

A Child Becomes...Preschool

**School Handbook
Fall 2011-Spring 2012**

*There was a child went forth one day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became.
And that object became part of him for the day
Or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*

Walt Whitman
"Autumn Rivulets"
In Leaves of Grass

A Child Becomes...Preschool
"Let us help each child go forth and become..."

Welcome to our school...

Colors

My skin is kind of brownish

Pinkish, yellowish, white

My eyes are grayish blue-ish green

But I'm told they look orange in the night

My hair is reddish blondish brown

But it's silver when it's wet

And all the colors I'm inside

Have not been invented yet.

Shel Silverstein

September 19, 2011

Dear Parents and Families,

At A Child Becomes...Preschool, one of our many goals is to know your child well. From the quiet types, like my first born son to the energy bunnies! The teachers at A Child Becomes are passionate about their work and carefully plan a preschooler's day. Each child comes in our school doors excited to meet or see friends and teachers and at the end of their class day, leaves having learned something new about themselves, others, their school, or the world around them. As early childhood professionals, we cannot tell you what a special gift it is to be your child's "first" teacher. There is such great satisfaction in working with young children as they learn to socialize with one another, feel safe in a loving and enriching environment, and be accepted for their unique individual differences. We care about your children deeply and we will prepare an environment that will enable children to learn and grow at their own rates and in their own ways.

Pam, Jan and I have planned our curriculum for the 2011-2012 school year for the Twos, Threes and Pre-K. We are excited to get started and we look forward to seeing your children. We plan to spend the first few weeks getting to know one another...some for the first time and for others just becoming re-acquainted again! We will begin school with self-concept themes: getting to know each other, making friends, and practice learning our way around the halls, kitchen, running room and a few basic classroom rules.

In conclusion, as director of A Child Becomes, it is with great pleasure that I introduce my wonderful and dedicated staff:

Caterpillar Class	Jan Newgent and Ruth Fitzharris
Butterfly Class	Pam Bigatel, Angela Sadis, Leanne Griswold, and Alexis Whistler
Sunbeam Class	Shelley Neal, Jan Newgent, Liz Murphy, Angela Sadis, and Kristi Houk
Office Staff	CB O'Francia, Brenna Bond, and Ann Limbaugh

Please take time to read through the parent handbook carefully. You may have questions or concerns about our program and we ask that you please feel comfortable talking to us about your child as well as what we do here at our school. It is our responsibility to be open and honest with you and always be looking for the best way to help your child's first school experience be a positive one! We will always put your child's own level of growth and development as a primary concern.

In addition, I would like to mention a few words about the first week of school. Please keep in mind that the first day of school can sometimes be difficult for children who have not attended a preschool before.

Please know that your child is safe in our hands. However we also encourage you to stay with your child the first week if he or she needs a little more time for the new transition. If your child is a bit hesitant on the first day please consider leaving siblings, if any, at home or with a friend so that you can give your child 100% of your love and attention as he or she learns to say "goodbye" for the first time.

Thank you again for choosing our school as the enriching environment for your child to begin their path of learning and discovery. We will help develop that vital pathway for optimal success later in life. Your child needs only to begin the footsteps as part of their lifelong journey of learning and growing.

All the best,
Teacher Shelley, MAT
Director of A Child Becomes...Preschool

Our Philosophy

As teachers of early childhood, we believe that all aspects of a child's personality should be touched or challenged from the cognitive and social to the emotional, physical, and spiritual. Each part of these aspects is inter-related and a relaxed and rich environment is most conducive to effective learning. We believe that all children are unique and we do our best to find the gifts that each child shares within themselves. We also believe that what truly makes a difference in a child's life...beneath all the methods, materials, and curriculum...is a teacher who cares about each child, who teaches from the heart.

Psychologists, researchers, and child development specialists continue to provide evidence of the influence in environmental factors on the development of young children. It has been reported that as much as half of an individual's intelligence is developed by the age of four and that the first four or five years are the most susceptible to environmental influences! Leaders in early childhood state that the earliest years of life are the most important and preschool teachers have a very influential role in being the first link to a long chain of instruction.

Success in a child's progress through school depends largely on the foundation laid in the early years. Our school has a responsibility to provide, for your child, an environment that will stimulate and enrich them as well as provide a curriculum that when built around "weekly" themes will help lay a foundation for future academics.

At our Preschool, it is important that we know your child's level of "cognitive" and social-emotional development and have age appropriate activities to meet those developmental milestones. Preschool children love to learn by "doing". They are active learners who gain knowledge by acting directly on and with concrete objects. Through these actions they can draw conclusions about their world. Within our daily classroom routine, we have many hands on activities and projects designed to be stimulating and fun for your child.

It is exciting that preschoolers are such tireless experimenters and investigators. We will nurture their early literacy, math, and science capabilities and help each child to reach, as Vygotsky puts it, "their own zone of proximal development" in all areas of growth.

It is our goal that your child's creativity and self-esteem be nurtured. It is our goal that he or she may learn new ideas and concepts. It is our goal that your child will find that learning, in itself, is an exciting and enriching adventure...one of growing and becoming...

We pledge to help each student be ready to learn and grow in the 21st century kindergarten.

A Child Becomes...Preschool

Calendar of school days off Fall 2011 through Spring 2012

A Child Becomes follows the Seattle Public School Break Schedule.

- Our Preschool begins: September 12th and 13th
- All class days end on June 8th or 9th
- Pre-K only graduation is June 11th at 7 pm

NO SCHOOL on the following dates:

- Friday November 11th-Veteran's Day
- Mon-Fri. November 20th-24th-Conference Week
- Monday December 19th-Monday January 2nd School resumes the 3rd
- Monday January 16th-Martin Luther King Jr. B-Day
- Monday February 20th-Fri Feb 24th-Mid Winter Break
- Monday April 16th-Friday April 20th-Spring break
- Monday May 28th-Memorial Day
- June 9th-Last day of school

Arrival and Pick Up

School Hours: Mon-Fri, 8:45 AM to 3:30 PM

We ask that you arrive when class time begins and pick up on time. Doors will open at 8:45 AM. If you are early (before 8:45 or 3:30), you will need to wait in the hallway for the classroom doors to open.

Please have your child bring his or her bag to school each day. Please encourage toys from home to stay in the canvas school bag for a “nap” during school hours or leave them at home. An exception is on your child’s specified “show and tell” day when they may bring one or two items. We do ask the “snack day child” to keep their “show and tell” as a surprise in their bag until proper time to show.

When driving your child to school, please always walk your child to the classroom or you may hand off your child to a teacher. Please do not let your child enter by him or herself without an adult.

We have a form for “pick up” if it is someone other than you; mother, father, or a regular carpool person. These forms are found on the bulletin board.

Please be on time for your child at pick up. The time period after others have been picked up may seem like ages for children left behind. Also, many of our staff have children of their own for which they need to be respectively on time for pick up after our school ends. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

The BUTTERFLY Class and Schedule

Classroom doors open at 8:45

Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday AM 8:45-11:45

Monday-Wednesday 8:45-11:45

Each day please have your child bring his or her canvas bag and “show and tell” if it is their selected day. Have your child put their bag on a hook before they come into the classroom. Please arrive when class begins. If your child has snack day please put the snack on the table in the large hall located at the east end of the building. Thank you for fulfilling your snack day obligation.

8:45-9:00/11:45-12:00 Welcome and circle

9:00-9:45/12:00-12:45 Learning centers-Child Centered

9:45-10:00/12:45-1:00 Carpet-Teacher Directed Learning-Read Aloud

10:00-10:15/1:00-1:15 Transition time (clean up, bathroom, etc.)

10:15-10:30/1:15-1:30 Snack

10:30-11:00/1:30-2:00 Recess/Large Motor

11:00-11:45/2:00-3:00 Story Centers, Music, story, Journal and Departure

Teachers will stay with your child until all parents arrive for pick up. Please try to be on time for your child. Five minutes can seem like an hour for a young child, sometimes.

**Pick-up time: 11:45 for AM Class
 3:15 pm for PM Class**

The SUNBEAM Class and Schedule

AM Class 9:00-9:30	PM Class 12:30-12:45
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Arrival: Each child finds name and places it on the chart in class. Job chart is reviewed and jobs are completed with the help of the teachers. The children then can spend the rest of the first ½ hour in arrival activities/free choice.

AM Class 9:30-10:00	PM Class 12:45-1:15
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We will gather around circle time area and have our first “Circle Time” where we will do job chart and have the letter of the week or theme introduced.

AM Class 10:00-10:30	PM Class 1:15-1:45
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Work time: Put craft items on large letter to take home when the entire ABC book is put together at the end of the year, Library Center, Literacy Center, and Creation Station are open. This can also be an early mathematics learning time.

AM Class 10:30-10:45	PM Class 1:45-2:00
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Clean Up and Gather for Show and Tell.

AM Class 10:45-11:00	PM Class 2:00-2:15
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Hands and “Snack Time” in kitchen

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AM Class 11:00-11:30	PM Class 2:20-2:40
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“Recess” – Outdoors on nice days

AM Class 11:30-11:45	PM Class 2:40-3:00
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“Circle time” with a science-social studies theme. Review of the day. Journals, Shared reading time.

**Pick-up time: 12:00 for AM Class
 3:30 pm for PM Class**

A Day In the SUNBEAM Class Room

I would like to describe what happens in our Sunbeam classroom and where and when we apply pre-academics and when we actually use the “meaningful play practices” that teaches children to regulate their behavior from the Vygotskian philosophy. I will describe when I incorporate direct explicit instruction for early literacy, early writing, as well as math and science.

Our day begins with explicit teacher directed Carpet Time whereby the students partake in group learning using the calendar, weather graph, and theme or concept for the day for the development of pre-literacy and math skills.

- The students practice counting numerals as well as learn the pattern for the month which might be: ABAB or ABBABBA.
- Children learn the days of the week, count the number of syllables for the name of the month and days, and begin to understand the concept of seasons and time which is very difficult for most to grasp as it is a complex understanding.
- For the weather, we are graphing the choices of weather for the given day, measuring and counting and comparing 8 different weather patterns and in the spring we will learn to identify 3 main types of clouds. At this time of the year we see less and less cirrus clouds and more and more cumulus!
- We then discuss our theme and listen to a “read aloud” and relate the story to what we will be learning.

Using Vygotsky’s terminology, I teach self regulation at carpet time by having students sit criss cross, hands in their laps, eyes on me, and wait to raise hands before speaking. I have always done this however new terms help to make clear specific reasons why children should or can be taught to control spontaneous and unregulated behavior during group time.

After carpet time we move to **Center Time for 45 minutes**. We use the **Tools of the Mind Philosophy** specifically to teach children to be Masters of their behavior. Rather than randomly choosing centers and bouncing from one to the other children are taught to stop and think about how they would like to play. They develop their own play plan before they enter a center and their plan is taken quite seriously with consideration of including others and scaffolding learning within the centers. The teachers are very involved. They do not stand by and just observe. They help children develop their Zone of Proximity and use mediators to do so. This play time is **45 minutes**.

I want to share 3 examples of this type of learning.

- This afternoon in writing Kalei said I want a 5 page story about rocket ships, people, etc. I said lets get started and he did the drawing s and I helped with the writing.
- Around the corner, Ava was busy attending to her baby in the art room. When asked why the baby was away from the dramatic play area she said being a mom was a busy job looking out after a baby. She needed to keep it with her. Wouldn't we all agree? Naturally, Ava was in the role of parenting and we encouraged her to do the things she needed to do to be a mom.
- Ginger today surprised us with her complex understandings of patterns whereby we scaffolded her abilities and provided more difficult patterns to challenge her current abilities.

At the blocks children are constructing buildings that have a plan, at the easel children are learning to make representative paintings and mixing colors, and at the table top toys children are learning to play and work with manipulatives. It is at center time that we take “play” to a whole different level. It is intentional play and the learning, again, is taken very seriously. We are very proud of what our students can accomplish and their self regulation skills are above the norm!

Simply said, mature intentional make believe play is the foundation of self regulation development in preschool. It creates conditions in which young children are able to act in a more mature way and use more mature mental functions. Children remember more, attend better, and have better self regulation.

This kind of play is the only classroom experience that naturally provides three types of interactions, which lead to self regulation: regulation by others, regulation of others, and self regulation.

After center/play time we go back to the carpet for explicit direct teaching.

First beginning with show and tell and then instructions for the work we will have after snack at the “work table”. At this time, the work is theme or project related however in October we will begin the Handwriting without tears curriculum and learn to make all of our upper case letters using the Seattle Public School manuscript for conventional letters. We then go to the carpet for independent reading; the students choose a book and practice being readers. It is a quiet time and books are respected and shared with others if it can be done respectfully and quietly while others are still at the tables working. We then move to the outdoors for recess.

At Recess we look for children who may need help playing/socializing as well as monitor the freeway. We encourage those who prefer a quieter recess to use the sandbox or swing. We watch for children who may be physically delayed in areas of walking jumping running etc.

At the end of the day, we come in to carpet for one last teacher directed shared reading time. Incorporated into our program are specialty people who will come at the end of class to teach art, music, and Spanish. This will be after recess for the AM class and before the first carpet time for the PM class.

I hope this information helps. I have never felt more confident in my work. I have been teaching for over 23 years and in many ways have never changed my style or passion for what I do.

I am grateful for the Tools of the Mind philosophy **during Center Time** because it allows intentional play to be the major factor of self regulation. So many children today do not engage in this type of play and are rather entertained by either adults or have movies and TV or computer as entertainment. Living in the city can often prevent children from having long stretches of time where they go in the back yard and play with neighborhood of different ages who act as mentors. Unlike many years ago children often come to preschool not knowing how to play in a way that promotes self regulation.

In conclusion, if the question is, “Is academics the emphasis?” A mix. Your child will become readers and writers in the way that is appropriate for their development. They will learn to control or regulate their behavior. They will simply “shock the socks off their kindergarten teachers” as we often say at preschool and be ready to learn.

My door is always open. Please comment if needed. As always, I look forward to any feedback or opinions. (Please refer to Tools of the Mind website for further reading if you are interested.)

School Procedures

Newsletter

We have a School Newsletter Page that is distributed monthly in your child's bag an/or emailed to parents. This is a letter that reminds you about the events during the month as well as new educational info from teacher resources. There may be a parent information page from *Young Child* to update you on early childhood news.

Scholastic News Books

Order forms will be handed out separately to "order" books for your child. We highly encourage this monthly program. Books are ordered and returned within 2 weeks to your child at school.

Please order online.

Field Trips

Permission slips for each trip will be handed out as we approach each trip. Please look for these in your child's bag and return them promptly to your child's teacher.

Guidance Procedures

We have simple and clear rules that we teach our children. At the beginning of the year, Pre-K write their own rules as an interactive writing. In order to provide a safe and lasting environment, where everyone can learn and feel comfortable, we ask that at home you also reinforce our rules and talk about them with your child.

1. Respect each other. We are all special and we all have gifts and no-one is alike. Everyone deserves to be treated as a loving and capable person.
2. Feelings are extremely important. Use words to tell your feelings.
3. "Warm Fuzzy" words are kind words that help others feel good. Use them often.
4. "Cold Prickly" words are "cold" words that make others feel bad. Cold Prickly words are not allowed in school.
5. We will remind children if there is a problem behavior that needs to be addressed. We will help that child learn ways to work through a problem through teaching how to communicate using eye contact and helpful words. At recess we may, at times when we feel necessary, use a "take a break" from activity if it is a safety concern.

Snack Time

We have snack everyday and a schedule is given to families each month with a list of the snack people for each class day. On your child's snack day please send in one or two items that he or she would like to share at Show and Tell. No weapons. We encourage items that are from nature or handmade from home. Your child's Show and Tell can be brought in their canvas bag. Please place the snack on the kitchen snack room counter. Snacks should be healthy and enough for everyone in the class. You may refer to class list. Cupcakes on birthdays are fine. Please include a fruit that is washed and sliced.

Favorite Snacks

- Crackers such as cheese flavored, Ritz or goldfish, healthy corn chips
- Pirate Bootie
- Cheese slices or string cheese
- Apple slices
- Grapes
- Orange slices
- Strawberries
- Dry cereal
- Cereal bars (in the past most kids do not like the Nutra Grain bars)
- Pretzels
- Popcorn (with salt and a little butter helps the consumption)
- Rice Cakes
- Bagels and cream cheese
- Muffins-no raisins
- Small pizza slices
- Small carrots with Ranch type dressing
- Finger Jell-O
- Healthy cookies
- Popsicles/low sugar types

Child Info Notebook

This is kept at all times in the red mailbox for parents and care givers to write down any problems that may have come about in your child's day prior to class, that could have an effect on his or her day at school. Or write current family news you want to share with us. It may also be used to write down a time for us to call you if you need to talk with a teacher, specifically.

Before and after class time is often not a good time to talk about personal matters. However, we do care deeply about your child's experience here at Pre-School, so therefore ask that you write down any matters of concern and if necessary, a good time to call you back.

All notebook remarks are read as soon as possible (once class begins) and kept confidential.

Parent Authorization Forms

For anyone other than the parent picking up the preschool child, it is required that you sign a consent form naming the person who picks up and their relationship to the child. The blank forms are located on the information board in the hall above the coat hooks. Please take one, fill in the appropriate information, sign, and leave it with your child's teacher.

Preschool Dress/Attire/Potty accidents

We ask that you send your child to school in play clothes for each class day unless it is picture day. Children are exposed to many crafts, paints, play dough, etc. and we want each child to feel comfortable and safe to try new things.

For Three to Five Years of Age

Because we know that all children are unique and usually potty train themselves when they are mentally or physically "ready" (of which may be after three years of age such as all three of my sons), we allow children to wear pull ups and we will help them with the toilet such as wiping, fastening pants, etc. However, we do not have the proper facility for changing diapers especially ones that have a messy bowel movement. We do not have a changing table or daily-sanitized mats for changing. Therefore, we will call the parents and ask for help in making their child more comfortable (change their diapers). If potty training has been an issue, parents leaving their children will need to provide us with a phone number of their whereabouts during school session.

For the Two Years of Age

For those children who are two years of age, we have a station set up for changing diapers with plastic gloves, wipes and pull-ups available. Your child will not be left with a messy diaper.

Student Withdrawal

Sometimes circumstances arise where we feel our school is not the right environment for a child. We will, however, do all that we can to make positive and rewarding experience for all children. If a child is continually not happy or causing hardships for others, we will take time to analyze the situation and try, as professionals, to make things work out. If we are not successful, we will help you make alternative arrangements. We will give you a two-week notice and help to find a new school that is better fit for his or her particular needs.

If you decide to leave our school due to reasons such as work, a move, etc., there is a “one month following notice policy” whereby you are responsible for tuition for the month following your notice of withdrawal.

Fire Escape and Earthquake Emergency Plan

Our school is inspected yearly by the Seattle Fire department. Our escape plan is shown to the children and we will practice throughout the year making a line and listening to the teacher for direction. Our departure-escape plan is on the wall in the school hall.

We review lining up and exits for an emergency, with your children, if we need to leave the school for any reason.

Earthquake kit is kept in a Rubbermaid box consisting of myler blankets for 18 (as we have only one class at a time), water bottles, a snack, and storybook. Also included is a class list for all classes. Teachers have cell phones to phone home.

Emergency Procedures and Illnesses

Minor accidents are handled using first aid procedures and are always reported to parents. Also, if a child becomes ill at school, or has not been picked up as scheduled, parents will be called.

Please make sure that you have left us with a number where you can be reached or an emergency contact. We will provide forms to fill in necessary emergency information with the handbook.

We must know if your child has any allergies to foods before the first class day so we can notify parents about types of foods to avoid on snack day.

Please keep your child home if:

- Fever within last 48 hours.
- Severe or phlegm producing cough.
- Thick colored nasal discharge – green noses.
- Within 48 hours of beginning antibiotic treatment.
- While chicken pox sores are still infected.
- For first 48 hours of continued cold symptoms.
- Vomiting or diarrhea is present.

Snow Days

Please look for an email after 8 AM on the day of questionable weather regarding whether school will be closed or not. Closed days will not be made up at the end of the year.

Non-Discrimination Policy

A Child Becomes...Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Staff Education and Background

All staff backgrounds are available on achildbecomes.org website