



Stamford **Museum**
& **Nature** Center

Art, Nature & Me Parent Policy Handbook

Our Mission

Art, Nature & Me at the Stamford Museum & Nature Center inspires creativity, promotes self-discovery, and nurtures an appreciation for lifelong learning. Our staff supports a child's sense of wonder and natural curiosity by providing hands-on experiences in our classrooms, as well as outdoors in the natural world.

Our Philosophy

- *We believe all children are unique and capable learners.*
- *We believe that parents are the primary educators.*
- *We believe that home/school communication is of utmost importance.*
- *We believe in the importance of instilling a lifelong passion for being stewards of the earth.*
- *We believe that learning can take place both indoors and outdoors.*
- *We believe in the importance of having children explore outdoors.*
- *We believe in keeping current with knowledge in the field of early childhood education.*
- *We provide learning opportunities for children to learn in their own learning style.*

*In 1956 Rachel Carson who is known as “the patron of the environmental movement” wrote in her book, The Sense of Wonder, “If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil. Once the emotions have been aroused—a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admirations or love—then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning. **It is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts he is not ready to assimilate.**”*

Let us together pave the way for children to want to know.....

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Arrival: Please arrive on time, not too early or too late. This is our time to greet each other and put away any outer garments, backpacks, etc. from home. This is one of the first opportunities for preschoolers to assert their independence so we ask that the children learn to take care of their belongings. Sign your child in and out on the classroom clipboard.

Bathrooms: We take the children to the bathroom anytime they need to go in addition to the scheduled group time. Children are NEVER allowed to go to the bathroom unaccompanied. Also, we will periodically ask the children if they need to use the bathroom.

Birthdays: Your child's teacher will let you know how birthdays will be celebrated in their class. We will be doing something special on your child's important day. Because of food allergies we will not be celebrating with a special snack.

Calendar: Art, Nature & Me follows the Stamford Public School's 2018/2019 school calendar except we have some days off when the public schools are in session. We start and end on different days than the Stamford Public Schools. Please review the Preschool Calendar.

Class lists: If you do not want your phone number published, please notify us in writing by September 1, 2018.

Clothing: Please bring a complete extra set of clothing to be left at school. Please have your child wear sneakers or hiking shoes / boots (rain or snow boots). **No sandals, clogs, party shoes, or crocs.** We will go outside every day unless it is very wet or very cold. No umbrellas or scarves please. **During the colder months please:**

- Make sure your child has mittens (no gloves, please) unless your child can put gloves on themselves.
- Hat
- Snow boots
- Snow pants
- Please send boots and pants in a bag with your child's name on bag.
- Due to the choking danger of scarves we ask you not to send scarves in.

Conferences/Communication: We believe that communication about your children is of utmost importance. We ask that you do not discuss concerns at drop off or dismissal as we need to focus on all the children in the class. We always welcome a time outside of class time to discuss anything you need to discuss. In the fall your child's teacher will contact you by phone to discuss your child's adjustment to school. In March/April there is a parent/teacher conference. We hope you will always feel comfortable contacting us with any questions. Our assessment of your child starts the first month of school. We use the Preschool

Assessment Framework developed by the State of CT's Office of Early Childhood. We use the information we gather to develop our curriculum to address each child's strengths and challenges.

Contacting Staff Your child's teacher will give you an email address to contact them. Any emails will be answered within 24 hours during the school week. In the event you need an immediate answer you may contact preschool@stamfordmuseum.org or call 203 977-6528 or 203 977-6531 during the school week.

Curriculum: We want children to have confidence in their ability to try new experiences which is the foundation for a lifelong love of learning. Children learn through play as they explore, create, socialize, and investigate their environment both indoors and outdoors.

- Our curriculum is based on knowledge from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, particularly what their research and position is on "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" in early childhood education.
- Our classroom environment is divided into interest areas and the curriculum themes are brought into the interest areas.
- We use the State of CT's Early Learning and Development Standards and Preschool Assessment Framework to plan curriculum. Following are the four "domains" of early childhood learning that guide us in the development of our curriculum.
 1. Personal & Social Domain- Children learn to be part of a social group by learning to listen: using language to express emotions or feelings; showing empathy and caring for others; interacting cooperatively with peers; working to resolve conflicts; learning self-direction with a range of materials; developing attention spans; participating in teacher-led activities; managing transitions; and following rules and routines.
 2. Physical Domain- Children learn to coordinate large and small muscle movements and care for themselves independently.
 3. Cognitive Domain- Children learn to engage in scientific inquiry; use a variety of strategies to solve a problem; sort objects; recognize and make patterns; compare and order objects and events; relate number to quantity; demonstrate spatial awareness; use complex sentences and vocabulary to describe ideas and experiences; understand and participate in conversations; show understanding of stories; display knowledge of books and print; recognize similar sounds in speech; identify printed words; and build and construct to represent own ideas.
 4. Creative Expression Domain- Children learn to draw and paint to represent own ideas; represent experience and fantasy in pretend play; and sing and respond to music.

Discipline: A “Discipline Policy for the General Safety and Prevention of Child Abuse” is posted in the entrance lobby of the Preschool Building. A copy is available for any parent at the parent’s request.

Following are guidelines we use to help children develop inner controls:

We understand that children have to be guided in a positive way in order for them to learn appropriate behaviors. We can accomplish this by the following:

- Praising children for appropriate actions.
- Using positive language. “Please sit on the chair” as opposed to “Don’t stand on the chair.”
- Establishing expectations clearly so children understand the rules to help their classroom function well.
- Reminding children of these expectations rather than telling them “Don’t do
- Helping the children understand that they are responsible for their behavior. “I see **you are making a choice** not to play in the sand area because you are throwing sand at your friends.”
- Giving children tools to use when they are frustrated. “I can see you want.....Can you use your words to tell _____ that you want a turn?”
- Using group management strategies such as limiting the amount of children to an appropriate number for a play center area.
- Balancing the day with active and passive activities.
- Having a variety of materials out on a daily basis.
- Changing materials available to children so that children stay interested.
- Keeping the staff/student ratio to state guidelines.
- Redirecting children to another area when they are not playing appropriately in a given area.
 - ❖ Teachers and assistants will remind child of expected behavior.
 - ❖ Let child know why you are reminding child of expected behavior.
 - ❖ Give child consequence if behavior continues.
 - ❖ Redirect child if above does not happen.
- Letting children understand that we all have rules, even adults “What would happen if _____ didn’t stop at a traffic light?”
- Being consistent in expectations on a daily basis. What shouldn’t happen one day should not happen ever.
- Never bribe a child to comply.
- Never make a child think they are a “bad” child. We can let them know that we don’t like a certain behavior but we still like them.
- Never isolating a child unless that child is a physical threat to another child or a staff member. Example: Biting or throwing a hard object.
- **The only time a child is moved away from the group is to help the child understand that they need to gather themselves before they go back to what they were doing. A teacher stays with the child during this time.**
- Our goal is that each child learns to accept and deal with their behavior and the behavior of their peers so that they form a positive interacting social group.

- Seeking professional help with problem behavior if the above does not work.

Staff does not:

- Threaten- physically or verbally
- Humiliate
- Use physical force unless to protect another child
- Hit
- Use harsh language
- Withhold food, water, or shelter as a punishment

Dismissal time:

- Dismissal time can be very hectic and teachers must remain focused **on the children**. It is very difficult to have a conversation at this time. Please email your child's teacher to call you later if you need to discuss anything.
- Please make sure to sign your child out with their teacher.
- If someone other than you is picking up your child, please bring a note or fill out one of our permission slips available at school. You may write a blanket form for the entire year. We will not release a child without prior written authorization.
- Please be on time. Children look for whoever is picking them up as soon as the first child is picked up. If you are going to be late please call 203 977-6528 and let us know. If you are late often we will assess a late fee.

Enrollment: A child entering the three year old program must be three by October 1st of the September they enter. Likewise, a child entering the four year old program must be four by October 1st of the September they enter.

ENROLLMENT POLICY Three's Preschool

Siblings of families who have attended are given first refusal. Sibling deposit is due by October 1 of the year before their child is eligible to attend preschool.

A list of interest is started on September 1, one year before a child is eligible to attend.

Information sessions are held for families on the list of interest.

After all siblings have enrolled, placement in the threes program is based on the order of the List of Interest. It does not matter when you attend an information session as long as it is by December 1. Otherwise you forfeit your place on the list of interest. Extenuating situations are taken into consideration as long as you have spoken to Co-Directors of Early Childhood Education. You may call again at a later date and see what places are still available.

One must attend an information session to be offered an enrollment place. You have one week to return the enrollment form and deposit otherwise you lose the place you have been offered and your place on the List of Interest.

Anyone who wants to be on the wait list for another class can be. You are offered a place that may open up in the order of where you are on the List of Interest.

ENROLLMENT POLICY Four's Preschool

Siblings are given placement priority.

Children who are currently enrolled in the four's program who are choosing to repeat the fours are given priority.

Enrolled threes are given priority. The order is determined by when you enrolled in the threes. In case the enrollment dates are the same, place on the List of Interest is given priority.

Field Trips: We are a field trip! The classes participate in all the seasonal activities at the Stamford Museum & Nature Center.

Fire/Lockdown Drills: Each class practices evacuation or lockdown of the building monthly.

Forms: There are mandatory forms that we need to have on file. Please let us know in writing of any changes to these forms. These forms must be on file by September 1, 2018. They are as follows:

- Enrollment Form
- Child Contact Information Form
- Physician exam/record
- Release of Liability for Child's Participation in Program
- Children's Photograph Release
- Family & Child Information Form
- Sign off page on reading the Art, Nature & Me Preschool Parent Policy Handbook (Due September 1, 2018)

Goody Bags: Please do not bring goody bags to school. We ask that you leave these goody bags for times when children get together outside of school.

Holidays: Emphasis on certain holidays is not a part of our curriculum. We instead learn about the seasonal and natural connections and if appropriate we talk about that in relation to a holiday.

We listen and let the children talk about how they celebrate each holiday and make each child feels the way they celebrate is unique and important.

Home/School Communication. We frequently send weekly curriculum sheets to let you know what we've been doing and/or what will be taking place. This is done through email and postings on the class bulletin boards. Teachers are available through email for any questions you may have.

Inclement Weather: We will be closed on the days the Stamford Public Schools are closed due to the weather. If the Stamford schools have a delay will start the morning threes at 10:30 am and the morning fours at 10:45 am. Pick up time remains the same. If the Stamford Public Schools have an early release due to inclement weather, there will be no PM classes. Please note: **we do not make up inclement weather days.**

Insect Repellent: We ask that you apply insect repellent to your child before they come to school for the health and safety of your child. Staff will not be applying insect repellent to the children. Please do a tick check daily.

Medications: The staff of Art, Nature & Me does not administer any medications unless your child has a life threatening allergy. In the case of a life threatening allergy, please request the proper forms from the Head of Early Childhood. These forms and medication(s) must be on file with all information provided by a medical Doctor and parent and must be signed correctly.

Membership: You must be a member of the Stamford Museum & Nature Center at the family level to attend the preschool.

Parent Representatives: We have parent representative(s) from each class. These parents organize and carry out other events both in the preschool and for the Stamford Museum & Nature Center. At the beginning of the school year we will have a meeting for those interested in helping with this. Everyone will receive an email about the time and date for this meeting.

Parental Participation: Parents are welcome to come in and observe at any time. If you are interested in helping in your child's classroom, please speak with your child's teacher. Helping with planned teacher activities provides opportunities to assist.

We honor and respect the traditions of all families. We welcome families to share their customs, stories, and traditions with us. We ask that you respect each other's beliefs and do not share religious beliefs when you do this. When you chose to visit or help in your child's class we ask that you make other arrangements for siblings.

Parking: The nature center has limited parking in the upper lots. Please park in the lower parking lots. We have drop off and pick up procedures for families with younger siblings, pregnant moms, anyone with a disability, or if you have a situation (like being ill yourself or having an older child in the car ill). Multiple children in their three year old year may use the line.

- There must be access on your right for another **vehicle to pass.**
- Get your child in and out on the **driver's side.**

- Please have any requests for your child's teacher in writing.
- Be observant of speed and stop signs.
- We cannot allow parking in driveways or any undesignated parking area.
- We respectfully ask your assistance with the above. It is for the safety of all.
- Wait until five minutes before your scheduled class time to come to drop/off/pick line

Party Invitations, thank you notes, and any personal correspondence:

Please mail all invitations for activities not connected to school functions. Children love to get mail at their homes!

Siblings: They are our future students! We do however have to have a policy that for safety reasons we cannot allow siblings to play in the classroom or outdoor play area at arrival and dismissal. We also ask you to make arrangements for siblings if you are participating in an activity in your child's classroom.

Sick Policy: The following are guidelines to determine whether your child should stay home from school. Please keep your child home if:

- They have a fever.
- They vomited during the night or in the morning before school.
- They had diarrhea during the night or in the morning before school.
- They complain of aches and pains out of the ordinary.
- If they have a cold and the mucus is colored (not clear or milky looking)*
- They are coughing on a continual basis.*
- Your child must be fever free for 24 hours before they can come back to school.

* If these two occur and your child has been on antibiotics for 24 hrs. and is fever free, they may come to school.

Please understand that this is for the health of our class as a whole.

Snack: Due to food allergies, we ask that you provide a simple snack for your child each day. Please send in **one** healthy food item and a juice box or water for your child in a bag with your child's name on it. **No candy.** Please do not send any foods that pose choking hazards such as popcorn and "unsliced" grapes.

WE ARE NUT AWARE. Please do not send any food in containing any kind of nut, nut product, or peanut butter. This includes peanuts, walnuts, cashews, almonds and all other tree nuts. Please read all food product labels carefully. Many foods are labeled "**may contain**" or "**traces of**" nuts sent in for snack. We ask that you **do not** send in items labeled as such.

Sunscreen: We ask that you apply sunscreen to your child before they come to school for the health and safety of your child. Staff will not be applying sunscreen to the children.

Tax I.D. - As needed for flexible childcare spending and federal forms the Stamford Museum & Nature Center's tax I.D. is 06-0653148

Toys: We request that you do not have your child bring toys to share with their class unless your child's teacher requests that your child bring something in. Toys from home get lost, broken and are difficult to share. We understand that some children need to have something personal to help with separation and these items will be kept in the child's cubby during school.

Tuition Payments. Tuition is paid on a monthly basis. In the event your bill is not paid within thirty days of the due date, SM&NC may require the withdrawal of your child until the payment is received. Extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed with the Director of Finance. Please call us if you need to talk about this.

Withdrawal: There is a provisional enrollment period. In the event we feel we cannot provide your child with the appropriate preschool experience and it is deemed detrimental to the health or progress of your child or other children, Art, Nature &Me may require that you provide evaluations from other outside professionals at your expense. At times it is necessary to have a shadow to help your child access our regular education preschool. You provide this at your expense. We rarely ask for the dismissal of your child from the program unless you have not complied with above. If this happens you will be responsible only for the days your child attended. The \$300.00 deposit is non-refundable. We make every effort, with professional help that is available, not to let this happen.

There is a 30 day cancellation policy if you chose to leave the program. You are responsible for tuition payment scheduled the month following the month when notice of cancellation is given. (For instance, if you give notice on December 11, 2018, you are responsible for the tuition payment on January 1, 2019.)

The \$300.00 deposit is non-refundable.

On a typical day in Art, Nature & Me your child will:

Be safe

Have fun

Some time will be spent both **indoors and outdoors:**

- In free choice play/child directed activities.
- Listening to stories
- Singing songs and finger plays
- Learning about seasonal and natural themes
- Participating in teacher directed group activities.

Thanks for being partners with us in your child's preschool experience



Stamford Museum & Nature Center

Dear Parents,

Attached you will find the Art, Nature & Me Parent Policy Handbook. Please read it carefully and then sign and return this page. The State of CT's Childcare License mandates that parents have read and understand all policies. There is a lot of information in the handbook. I have included a table of contents for quick reference when you have a question about policy and procedures. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call. Please keep the handbook in a place you can refer to during the year.

Thanks for taking the time to do this,

Ellen Reardon/Lisa Combs
Art, Nature & Me Preschool
Co-Directors
preschool@stamfordmuseum.org
203 977-6528/977-6531

I have read, understand and discussed the policies and procedures stated in the Art, Nature & Me Parent Policy Handbook.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____