



# Ojai Valley Community Nursery School

*The Ojai Valley's only parent cooperative preschool since 1955*

# Parent Handbook 2008 - 2009

OVCNS Parents have been saying the same thing since 1955:  
*The more you put into your experience, the more you will get out of it.*  
Enjoy your time here!

OJAI VALLEY COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

# Parent Handbook 2008-2009

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## **Ojai Valley Community Nursery School's Mission Statement:**

The Ojai Valley Community Nursery School is a parent-teacher cooperative preschool that serves families in the Ojai Valley and surrounding areas. We strive to create a safe, nurturing, child-directed program, within a community of tolerance, courtesy, and grace. Our school utilizes parent participation to provide a low cost, high quality children's school. At OVCNS we work to pass on a legacy of respect for self and others that our families and children can keep throughout their lives

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## CHAPTER 1 - Overview of Our Programs

*This chapter gives an overview of OVCNS's Programs and Philosophy, and explains what makes us different than other preschools.*

**B**ackground and Licensing. The Ojai Valley Community Nursery School is a 501c3 non-profit corporation (TIN: 95-1873950) and admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities available to students at the school.

OVCNS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship, or other school administered programs. We are licensed by the State of California for children ages 18 months through six years (CA. Dept. of Social Services Facility No. 561700267). Our school was established by parents in 1955 and continues to be managed by a Board of Directors elected from and by the parents of enrolled children. All teachers have fulfilled state law requirements for teaching in preschool, and have been chosen for their qualities of warmth and responsiveness to children, their commitment to family participation in early education, as well as their educational qualifications. We currently have the only Director and Preschool teacher in the Ojai Valley who is an AMI-trained Montessori Primary Teacher.

### Programs Currently Offered

- **TODDLER PROGRAM** – ages 18 months – 3 years. A non-separation program, which meets for 2 hours one or two mornings per week.
- **PRESCHOOL PROGRAM** – ages 2.5 – 6 years. A Primary Montessori classroom. Children may attend 2, 3, or 5 days per week, from 9am – 12pm.
- **EXTENDED DAY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM** – ages (only with the permission of the Director) – this program is generally for older preschool children who are able to stay for an extended day: 12-2pm. This program includes a shared snack, further inside and outside time, usually with some more in-depth explorations of art, language, science, math, and nature. This is only appropriate for children who no longer take naps, and have the energy for a longer day at school.

## Parent Cooperative Philosophy

### What makes OVCNS different from other schools?

*Respect for the role of parents is a hallmark of our preschool. OVCNS is organized on the principle that strong family relationships grow when there is an opportunity for parents to participate in the school experience. Parents participate and families are supported in the following ways:*

- Parents work in the classroom. All parents work in the classroom between 2 and 4 times per month as assistant teachers. In the Toddler program, an adult caregiver is always attending with the child. This participation offers a unique opportunity for the parents to deepen the parent-child relationship, while learning about their preschooler's individual development and gaining skills and techniques for guiding young children.
- A Gentle Separation. Unlike most traditional preschools, OVCNS offers children a *gentle separation process*. Families learn to separate with the support and guidance of the teachers and other families. The growth and learning that occur in a preschool happen more easily when children are not worried about saying good-bye. The non-separation, Toddler Program helps make the preschool a familiar place with familiar faces, which also eases the separation and transition into preschool.
- A Parent-Governed School. Outside the classroom, parents play a critical role in running the school. Together each year the parents elect from the parent-body a Board of Directors to run the school and assist the Director and Teachers in their work with our children. All parents help govern and maintain the school by serving on committees, attending and voting at monthly Parent Meetings, participating in fundraising, and attending parent education.
- A Community of Families. Families make valuable contributions by sharing their cultural traditions (songs, traditions, recipes), and their interest in science, nature, music, publishing, editing or the visual arts. These contributions greatly enhance our curriculum, and ensure the continued success of our school. Socially, OVCNS is a supportive environment for parents to meet other parents. These relationships often continue long after the children finish preschool!
- Parent Education is an integral part of our program, and in a sense ALL of our activities constitute parent education: working in the classroom, observing the teachers, observing other parents, and observing children. By working in the classroom parents learn so much about child development and their own child – an opportunity not available in a traditional preschool setting. OVCNS also offers FREE formal Parent Education programs several times a month, led by our Director, Teachers, and Child Development Specialists. The programs are essential in creating a supportive and respectful educational community for our children and families.

## Montessori Philosophy

### What makes a Montessori School different from other schools?

- Child-Centered. The Montessori preschool classroom is a child's world, geared to the size, pace and interests of boys and girls between the ages of two and a half and six years. It is designed to put the child at ease by giving her freedom in an environment prepared with attractive materials. These materials are arranged on low shelves within easy reach of even the smallest youngster. The children work at tables and use mats on the floor where they are naturally comfortable.
- Variety of Enriching Activities. Hands-on activities are always a part of the classroom environment because children learn by doing as opposed to just by being told what to do. Art media and music are used both individually and in groups for dramatic play, parades, yoga, dancing, singing, and instruments. Activities in Science, Nature, and Culture are explored through experiments, books, observation, gardening, hiking, cultural celebrations, conversations, food and cooking.
- Child-Directed, Teacher-Assisted. In the classroom the learning comes from the child's interests. The teacher is an observer of the individual interests of each child, and her daily work proceeds from her observations rather than from a prepared curriculum. She demonstrates the use of the materials as they are chosen by the child, with little or no talking. Since a child learns through experience the teacher does not correct the child with the materials. If there is an unsafe situation or the materials are being misused, the actions are stopped and the child is redirected in a positive way.
- Progression of Learning. The Montessori materials in the classroom are progressive to allow a wide variety of choice to the children. The children can grow as their interests lead them from one level of complexity to the next. Having children ages two and a half to six offers the opportunity for the younger children to learn from the older children, and for the older children to help the younger children and even give them lessons. The younger children look up to the older children, naturally wanting to work with the materials used by the older ones.

## What Children Learn and Experience at OVCNS

*Following are some specific areas of your child's development, and ways in which they are supported at OVCNS*

### **Imaginative Process**

The imaginative process is encouraged through allowing the child the space for creativity in all aspects of her/his work and play in art, drama, music, movements, and stories. Maria Montessori wrote of this topic, "We often forget that imagination is a force for the discovery of truth." We must allow children to do things in their own way because what better way would they have?

### **Sensory Perception**

The child learns about the world through the use of his/her senses. In order to develop a keenness of sense, the indoor and outdoor classroom environment provides activities to extend the use and awareness of touch, smell, feeling, seeing, and listening. Cooking projects, Montessori sensorial materials, walks, water play, art media, collage works, play-dough and sandbox play are some of these activities.

### **Self-Esteem**

One of the most important goals throughout the school year is to give each child a positive sense of self-worth. We allow room for growth by waiting to help a child until after he or she has first tried and then asks for help. To show that we have confidence in the child, we give choices within limits and respect a child's choices. When discipline is necessary, the child is supported and positive redirection is given. Self-esteem is never ignored--it is the action we dislike, not the child who does the action.

### **Socialization**

Socialization is the process of learning to cope in a group situation--with teachers, other adults, and peers. Children learn to socialize through role-playing, sharing, trading, listening, working out disagreements, exercises in grace and courtesy, talking to each other, comparing ideas and ALL group activities. Some ways children socialize are:

- On-looker - Observing, talking; but not participating
- Solitary - Play nearby but without reference to other children
- Parallel - Play of a companionable nature with similar materials but without personal interaction.
- Associative - Play that is loosely organized around a common activity, shared interests, and materials.
- Cooperative - Play with different roles, common goals, usually with one or two leaders, of relatively long duration and complexity.
- Participating in Games with Rules - Young children are just in the beginning stages of being able to participate in games. By the time they reach 4 - 5, they will have a true understanding of games and rules, and are able to enjoy them more fully.

### **Literature and Language**

One of our goals is for children to communicate and to appreciate the beauty of language. Children develop this through listening to stories, making up stories to be written down, and singing songs. The child has a hunger for knowledge and factual information. Therefore, language should come naturally to the child as part of everyday life. Every activity is a basis for verbal expression.

### **Large and Small Motor Skills**

Anything we do involves movement. The use of the materials inside the classroom involves many motions--walking, carrying, pouring, speaking and particularly the constant using of the hands. The whole of the Montessori classroom environment is set up to accommodate the child's will to learn through the use of his hands. Because of the explosion of physical abilities along with the emergence of independence, we provide safe and appropriate physical equipment and materials in our outside environment to challenge the children. There are open areas for running, jumping, climbing, rolling, crawling, sliding, and swinging.

## Parent Cooperative Member Responsibilities

Upon enrollment, each family automatically becomes a member of OVCNS. Unlike other schools, a parent cooperative preschool depends on the full participation of all parents. We are a rich community of parents with different skills and interests, and together we are responsible for administering and maintaining the school.

The following are required from all Member Families who attend OVCNS:

1. **Attend Fall Orientation Night each year.** This required meeting is held on an evening the week before school starts in the fall. The Director and the Board welcome new families and give information about OVCNS. The Teachers discuss curriculum and classroom procedures. Children do not attend the Fall Orientation meeting as childcare is not provided.
2. **(Preschool only). Attend your assigned day with your child of Orientation Week.** Here your child is oriented to the classroom routine by her Teacher, and each parent is given a comprehensive tour and training for their workdays by a Board Member.
3. **(Preschool only). Work in the classrooms as assistants** on your assigned workday between 2 and 4 days per month, depending on the number of children enrolled.
4. **Attending monthly Parent Meetings**
  - a. Attendance at these meetings is required for Preschool families, since a successful co-op requires a close relationship between parents and teachers. (Attendance is highly encouraged for Toddler families).
  - b. Parent meetings cover school business and parent education. The meetings are held monthly at OVCNS in the evenings, and childcare is provided.
  - c. Parents sign-up to take turns bringing food and drinks.
5. **Join a Committee.** To ensure the smooth functioning of our school, every family is required to join a school committee. (See Committee chairperson for details.) Committee work usually averages 2-3 hours per month.
6. **Participate in our 2 All School Clean-up Days** (a minimum 3-hour commitment per family per Clean-up Day).
7. **Participate in fundraising** (see details in the Fundraising section of this handbook).
8. **Participate in our Parent Education Program.**
9. **Optional** Responsibilities Include:
  - a. Attending Board of Directors' meetings.
  - b. Serving as a member of the Board of Directors.

## CHAPTER 2 - Admissions

Our application deadline for Fall Admissions is in March. The priority for registration is as follows:

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### ENTRANCE PRIORITY

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1. Returning students
2. Siblings of returning students
3. General public

#### PRE-Registration of Currently Enrolled Families

Returning students are assured of the timeslot they currently hold, provided they turn in:

- ❖ The non-refundable registration fee
- ❖ Signed copies of the Parent Agreement, Fundraising Agreement and the various forms that the State of California requires us to have on file for each family. Parents are required to submit new/updated forms as requested by the Registrar.

#### Registration of New Families

Registration for the public at large will take place immediately following the currently enrolled family pre-registration. A new family must first interview with the Admission Director/Registrar, schedule and complete a visit to the classroom where they meet with the Director and Teacher, and complete an Application for enrollment. Spaces are granted to families willing to fulfill the responsibilities of being a member of our parent cooperative preschool (see Parent Cooperative Member Responsibilities, Chapter 1) on a first-come, first-served basis.

#### Changing Your Timeslot

If you would like to change to another scheduling option, please contact the Registrar. Any requests for timeslot changes will be honored on a first-come-first-served basis, at the discretion of the Director.

#### Special Needs Families

The Preschool will enroll children with special needs as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (a copy of this information is available in the Preschool Policy and Procedure Manual).

#### Tuition

1. Tuition is due at the beginning of each new semester September 4<sup>th</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>. A \$10 late charge will be added if tuition is paid late. If you anticipate financial problems, please notify the Treasurer before the tuition due date.
2. When a family is 30 days late paying tuition, the child's place in the school may be lost.
3. Checks can be dropped off in the tuition box in the Preschool or sent by mail to P.O. Box 1117, Ojai, CA 93024.

4. When a child enters after the school year has started, the tuition amount will be prorated accordingly.
5. When a family withdraws their child(ren) during the school year, refunds will not be given after a two-week trial period. During the two-week trial period, a prorated refund can be given.
6. In the event of an extended absence, tuition must still be paid if space is to be held for the child.
7. Tuition is used primarily to meet the standing expenses of teachers' salaries, supplies, insurance and rent. Most other expenses must be met by the proceeds from fundraisers.
8. A \$25 fee will be assessed for each returned check.

### **Registration Fee**

A registration fee/deposit is charged each year to secure a spot for your child in the program. This fee covers the administrative costs related to registration. The registration fee is non-refundable and is required each year that your child is enrolled in the school.

### **Materials Fee**

A materials fee is charged each semester. This fee is on a sliding-scale based on the number of hours your child is enrolled in the program.

## **Working Scholarships**

**OVCNS offers scholarship opportunities for parents willing to fill necessary jobs at our school.**

- Scholarships are granted by the Board of Directors and are based on the following:
  1. Financial need of the family.
  2. Needs of the School.
  3. Qualifications of applicant.
  4. Availability.
- All scholarship recipients must also serve on a committee.
- All scholarships are subject to Board review at any time. If the Board determines the scholarship recipient is not fulfilling their agreement, the scholarship may be terminated.
- Two-week notice must be given to the Board if the scholarship recipient wishes to resign their position.
- If the need arises, the Board may split scholarships.
- Board members are not eligible for the work scholarships (cleaning, gardening, maintenance, or childcare) unless no other recipient is available. If no one is available for the work scholarships, they must be hired out.
- If an absence is necessary, the recipient is required to arrange a substitute, or potentially lose the scholarship. (i.e. recipient is unable to fulfill obligation for any reason or duration).

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## POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

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### **Cleaning Scholarship**

The Cleaning scholarship requires the recipient to thoroughly clean the shared church spaces and the OVCNS classroom every week. Three (3) hours of cleaning inside and outside must be done between Friday afternoon and Saturday evening. The scholarship for this position is 1 day/week of tuition.

### **Gardening Scholarship**

The Gardening scholarship requires the recipient to thoroughly maintain the schoolyard. Three (3) hours per week must be worked to maintain the school's grounds. The scholarship for this position is 1 day/week of tuition.

### **Maintenance Scholarship**

The Maintenance scholarship requires the recipient to oversee the welfare and safety of the school grounds. Manage and/or delegate the maintenance, repair, cleaning and disposal of toys, playthings and equipment in order to avoid injury and the spread of germs. The recipient is responsible for scheduling and maintaining pest control. Schedule and organize 3 all school workdays throughout the year for maintenance projects and deep cleaning. The scholarship for this position is 1 day/week of tuition.

### **Childcare Scholarship**

The Childcare scholarship requires the recipient to provide childcare for all OVCNS meetings. Six (6) hours per month of childcare at Board Meetings and Parent Meetings must be provided, which includes time for set-up and clean-up. Families receiving this scholarship must also make available another adult caregiver to attend the mandatory Parent Meetings. The scholarship for this position is 1 day/week of tuition.

### **Buy/Out Scholarship**

These scholarships are sometimes available if another family is choosing to "buy-out" of their regularly scheduled workday. The scholarship requires the recipient to work one (1) workday in addition to their regularly required workday. This requires three and one half hours (one full extra workday) per week. The scholarship for this position is set by the Board each year, based on the cost for the parent to "buy-out".

### **NFL Scholarships**

All OVCNS families are eligible to apply for the bi-annual Ojai Valley Neighborhood for Learning educational scholarships. These scholarships are given to families with children aged 5 and under based on financial need. For more information, please talk to OVCNS's Registrar or our NFL Committee representative.

## CHAPTER 3 - Daily Procedures at OVCNS

*This chapter will discuss all the information a parent will need to know in preparing her child to attend OVCNS.*

### Daily Schedule for Preschoolers

8:30 a.m.	Teachers arrive to set up classroom
8:45 a.m.	Workday Working Parents arrive to set up classroom (instructions are at school on Daily Job Cards)
9:00 a.m.	Children arrive: indoor activity choices in classrooms
10:20 a.m.	Clean up, followed by hand washing and inside circle time
10:30 a.m.	Outside for snack time (children bring their own lunch boxes)
10:45 a.m.	Open choice activities outdoor
11:30 a.m.	Clean up
11:45 a.m.	Outside circle, Group time,
12:00 p.m.	Goodbye, pick-up time

### Daily Schedule for Extended Day Preschoolers

12:00 p.m.	Shared snack (often prepared together)
12:15 p.m.	Outside time
1:00 p.m.	Inside time
1:45 p.m.	Circle time
2:00 p.m.	Good-bye, pick-up time

### Daily Schedule for Toddlers

9:00 a.m.	Teachers arrive, to set up classroom
9:30 a.m.	Children arrive - Outdoor activity choices – shared snack is available
10:25 a.m.	Clean up
10:30 a.m.	Inside time - open choice activities
11:10 a.m.	Clean up
11:15 a.m.	Goodbye circle - Group time
11:30 a.m.	Goodbye time

## Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child

**DROPPING OFF – SCHOOL LICENSING REQUIREMENTS** – THERE IS A SIGN-IN SHEET for the Preschool Class at the front gate. Sign your full name, your child's full name, and record the time you are dropping off your child. State law mandates this procedure. In the event of a disaster, these sheets are used to take attendance, and the child's welfare may depend upon the sign-in sheet's accuracy.

California State law also requires that you bring your child to the supervising teacher upon your arrival at school. This is a very important opportunity for us to greet your child and also to determine that he/she is feeling well and is ready for the demands of a busy day at preschool. This process also ensures that responsibility for the child is "handed-off" from the parent to the teacher.

### **RECOMMENDED ROUTINES TO EASE THE TRANSITION AND SEPARATION**

**Preparation:** If this is your child's first time attending preschool, or even if your child is returning to OVCNS after having the summer off, make sure that your family adequately prepares for the transition into school. At least 2 weeks before school, begin getting into a bedtime and wake-up time that will enable your child to be fully rested and ready to be on time for school. Over the summer, begin talking about school. Have playdates with friends from school, and visit the school playground. Spend time familiarizing your child with the playground so that she feels comfortable and at-home at her school. Begin talking to your child a few weeks before school about what to expect at school. After reading this Parent Handbook, you will have a good idea what your child's day will be like, so explain the Daily Schedule to your child in detail. Get books from the library about starting school. Allow your child to ask any questions about school, and answer them honestly.

**Address Anxieties.** Make sure that you are aware if you have any anxieties about leaving your child at school. It is normal for a parent to feel anxious when her child begins school, but be aware that your child will know if you are anxious, and will in turn worry about going to school. Make sure all of your questions are answered about how your child will be cared for at school, and other concerns that you might have. If your child has special needs, communicate these to her teacher before school begins. Communicate any questions or concerns clearly with the Director and Teacher. They have helped hundreds of families make a healthy transition into preschool, and are there to help you.

**Absolutely attend Orientation Week and Orientation Night** for Preschool families. These meetings are essential in helping your family prepare for beginning school at OVCNS.

**Develop a routine.** When you take your child to school, have a regular routine when dropping-off your child, when it is not your working day – and make sure your child knows the routine. **BE ON TIME** -- this makes the transition easier, as everyone arrives together, and your child will not feel out of sync with the other children. Most children have a hard time entering a classroom, when the other children are already busy and engaged in their work. We recommend that you always first sign-in at the front gate together. Make sure your child goes inside with you, assist her in placing her lunch in the "lunch basket", storing things in her "cubby", and hanging her jacket on a hook. Some children like to take off their shoes for "inside time". If your child likes to do this, she can place her shoes on the shoe storage shelf in the hallway.

**Settle into the classroom.** After she has organized her belongings in the hallway, walk into the classroom with her and make sure you greet the teacher together (briefly, if the teacher is working with another child). Inside the classroom, talk in a quiet voice to show respect for the classroom and the work the children are doing. Allow your child to ease into the classroom at her own pace – some children immediately engage with other children or an activity, and others like to observe everything that is going on in the room before choosing what to do. Respect your child's pace, without rushing her, and allow her to choose what she would like to do on her own – it is her classroom.

**Plan your goodbye.** Follow your pre-arranged plan of when you will say “good-bye”, and stick to it. Once you have said good-bye, leave, and do not socialize in the hallway with other parents. This makes your good-bye confusing. Also, adult voices in the hallway are very distracting for the children in the classroom.

**Ask Teacher for help.** If good-byes are difficult, discuss a plan with the Teacher. This might involve the Teacher directly helping the child become involved in the classroom, or it might involve you staying in the classroom initially. Every child is different, and at OVCNS we respect each child’s individual needs.

## PICKING UP

PICK UP TIME IS 12:00 NOON. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU BE ON TIME TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD. Children become anxious if their parents are late. Inconsistency only serves to undermine their trust in you. Should you be unavoidably detained, please call and let us know, so we can explain to her that you will be late, and we can arrange for someone to remain at school with your child.

Sign your name and record the time on the sign-in sheet when you pick up your child. Check the mail file with your family's name on it for messages. Only adults who are authorized on the form on file in the Preschool office will be allowed to pick up a child. A parent may not prohibit a child's other parent from picking up their child unless the prohibition is supported by legal documents on file in the Preschool office. If you have made arrangements to have a friend or other family member pick up your child, please be sure that you inform the teacher and/or Director.

No adult will be allowed to pick up any child if the adult appears unable to safely drive and/or safely take care of the child.

Stay with your child upon pick-up, and walk them out to the car promptly. After your pick-up routine, *leave right away* so that working parents can finish their clean-up. Make any social plans outside of the gate, but make sure you supervise your children to keep them safe from the road and parking lot. Our teachers have after-work obligations and are not paid to stay late. After the first incident of late pick-up, families will receive a warning. If late pick-up occurs repeatedly, a family might be charged for an after-school childcare fee, or asked to leave the school.

## SOME TIPS FOR EASING THE TRANSITION AT PICK UP- FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND TODDLERS

*Transitions can be stressful to young children, as any parent who has tried to rush a two-year-old to bed knows well. One of our goals has always been to make "going home time" a smooth and easy experience for everyone: child, parent, the rest of the child's group, and the teachers.*

**Reconnect.** It is important that the child and parent have a moment to re-connect after a morning or day apart. The child usually wishes to share some of his/her day's discoveries; "We read this book, I painted this picture." The parent often needs to feel included in his/her child's day as well. A short period of listening and reacting now, as lunch box and artwork are gathered, sets a warm tone for the rest of the day.

**Check-in with teacher.** This is often an appropriate time for a brief exchange with your child's teacher; ("She had a great time with the blocks today!" "We might be a little late tomorrow"). Although if the teacher is very involved with the group, a simple "See you tomorrow," might seem best.

**Do NOT:** There are some activities that do not work well at going home time – this is true for both Toddlers and Preschoolers. Long talks with a teacher are better planned for another time. Occasionally, a child will be so overwhelmed with emotions, or tired from school, that she will become argumentative. Sometimes the best choice then is to physically remove your child from the classroom - problems are often more solvable in private. Don't hesitate to ask for a teacher's help or input in these situations - we've seen it all before.

**Keep a simple routine.** In short, a simple routine is usually best for all - check the cubby; get the lunchbox and clothes, look at the project; bye-bye to our friends, and the teacher; and we'll see you tomorrow!

## Cubbies

Preschool children are provided with a cubby in the hallway. Cubbies are the children's private space in which they keep their extra clothes, and any other possessions they have brought from home, as well as all completed schoolwork. A complete change of clothing, including socks and underwear, should be available in your child's cubby every school day in case of accidents, messes, or water play. Check your child's cubby at the end of each day to see if there are wet or dirty clothes to take home, artwork, and other projects; and also to see if new clothes are needed. Please **DO NOT** leave food in cubbies overnight – as this will attract mice and other hungry creatures.

### Suggested Clothing

Due to the nature of children's activities, and for safety reasons, we highly recommend that tennis shoes be worn at the Preschool. If the child must wear sandals or boots, he or she needs to bring a pair of tennis shoes for use on the climbing structure, riding vehicles, and tree climbing. Please keep in mind that our preschoolers are very busy, often working with paint, a variety of art media, as well as mud, food, and dirt. All the clothes they wear to preschool should be clothes that can be covered in whatever they happen to be working with that day. We also recommend that the children be able to move freely and safely in all their clothes. And please keep any commercial images off their clothing, as this can be confusing, frightening, and distracting to the other children at school. **REMEMBER: FUNCTION OVER FASHION!** To avoid mix-ups, parents should put their child's name in all clothes, and check our Lost and Found basket every week!

### Raingear

We do allow children to play outside in the rain, provided that they have brought raingear, rain boots, and an extra change of clothing. We also set up the fireside room, as an optional indoor playing space on rainy days. Working parents dress for the rain on your workday, too!

### Sharing – Bringing Items to School

Although we support a close bond between home and school, and recognize that sharing a special toy may help bridge that gap, we find that more conflicts erupt over toys from home than over almost anything else. Talk to the Director or Teacher about bringing true “comfort” objects like security blankets that will help her with separation, but please leave all toys in the car or at home.

A few times a year, we offer “Share Day” where children may bring something from home. Your child's teacher will let you and your child know when share day will be. The staff has established the following guidelines:

1. Children should bring something only on sharing day.
2. Beloved books or nature “finds” like birds' nests, feathers, shells, seed pods, etc. are welcomed as items to show others at school.
3. Weapons (guns, swords) or any potentially dangerous (i.e. broken or sharp) toy must be kept at home.

## Food At School

### Snack and lunch guidelines

At school, children have many opportunities to eat throughout the day. In preschool, the children bring their own individual lunches from home everyday. And in both Preschool and Toddler, parents bring a shared snack on a rotating basis.

The purpose of having food choices available regularly is twofold:

1. NUTRITIOUS SNACKS IMPROVE HEALTH, DISPOSITION, AND LEARNING ABILITY. Since young children sometimes don't eat breakfast, have small stomachs, and generally need a nutritional boost between regular mealtimes, snack is available to provide much needed energy for the school day.
2. IN OUR CLASSROOM, INSIDE SNACK IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR PRACTICAL LIFE AREA. Here, children can choose the food they want and sit at the snack table to eat and have conversation with friends. When they are finished they put the compost in the bucket, wash their dishes and check the table to clean up, when necessary. Young children enjoy this process so much that they sometimes eat another snack just to be able to wash their dish again.

**Our policy is that while attending OVCNS children will eat healthy, whole foods and avoid junk food. Please follow these guidelines whether you are packing your child's individual lunch or bringing a shared snack:**

1. Limited amounts of healthy sugar (i.e. yogurts, granola, etc.)
2. No highly processed food
3. No gum or candy – even for Halloween, Christmas, or Easter
4. No artificial colors or flavors
5. Only real juice, no soda or juice substitutes (sugar water, fruit punch, etc.).
6. DO bring whole foods: fruits, vegetable, protein
7. DO bring homemade foods, with no refined sugars
8. DO bring food from your home garden
9. DO bring organic foods
10. DO pack lunches in reusable containers – try for a ZERO-WASTE lunchbox
11. No meat for the “shared snack”
12. Please tell the teachers at the beginning of the school year if your child has any food restrictions, etc.
13. Please check our list of food restrictions posted in the classroom when you are bringing the “shared snack”

14. Water is always available to students both in the classroom and outside.
15. Children enrolled in the Extended Preschool Program (12-2pm) should bring extra food in their lunchbox.

### **Snack Projects**

Preschool parents are welcome to bring a cooking project to do with children at the Project Table when it is their day for Project, but this activity will be considered extra to snack. It's also science! Physical changes in food are intriguing science curriculum. With close supervision, we allow kids to spread, chop, sort, wash, measure and mix ingredients. Not only do these important skills build competence, but the activity also teaches cooperation. The cooking projects are usually eaten at closing circle.

### **Special Occasions**

On a child's birthday, his or her parents are welcome to bring a special snack for the entire classroom to enjoy. We recommend something simple, homemade, nutritious, and with no refined sugar. We strive to make this event both low-key and child-focused. Please discuss your plans with your child's Teacher.

### **Toilet Learning**

The toilet learning process often coincides with a child's entry into Preschool. We are not licensed to change diapers at Preschool, so, by law, children should be independent in their toileting before they start school. We accept, however, that some children may still be working on toileting, or will regress in their toileting during this time.

If you anticipate that your child will need his diaper changed, or help cleaning up after a toileting accident, please designate another parent to help him with this. We encourage toileting independence where appropriate. Communication around toileting issues is important, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your child.

### **Play Dates**

Play dates are a wonderful opportunity for children to explore their friendships with their classmates outside of school, and to share their own environment with a friend. But please do your scheduling of play dates on the telephone and not while you are dropping-off or picking-up children. Friends who are not involved in play dates can feel excluded and sad when they see their friends making plans together. For this same reason, never pass out party invitations at the school, but mail them to families' homes – unless the entire class is invited.

### **Library Closet**

Parents may check out books from the Library Closet, which is located in the main hallway. We have books appropriate for reading to children on many different topics, as well as books on parenting, health, and creative activity ideas for parents and children. Books are organized by topic in the library. The library is maintained and organized by the Library Committee person. Please be sure to "check out" your book on the sign-out sheet on the door, and re-check your books EVERY WEEK. We have found that busy parents sometimes forget to return books for long periods of time, and we want all families to be able to enjoy our library selection.

## **Field Trips**

Classes may go on field trips throughout the year. Field trips are always scheduled in advance so that parents can be notified. Legally, we must have a signed field trip release form from you before we can include your child in our plans.

In previous years, we have visited the library, pumpkin patch, the fire station, gone to the storytelling festival, and have taken a trolley ride to the park.

For our field trip days, we recruit extra parents to ensure adequate supervision and transportation of the children. Extra hands are always extremely helpful to the safety of our children – and ALL parents are welcome to come on field trips! Parent cars are used for transportation. We might ask you to help with transportation, providing that your car has a seat belt for each person you take, and that we have proof of your auto insurance on file at school (this form is included in your annual Health Packet). We require that all children be placed in a car seat or booster seat. On field trip days, be sure to leave your child's car seat, labeled with their name, in the hallway outside at school. If it is not your child's regular school day, you may bring your child on the field trip as long as you come along with your child.

## Health & Safety

**OVCNS Illness Policy** - *In order to keep our California State license and for the protection of children and staff, the illness policy is of the utmost importance.*

THE CHILD'S COMFORT SHOULD BE ASSESSED BEFORE LEAVING FOR SCHOOL. If a child is listless, complains of a headache, is pale or unusually irritable, this would be a good day to stay home. Working parents should have a back-up plan in place before their child becomes ill. If cough or cold medicine is needed at school, the child should be kept at home. *If a working parents stays home with a sick child, she must find a substitute!*

The school should be called if a child will be staying home due to illness. The staff needs to be aware of illnesses which may be present among the children, and it is important to notify the Preschool if you suspect that your child has an infectious disease. These include, but are not limited to: conjunctivitis (pink eye), fifth disease, impetigo, chicken pox, strep throat, scarlet fever, and bacterial diarrhea. If your child may have been exposed to one of these illnesses at the Preschool, we will distribute a notice to alert you.

### **A child must be kept home if he or she has:**

1. A fever. A child should stay home until a normal temperature has been maintained for at least 24 hours.
2. An unusual rash that might be a symptom of a contagious disease.
3. A contagious virus such as measles, chicken pox, mumps or roseola.
4. An eye infection with a discharge. After being examined and placed on medication, the child may return when they are no longer contagious.
5. An ear or throat infection. Once the child has been examined, placed on medication, and made comfortable, he or she may return to school when no longer contagious.
6. A cold. A child should stay home until the symptoms of a cold such as coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, and thick, green mucus secretions have subsided.
7. Diarrhea and/or symptoms of flu. A child who has been vomiting and/or complaining of a headache may not attend school. A child should stay home until they have had no symptoms for at least 24 hours.
8. A persistent, hacking cough.
9. Difficulty breathing.

10. If there has been an exposure of a communicable disease at the school, children who are not immunized against the disease will be required to stay home until chance of infection has passed. We do not give any tuition reimbursements in such a case.
11. Tuition reimbursements are not given for extended illnesses.

- *This list is subject to immediate change if new state guidelines are implemented.*

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**CHILDREN WHO HAVE THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS SHOULD BE EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL UNTIL**

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- A physician has certified the symptoms are not associated with an infectious agent or the child is no longer a threat to the health of other children at the school
- The symptoms have subsided

**Emergency Contact Information**

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY INVOLVING YOUR CHILD, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE BE ABLE TO REACH YOU IN A TIMELY MANNER. Provide the school with any and all means of contacting your cell, pager, work phone, home phone, etc. Be sure to inform the Registrar whenever there are changes to your phone numbers or addresses.

The Preschool is not licensed to care for even mildly ill children. Parents whose children become ill at the preschool will be contacted by Preschool staff and asked to pick up their child as soon as possible. Please have a contingency plan in place for this possibility.

**General Safety and First Aid**

If a child becomes injured at the Preschool, the staff on duty will administer first aid. The staff has been trained in first aid procedures for preschoolers. In the event of serious or life-threatening injury, the staff will take the necessary procedures. Minor injuries (i.e. scraped knee, bumped head, etc.) that do not require a doctor's care will be reported to the parent at pick up time. In the case of more major injury, which the teacher and/or director feel may require a doctor's visit, you will also be notified as soon as possible by phone.

**Hand Washing**

*The best way to reduce the risk of disease in our preschool is to ensure that staff, working parents, and children follow recommended hand washing procedures.*

**HOW**

- Use soap and running water.
- Rub hands vigorously as you wash them. Wash all surfaces, including: backs of hands, wrists between fingers under fingernails

- Rinse hands well. Leave the water running. Dry your hands with a single-use (paper) towel.
- Turn off the water using a paper towel instead of your bare hands.

## **WHEN**

- When they come to the preschool in the morning.
- Before preparing or serving food.
- After diapering a child or wiping his nose or cleaning up messes.
- After using the bathroom - either with a child or by themselves.

## CHAPTER 4 - Preschool Workday Guidelines

*The next few pages should answer all the questions parents might have about what to do on their assigned workdays. Please refer to this throughout the year, as it contains many helpful ideas, some of which might make more sense after you have worked in the classroom a little while.*

### General Overview of Workdays

1. You are required to work in your child's classroom on your assigned workday. The number of workdays required per month will be determined by the Board of Director's at the beginning of the school year, and will be based on the days you are enrolled, our overall enrollment, and our classroom coverage needs. Your assigned workday will always be the same day of the week.
2. BE PREPARED TO WORK FROM 8:45AM – 12:30PM. You must stay until all children have been picked up, unless they are enrolled in the Extended Day Program. Parents are not required to stay and work during the Extended Day Program.
3. A monthly workday calendar will be created and distributed each month by the Preschool Liaison (committee position) under the supervision of the Registrar.
4. Working parents will rotate bringing in snack and project, and these assignments will be indicated on the monthly workday calendar. Put handbags and backpacks in the library closet.
5. Each workday parent has pre-assigned duties for set-up, class time, and clean-up. You will either be assigned to Job A or Job B, based on whether you brought snack (A) or project (B). Laminated copies of these Job Cards are kept in the classroom, attached to the memo board inside the classroom. You may carry your job card in your apron pocket during your workday to remind you of your jobs, and return them at the end of each day.

## Job Cards

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### **CLEANING JOB A (WHEN YOU HAVE BROUGHT SNACK)**

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- For snack please bring these 5 snacks that the preschoolers can prepare themselves; eggs, peanuts, bananas, apples, and oranges.
- **Arrive at 8:45am to set up snack and dishwashing area.**
- Set up cups, compost bucket, food, outside red & yellow chairs. There are additional forks, plates and OJ cups in the white cupboard so the children don't spread germs.
- Get warm water from kitchen in green bucket, put dish soap in first bin and rinse water in second; also bring extra warm water to put into the hand-washing pitcher
- Encourage children to wash their hands before preparing a snack
- Supervise preschoolers preparing snack, following images placed on wall, using appropriate trays
- Supervise preschoolers washing their dishes and trays in the hallway
- **When the bell rings, please help children in the restrooms to wash their hands before circle time**
- While teacher does an inside circle, bring basket of lunches and compost bucket to outside table. Begin to clean snack area.
- On toddler days this needs to be done before the toddlers are inside:  
Use bleach solution spray to clean the inside classroom snack table, letting the bleach sit for 3 minutes. Use the Trader Joe's green spray instead of the bleach to avoid the bleach fumes.
- Empty water from wash bins into cleaning closet sink, carry used dishes, wash bins, and drying rack to church kitchen for further cleaning. Please remove all food from the classroom.
- **Check outdoor play area thoroughly for black widow spiders**
- Wash dishes with antibacterial dish soap and air or towel dry, reset the trays and cover the snack shelves.
- **Dry** any excess water from the sinks, **leaving wash bins out to dry**, if necessary. Tidy **kitchen** counters, sink, and floors, **empty kitchen garbage and replace liner, if necessary.** It is imperative that the kitchen, a shared space with the church, is left neat & tidy each day.
- Collect all dirty towels in the laundry basket under the dishwashing area, and next to the water bottle outside. Take home to clean. Return to the shelves in library closet within next day or two.
- Supervise children in playground
- Help children pack their lunches and gather belongings at the end of the day – bring any clothes or shoes to the front steps – and bring lunch basket to front steps

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### **CLEANING JOB B (WHEN YOU HAVE BROUGHT PROJECT)**

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- **Arrive at 8:45am to set up**
- Have all supplies and example (if appropriate) ready
- Set up painting easel; open paint, or refill to 1/3 full, and prep paper for easel
- **If you did not bring a project, check outdoor play area thoroughly for black widow spiders**
- Check for and clean rat or mice droppings around patio area
- **From 9 – 10:30am work with children in the project room**
- When the bell rings, please help children in the restrooms to wash their hands before circle time
- Put child's name on project or have child write name on project
- If there are "dried" completed projects in project room, place in child's cubbies
- Please clear the Project Room shelves and return supplies to the unlocked shed
- Please rinse brushes and cover paints
- Supervise children in playground
- Please assure there are soap and a towel ready for outside hand washing.
- Water garden boxes and **check outdoor play area thoroughly for black widow spiders**
- Clean outside snack table and put up chairs.
- Help children pack their lunches and gather belongings at the end of the day – bring any clothes or shoes to the front steps – and bring lunch basket to front steps

### Substitutes

1. Workday parents are required to make their own arrangements with another parent if unable to work on their scheduled day. The class list of families will help you contact another parent to substitute for you. In the event of an emergency please contact the Director for assistance in finding a substitute.
2. By law, we must have a certain ratio of adults to children at school every day. Please notify the Director of whatever arrangements you have made, and ask your substitute to indicate that they are substituting for you on the daily sign-in sheet.

### Set-Up

1. The Workday begins at 8:45 a.m. **Please arrive on time!** If your child requires more time to settle in before you can get to work please arrive early enough to accommodate her.
2. Working parents are required to sign in and sign out on the sheet located at the gate. Each parent must sign in with their legal signature and see that all children are signed in on the attendance sheet. This is a state licensing requirement.
3. Upon arrival put on one of the adult aprons provided for working parents. This is a signal to the children that you are a Parent-Teacher for the day. Consult your Job Card and begin the set-up routine of classrooms and for the day.
4. Often, supervision of the children is the highest priority while the teacher sets up the activities for the morning and greets arriving children and their parents.

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### DO NOT

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1. Use your cell phone during school hours -- ONLY for emergencies!
2. Bring hot liquids. Please have your tea or coffee at home or in the car before you come for your work day. The possibility of children being burned is a risk we will not take!
3. Socialize with other adults.
4. Conduct school business with other adults.
5. Leave your assigned area without telling other working adults, NOT even for one minute!

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### DO:

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1. Make sure all areas with children are being adequately supervised.
  2. Talk in a quiet voice inside the classroom.
  3. Talk to children at their eye level (i.e. crouch down or squat)
  4. Quietly observe.
  5. Assist the children when needed.
  6. Keep an eye out for maintenance issues – like splinters – and inform the Maintenance Committee if work is required. Also, we all need to be aware of the possibility of black widow spiders inside play structures – please conduct a close inspection whenever you are working with children at the boat or playhouses.
  7. Be sure to wear comfortable, old clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.
  8. Bring raingear on rainy days – we will go outside!
  9. Dedicate your time and attention to the children rather than to other adults. Laugh with the children and the parents on your team. Enjoy your day at school.
  10. Seek to maintain a calm, productive atmosphere during school time
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**During Snack** When snack-time is called, assist children with hand washing. During outside snack, please sit with the children and engage them in casual conversation. Encourage children to eat, sit on their bottoms, and stay at the table until they are finished and have cleaned their place.

**Circle Time** During Circle Time, we ask that you join in with appropriate respect and enthusiasm. When parents intersperse themselves within the circle of children, they can easily lay a gentle hand on a wriggly child, or hold a timid or weary one on their lap. Often just sitting between two restless children leaves the Teacher free to create group time that is rewarding for everyone. If a child is too disruptive during Circle Time and continues after one reminder, please consult with the Teacher about a plan for disruptive behavior during circle. All children become able to be in a group at different times, and for many of our children it is their first experience participating in a group. We often see children grow into this valuable time of songs and stories over the course of the school year. Sometimes the Teacher may not need your help during Circle time and you can begin your clean-up jobs.

#### **Clean-up Time**

1. Follow the instructions on your Job Card.
2. Help children gather their belongings
3. Encourage parents to leave with their children right away.
4. Stay until all children have been picked-up who are not enrolled in the Extended Day Program.
5. Help the Teacher transition children into the Extended Day Program, and be aware not to be disruptive of this program.

## **Playground Supervision**

1. Safety is the first priority.
2. Adults should be positioned to supervise all outside areas where there are children.
3. Check all equipment for Black widow webs, black widow spiders, and egg sacs. For the safety of our children we kill any Black Widows that we find on our play equipment and destroy black widow egg sacs. We explain to children that Black Widows can hurt us with their venom, and we keep kids safe by destroying them. In turn, we also teach children that we do not harm any other spiders at school.
4. Check all equipment to ensure that it is in good, safe, working order. Check for loose boards, exposed nails, broken or sharp edges. Any unsafe equipment should be removed and reported to the maintenance committee for repairs or removal.

5. Always supervise children when they are using the tools at the work bench. Provide appropriate instruction, as necessary.
6. Use clear and positive statements when giving children reminders: “Walk around the swings”, “Keep the shovel low when digging”, instead of “don’t get in the way”.
7. Children must wear helmets when using the tall tricycles, two-wheeled bicycles, or roller skates.
8. Shovels are only for digging.
9. All wheeled vehicles must remain on the lower track.
10. No fence climbing or throwing things over the fence.
11. Children may climb in only the lower tree surrounded by the concrete ring, and only to the lowest split, and only if they seem developmentally capable.
12. Children should use the climbing structure safely and as intended.
13. Only one child on the slide at a time.
14. Teach children to walk around the wood box to avoid the swings when in use.
15. Redirect any “sword” or “gun” play.
16. Make sure children are dressed appropriately for the weather. Help them put on raingear, jackets, boots, etc., as appropriate. And help them remove layers on hot, sunny days.
17. At the end of the day bring all discarded clothing to the front steps for children to take home.
18. A child should always be accompanied in to the bathroom by an adult who has had a Live Scan (Director, Teacher, President, and some of our substitute teachers). This is a state licensing requirement.
19. Any working adult should accompany a child inside for any reason other than using the bathroom.
20. If a child has a minor injury, you may help them inside to wash and bandage the cut. If they get a serious injury, take the child to the Director immediately. She will determine the appropriate course of action.
21. Remember that outdoor play is also a learning experience for the child. Interact with the child when she needs help, but act as an observer when she is involved in her own activity.

## The Basics of Observation

We encourage parents to spend time “observing” children -- both when they are working in the classroom, and at home. Here is how we recommend observing children:

- ❖ Slow down – *get comfortable, relax, think of nothing else*
- ❖ Don’t interrupt or distract your child – *be unobtrusive, don’t comment, teach, or interject your own ideas; just watch*
- ❖ Cultivate a clear and open mind – *try to see what your child is doing without judgment or evaluation*
- ❖ Use descriptive rather than evaluative language – *simply notice, without making a judgment or evaluation*

## Helping in the Classroom

- ❑ The teacher relies on you as her working assistant, she needs you to assist children so that she can give individual and group lessons to children
- ❑ Help children help themselves – encourage independence!
- ❑ Have an older child help a younger child
- ❑ Show children where things are, if they do not know (i.e. help them find paper, or fill a cup with water in the bathroom)
- ❑ Be aware of the different levels and different stages of development of children in the classroom – and give help accordingly
- ❑ Be an extra assistant in the project room if more than 6 children are in there
- ❑ Read to children quietly in the library area
- ❑ Write names on any work or projects that children have completed to take home, or encourage children to write their own names
- ❑ Discourage running or playing in the hallway, by suggesting another activity – REDIRECT
- ❑ Children are able to take out and put away their work independently. In this way they feel the satisfaction of completing a cycle of work.
- ❑ When the work is back on the shelf it is the signal that it is ready for the next person to use.
- ❑ Children unroll a mat when working with materials on the floor. Parents can gently remind them to do so, if necessary. The mat designates that space for the child or children working on that activity. In this way we show respect for the child and their work.
- ❑ The children can prepare their own snack on a plate, take it to the snack table, eat it, compost the leftovers, and wash their dishes. They can be encouraged to sweep or wipe up spilled food on the table and floor
- ❑ If a child is using an activity and another child would like to use it, you can tell them to let the other child know that when they are done, they would like a turn. If it is two-person work, the child can ask if it is okay to use it together. The other child can answer either “yes” or “no”. A “no” needs to be respected.
- ❑ If a child comes to interrupt during the time a teacher is giving a lesson, they may observe the lesson with the support of the teacher.
- ❑ If a child wishes to work on something she has not yet had a lesson on, ask the Teacher to help. If she is working with another child, she will let the child know to first get out something on which she has already had a lesson, and the Teacher will give her the new lesson as soon as she is available.
- ❑ Sometimes a child is not ready for a lesson on certain materials, as the work in the classroom is progressive. In this situation, the Teacher will show her something that comes first.

## Respect in Daily Interactions with Children

*Please follow these guidelines both at home and in school*

1. Don't talk about the child to others when s/he is in the same room with you.
2. Begin from the earliest age to acknowledge the child's needs and feelings, even before s/he can speak.
3. Disengage from battles of will and power plays.
4. Prepare children for the daily activities and plans – let them know the schedule
5. Give undivided attention to your child every single day, with NO interruptions. Just BE TOGETHER!
6. In all interactions, treat the child as an active participant, rather than a passive participant.
7. Develop the child's interests separate from your own.
8. Stop to listen to exactly what the child is expressing so that you hear his/her needs, not your interpretation of those needs.
9. Learn about and trust the child's developmental process.
10. Convey your confidence that the child can handle him/herself in appropriate ways.
11. Help your child to solve his/her own problems without your stepping in to help or solve them.

## Problem-Solving Notes

1. Go to the problem calmly. Don't run unless someone is getting hurt. (If you find yourself shouting across the room a lot, something is wrong.)
2. Violence is never okay. Sometimes one child hurts another in anger, or frustration – remind them immediately that it's not okay to hit, bite, kick, push, etc. "We keep everyone safe at school. Use your words and tell her what's upsetting you."
3. Get down on their level and be supportive of each child. An "aggressor" needs you as much as a "victim" and often feels scared, as well.
4. If children are fighting over an object or toy, neutralize it by holding it yourself while the children talk about what happened. If one child holds it, the other child may not be able to talk calmly.
5. Avoid judgemental statements, such as "you have to share," "be nice," or "you are a big boy." As a rule, leave "fairness" out of things. What is fair to us may not be fair to the child having a problem.

6. Strive to have solutions come from the kids. When you say, “take turns”, or solve the problem for them, you are teaching children that problems are solved by older, bigger people who have the power.
7. Recognize and acknowledge feelings.
8. Not all problems have immediate, solvable solutions. It is okay to let a problem be unresolved.
9. Talk about problems when conflicts aren’t happening.
10. Allow problems to arise. Problems are okay. They are a part of life.
11. Conflict resolution is a vital life skill. When children learn to solve problems at this age, they have an important lifelong skill!
12. In Summary:
  - a. Approach calmly
  - b. Keep everyone safe
  - c. Gather information, recognize feelings of each child equally
  - d. Restate the problem according to what the children have said
  - e. Ask for ideas and wait for solutions
  - f. Restate choices and ask for a decision

### **Some Ideas for Project**

Parents take turns bringing a Project in on their work day. The schedule is indicated on the monthly preschool workdays calendar. Projects take place in the Art/Project room, and a variety of different projects are possible. Activities involving cooking, science, art, and construction would make great projects. There is a “Project Resource Guide” written by OVCNS teachers available in the Art/Project room, and we also have books in our OVCNS library containing creative project ideas.

Projects can be open-ended, exploratory or result in a finished product. Keep in mind that even a “finished product” can be interpreted in a variety of individual ways by each child – there is never a right or wrong way to do things! Accordingly, the Project can be structured, or it can simply be a day of “Open Art” where the parent can provide materials, ideas, and be a support to the children in their multi-sensory exploration of the materials. Hence, we like to emphasize the exploratory process more than the product.

## Helpful Hints for Commenting on Children's Creative Work

Commenting on children's creative work is extremely delicate and can be unknowingly threatening. Our role is to support and nurture children's creative expression.

Relax and have fun with the children. Remember that the process, not always the product, can often be most important.

1. Comment on the process of creating:  
"Look how fast your hand is moving back and forth."  
"You are (gently, carefully, boldly) putting paint on your paper."  
"You are experimenting with different ways of using....."  
"How did you make this? What materials did you use?"
2. Comment on the way things look:  
"You made little dots and wavy lines."  
"There is a lot of blue here and some yellow here. Look what happens when the two colors mix together here."
3. Mention any apparent feelings noted in body language, facial expressions, color or work preference:  
"You used a lot of blue here. Blue gives me a restful feeling."  
"You've chosen many bright and bold colors."  
"It looks like you are having fun experimenting with...."  
"You have spent a long time on this project. It seems like you really enjoyed it."
4. When a child is fully involved in an activity, sometimes no comment is necessary. Simply your quiet interest and full attention is sufficient. Sometimes no involvement from an adult is needed or wanted.
5. Three intrusions into creativity:  
"What did you paint?" Implies you don't understand their work  
"Why did you paint that?" Implies there needs to a reason for their work  
"Tell me about your painting." Insists the child move from the non-verbal world of art to the verbal realm of explaining something, a process some children aren't ready for.

## CHAPTER 5 - The Administration of OVCNS Programs

### Board of Directors

INTERESTED PARENTS WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE SCHOOL MAY BE ELECTED AS A BOARD MEMBER. A co-operative nursery school can be infinitely rewarding to all those who participate in it. We, the members of the school, make it what it is. Our individual and collective attention to the daily operation of each program determines the quality of the school experience for each child and for OVCNS kids as a whole.

Our Board of Directors consists of the Director and Teachers, and the following positions elected from the parent body: President, Vice-President/Treasurer, Secretary, Registrar, Committees Chairperson, and Fundraising Chairperson. Please refer to a copy of the OVCNS By-laws for more specific details concerning Board Member involvement and duties.

#### The Director's and Teacher's Roles

*The Director and Teachers have a two-fold responsibility.*

1. The first is to respect and keep all children safe, their bodies, and their feelings.
2. The second is to help each child develop her/his individual capabilities while learning to work and play joyfully with the other children.

*The director's and teachers' many functions are outlined in more detail in the school By-laws. However, in general, their agenda is to:*

1. Work out a consistent daily schedule of activities.
2. Provide continuity and long-range planning Supervise setting up the school environment every day.
3. Continually evaluate each program to ensure that it meets the children's needs.
4. Plan the parent education program
5. The director and teachers seek to create an environment where children are happy, compassionate, learning, and growing.

## Fundraising

As a Co-op preschool, O.V.C.N.S. depends on the support of all its members and as a non-profit organization O.V.C.N.S. needs a reliable source of fund-raising income to remain a successful operation. If a family participates heavily in one particular fundraiser, they will be exempt from having to participate in the other required fundraisers that year (after board approval). At this time we require our families to participate in the following mandatory fundraisers:

### Scrip

Scrip is a National Program that many schools use as a fundraiser. Through Scrip you raise free money for your school when you shop at certain stores. OVCNS participates in 2 Scrip programs: 1) Paper Scrip at 4 local grocery stores, and 2) E-Scrip – where you use store or credit cards to earn school money. Paper Scrip is sold at OVCNS (for Starr Market, Westridge Market, Rainbow Bridge, and the Farmer and the Cook), regularly by our Scrip Coordinator. For eScrip you register your Vons card or credit cards on the eScrip website. Every time you use your Von's card, or use your credit card at registered merchants, you will earn money for OVCNS in your name. You can also have family members register their cards for OVCNS. Each family attending O.V.C.N.S. is required to purchase \$100.00 of Paper Scrip monthly, or earn the equivalent in eScrip purchases. Scrip is an even exchange, dollar for dollar, so it will not cost you anything extra while making money for our school.

### Greens

Our oldest fund-raiser is the annual selling of Holiday Greens (wreaths, garlands, and other fresh decorations). OVCNS is well known for the Christmas Greens we sell every year. These Greens are beautiful, fresh, and very popular. We make it very easy for you to make your sales by providing you with a list of people who purchased Greens the prior year. At this time we ask our families to sell at least \$200 of Greens.

### Spring Fundraiser

Each year, generally in the spring, we hold a fundraising event, which is either an adults-only combination dinner and silent/live auction, or a Family Fun Day community festival, with games, entertainments, crafts, and auction. The auction committee works hard each year to come up with a wonderful array of donated items that are auctioned off to raise money for the school. Proceeds from this event are used to fund capital improvements and other items, which fall outside the normal operating budget.

## Non-Participation Fees – Buy-outs

The preschool relies on parent participation to complete various school tasks. Parents who are occasionally unable to fulfill these obligations, but are still committed to being a part of our parent cooperative preschool may opt to pay additional fees (or “buy-out”) of certain requirements. These additional fees are not fines; they are the Preschool's attempt to give parents flexibility in their participation in our cooperative preschool, while not compromising the quality of our programs. The Preschool asks that these additional fees be paid in advance of the required service the parents do not perform. With the permission of the Board of Directors, the following buy-outs are available:

- Workday buy-outs may be given only with the approval of the Director. Generally, only a small number of workday buyouts are granted, as parent participation in the classroom is an essential part of our cooperative philosophy. However, we do recognize that certain situations can make a parent unable to fulfill the workday obligation for a certain semester. The Director can only grant these workday buyouts when the needs of the classroom are being met, and a replacement can be hired. Workday buyout fees are set annually by the Board, based on the cost of hiring a substitute for the day.
- All School Clean-up. Families who are not able to work during the two annual All School Clean-up Days are permitted to do an after-party job within 30 days. Families may also chose to buy-out of their work party commitment for a \$75 fee per Clean-up Day. These costs go towards “hiring out” the work, or paying teachers overtime to clean.

- Scrip. If a family does not want to participate in the Scrip Fundraising program, they can pay a \$50 Scrip buy-out fee at the beginning of the year. This equals the cost the school would make in Scrip revenue per family.
- Greens. A family may buy-out of Greens participation for \$100; toddler family buy-out is \$75.
- Spring Fundraiser. A family may buy-out of the Spring Fundraiser for \$150 for those families whose children attend 3 and 5 days, \$100 for 2 day preschool families, and \$75 for toddler families.

### **Missed/Late Workday**

Parents who do not arrange for a substitute when they cannot work on their scheduled workday will be reminded the first and second times, and will be asked to leave the school on the third missed work day. (In the event of an emergency, the Director has the power to waive these conditions.) Parents arriving after 8:50 for their workday will be reminded to be on time.

## **Teacher-Parent Communication**

Good communication between staff and home is key. There are several ways for parents to communicate with us, and many ways that the Teachers, Director and Board Members communicate with families.

### **Communication from School to Home**

As a parent-member it is up to you to make sure you are up-to-date on current OVCNS information. Board members and Teachers make many efforts to dispense information to families. Please follow these simple steps to keep your self informed of important OVCNS information:

- ❖ Read the notices on the easel that the Teachers post outside the gate
- ❖ Check your mail file everyday
- ❖ Attend Parent Meetings
- ❖ Check the Bulletin Boards
- ❖ Read the OVCNS Newsletter when you receive it
- ❖ Check OVCNS's annual school calendar periodically

### **Communication from Home to School**

Teachers should be informed about changes in home life, i.e. parents going out of town, illness or death of a relative or pet, new sibling, etc. Such situations may cause changes in a child's behavior. An informed teacher can be more sensitive to the child's needs. The easiest way to communicate with the teachers is verbally after school, but use this method only for brief exchanges. Longer conversations should be scheduled with the teacher or saved until Parent-Teacher Conferences.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences in Preschool**

Preschool parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice during the school year, once in the fall and once in the spring. School is cancelled during conferences.

The teacher will provide written information about your child regarding developmental stages and observed behaviors. The conferences also provide an excellent opportunity for discussion of parental concerns regarding the child's development. You are encouraged to talk, confidentially if necessary, about anything that might be occurring at home, in the family, or in the neighborhood that might be affecting your child. The more the Director and Teachers know about her or his life, the better their understanding will be, and the deeper their relationship will become. It is our goal to help each child receive the most developmentally and emotionally supportive school experience we can give.

### **Handling Classroom Concerns**

QUESTIONS, DISAGREEMENTS, AND OTHER CONCERNS CAN ARISE WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ATTENDING SCHOOL. OVCNS is very happy to work with parents in addressing any concerns, as we see the family as the child's first and most important influence and teacher.

The first step in resolving classroom concerns is always a parent- teacher discussion. This step is essential. Teachers are very helpful when they are involved in the process of resolving concerns. We recommend the following steps:

1. Schedule non-classroom time for a private discussion with the teacher (can be by phone).
2. State the problem, issue, or concern.
3. Listen to the teacher's observations and perspectives regarding your concerns.
4. The Director, Parent, or Teacher may enlist the help of the Board and/or a qualified advisor to assist with the situation.

## **Disaster Preparedness**

During the fall, our classrooms will participate in a disaster preparedness drill. There are many kinds of disasters; we must be able to respond appropriately based on the conditions created by the disaster. Some conditions require a shelter-in approach (i.e. ones that are disruptive/threatening people present, chemical or radiation disasters). Other disasters require evacuation (i.e., earthquakes, fires). Following are brief overviews of the two different possible responses to disasters:

### **SHELTER-IN PROCEDURES:**

All children will be brought into the classroom. Attendance will be taken using the sign-in/sign-out sheets. All openings to the outside will be sealed as much as possible (i.e., windows closed, blinds drawn, towels put at base of door, etc.).

### **EVACUATION PROCEDURES:**

In the event of a major disaster, the goal of OVCNS is to reunite you and your child (children) in the safest and most timely fashion. In order to accomplish this, we have developed a plan of action to use during school hours:

1. Remove all students from the classrooms to the field behind the parking lot (attendance will be taken).
2. Provide first aid. All teachers are trained in first aid and CPR. We will sit on the tarp and review what just happened and reassure the children that they are safe and tell them the plan.
3. Keep track of students by:
  - a. Releasing students only to person(s) listed on the emergency release form in your child's file.
  - b. Maintaining a record of students released and to whom released.
  - c. Taking attendance using the sign in sheet, accounting for all of the children at school that day.

When in the case of evacuation a teacher will take the backpack with the immediate needed first aid supplies, car keys, cell phone, class roster, with consent for treatment cards and emergency cards in it. The teacher director is trained in first aid and CPR. A tarp will be kept with the emergency kits. In the case of a medical emergency 911 will be called as well as the child's parents or caregiver (we will use the numbers of the persons you provided on your child's emergency list).

**GENERAL DISASTER GUIDELINES:**

Know that we have enough supplies to care for the children for 72 hours. The staff will remain here until all children are picked up.

We will only release children to people you have authorized through the information on file in the office. Please be sure this information is up to date.

OVCNS must know any specific medical conditions or allergies pertaining to your child. If she/he may need any medication, please be sure we have a supply here.

Discuss your family's plan in case of an earthquake or if disaster strikes while everyone is at various locations, i.e. where you should try to meet; an out-of-state contact that each family member knows to call for your condition or location (remember, local telephone contact may be impossible).

## Notes :

