

Tamalpais Preschool Parent Handbook

Information to ensure the safety of our children
and the smooth operation of the school.



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www.tamalpaispreschool.org

HELPFUL HINTS

FACILITATING YOUR CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT TO THE NEW AND EXCITING EXPERIENCE OF PRESCHOOL.

*** Plan enough time for your child to dress and have breakfast. Try to avoid a "last minute rush" by having lunches prepared, sweaters ready, car keys in place, etc.. It is best for your child to arrive at school feeling relaxed.

*** Dress your child appropriately for school. Growing and learning are a messy business, and dressy, restrictive clothes interfere with a child's freedom to explore new things.

*** Bring your child to school between 9:00 and 9:15 am. It may be difficult for a child (who is just learning social skills) to come into the program after everyone else is busy at work.

*** Our Early Morning Child Care from 8:30 to 9:00 am is often a quieter, more relaxed time for a reticent child to begin school. At this time, parents may stay for a short while and help their child get involved in activities before the "big day" begins.

*** Arrive on time to pick up your child from school. It may be upsetting for a child to be the last one at school when everyone else has gone home or when your expected time of arrival has passed. (A child may feel abandoned and afraid, and may refuse to come to school for awhile after such an experience.)

*** Please be considerate of everyone by keeping your child home when he or she is not feeling well. A child with a cold, cough, or intestinal upset does not have fun at school... and it is unfair to risk infecting other children.

HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Monthly **TAMAGRAMS** will tell you important dates, special events as well as curriculum themes and projects. The Tamagram is accompanied by a monthly Preschool CALENDAR of morning activities and a CHILD CARE CALENDAR of afternoon enrichment activities. A monthly WHALE WATCH and Pre-K Calendar will be given to our Pre-Kindergarten families and details special Pre-K projects and events.

TAM TALES inform parents of some of their child's activities during the school day, and are compiled from teacher observations.

WELCOME BREAKFASTS are arranged for each group during the month of October. Parents are invited to come to school between 8:30 and 9:00 am to meet children and families in their child's group.

A CLASS LIST with telephone numbers, e-mail information and addresses will be available in September for help with carpools, birthdays and playdates.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS are best addressed by telephoning the Director before or after the school session; (8:30-9:00 am or 1:15-2:00 pm) as there is not much "quiet" time to have any "adult" discussion during the busy morning.

CONFERENCES: Parents conferences with the group teacher occur in the Fall and Spring. Sign-up sheets will be available a few weeks before the scheduled conference weeks.

VISITS AND VOLUNTEERS: Parents are welcome to visit our school to see "what's happening at school". Please check with your child's group teacher to arrange a visit. Volunteers are greatly appreciated too! Sign up on the Volunteer Calendar located in the front hall of the Preschool and Pre-K classrooms.

PRESCHOOL INFORMATION

CURRICULUM

Our Thematic Approach includes a wide range of topics which appeal to children. Science, art, music and movement activities help the children experience “hands-on” learning and developmentally appropriate exploration of a theme. We welcome parent ideas and suggestions for our curriculum projects.

NUTRITIOUS SNACKS

Daily snacks are provided in the morning and in the afternoon. Snacks may include crackers, cereal, vegetable or fruit and a beverage. Organic foods are provided whenever possible.

BIRTHDAY TREATS

We love to celebrate birthdays at school, but we aim for healthy treats. Parents may bring muffins, bagels, fruit slices or fruit breads as treats for the class. Please check with us before bringing a treat to avoid duplication of celebrations and to have the appropriate number of servings. After you talk to a teacher, look for the birthday sign-up sheet in the front hall of the school and write down your child’s name on the day you wish to celebrate, as well as the snack foods you will bring for the celebration.

LUNCHESES

Children bring their own lunches to school, usually in a lunch box. We recommend inserting an ice pack to keep food cold and encourage families to use reusable containers. We strive to have “trashless lunches”.

Nutritious lunches give children energy and begin a lifetime habit of healthy eating. Pediatricians advise parents to avoid foods which may cause a child to choke. Please avoid popcorn, nuts of all types, uncooked celery and carrots, hot dogs and hard candy.

NUT-FREE SCHOOL

Due to a few severe peanut allergies among our students, we are a nut-free school. **We need your help** – please avoid peanut butter, peanut oil or any food containing nuts in lunches or treats brought to school for any occasion. Acceptable alternatives to peanut butter may include sunflower butter or soy butter.

HEALTH POLICIES

PHONING SCHOOL

Our main telephone number is 415-388-4286. We have an answering machine on for those times when all of the teachers are occupied with children. We check messages often throughout the day. The message is also turned on after school is closed, so that you may leave a message at any hour of the evening or weekend.

ILLNESS

If your child is sick, please keep him or her at home. Illness includes a cold, cough, intestinal upset, fever or contagious disease. We will call you or authorized persons to take your child home if he or she becomes sick at school. A child may not return to school within 24 hours of an abnormal temperature. Your child should return feeling well and completely non-contagious. We want to maintain a healthy school setting for all.

EXPOSURE TO ILLNESS

You will be notified of exposure to contagious diseases or conditions. Notices will be posted on the sign-in sheets and sent home via email.

TOILET TRAINING

Children who attend Tamalpais Preschool must be toilet trained. Occasional "accidents" are expected, especially when children are adjusting to the school setting. Should a child be continually wetting or soiling him/herself, staff may ask the parents to keep the child home for a week or two to work on potty training. If "accidents" continue after that, staff may ask parents to withdraw their child until toilet training is fully accomplished. In this case, the child will be placed on our waiting list for the next available space.

HEAD LICE

Children who have indications of head lice infestation will be sent home from school and may not be re-admitted until treatment is complete and child is lice and nit-free. The Director or an assigned staff member will check children's hair in the morning before they are re-admitted back to school. Lice checks will be done every month.

SIGN-IN POLICY & PARKING

SIGNING IN AND OUT

As required by State Licensing Codes, the adult bringing a child to school or picking up a child from school must sign their name (the adult's name) using their first initial and entire last name. The Sign-In sheet will be available in the drive-up line at the preschool or in the entrance halls of the Preschool and Pre-K classrooms.

AUTHORIZED PICK-UPS

We will only release your child to persons authorized by you on the emergency information cards and by a written message prior to pick-up. In an emergency, a phone message concerning a change in pick-up plans may be acceptable. However, in such a situation, we will ask for identification of persons previously unknown to the school's staff.

DRIVE-UP SYSTEM GUIDELINES

Our drive-up system is designed to safely escort each child into school.

Preschool: Parents need to drive up to the front door via the Sycamore Avenue driveway parking lot entrance. Do not enter the Camino Alto driveway – this is an "EXIT ONLY/ONE WAY" street. Please drive to the front door very slowly (3-5 mph), as families are walking by to enter the school. A teacher will greet each child at the car and bring him/her into school. Please stay in the car and DO NOT enter the school while leaving your car blocking the driveway. Our drive-up is available in the mornings from 9:00-9:15 am and in the afternoon for pick-up at 1:00-1:15 pm and 3:00-3:15 pm. We appreciate your patience during these busy times, as we do this as quickly and safely as possible!

Please note: At the end of the day, children need to be picked up at 5:00 pm SHARP, as school is closed at that time. There is NO drive-up pick-up at 5:00 pm and late charges apply for children picked up after closing. Families can lose Aftercare privileges if they are continually late for the 5:00 pm pick-up.

The same procedure is used for leaving school. A teacher will bring your child (or carpool group) to your car and help load all of their belongings into the car. Please stay in your car and a teacher will safely buckle your child into their seat. When possible, place your child's car seat on the right-hand side of the car to facilitate easy access.

Pre-K: Pre-K parents are requested to take the first driveway off Sycamore Avenue, park their cars along the curb and escort their children to the front door of the Pre-K classroom. A teacher will greet each child at the door. At the 1:00pm pick-up time, parents are asked to walk to the front door of the classroom to pick up their child. A teacher will bring them their child and belongings at the door after they have signed them out. We ask that parents please move away from the front pick-up area after they have received their child, so as to safely continue the pick-up procedure. Children who are scheduled to attend Aftercare will be walked to the Preschool building at 1:10 pm. If you are running late to pick up your child, please call to inform the Pre-K staff. All children, including those who are picked up late, will be walked to the Aftercare program at 1:10 pm.

PARKING

Preschool and Pre-K parking is allowed in any of the "Church Only" lots. When walking with your child through a parking area, please exercise extreme caution!

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

LABEL BELONGINGS

We love to see labels on clothes, lunch boxes, thermos bottles and tops, books, blankets and any other items brought from home.

CLOTHING

We strongly recommend comfortable and carefree clothes for children. We encourage children to wear smocks in the art room, but be prepared for messy clothing anyway. Paint just has a way of creeping under smocks and onto shoes and sleeves.

SHOES

Our first concern at Tamalpais Preschool is your child's safety. Always dress your child in appropriate shoes for climbing, running and riding. Children need to wear shoes that have rubber-soles and tie or velcro securely. Please avoid: Cowboy boots, rain boots, Uggs, Jellies, Crocs, moccasins, party shoes, clogs and flip flops. Sturdy sandals with rubber-soles that have straps with buckles or velcro are fine. Boots of any kind prevent children from climbing safely.

Sometimes your child may insist on wearing their special shoes to school (such as rain boots on rainy days.) Wearing them to school is fine, but please bring a change of shoes for play. We will help them change into safe shoes before their play begins. Also, please do not bring umbrellas to school. They are not safe.

TOYS

Toys from "home" work against your child's overall adjustment. Toys get lost, taken by others, and distract your child from the wonderful learning equipment at school. Please leave toys at home.

ARTWORK

We emphasize the creative process, not necessarily a finished project. Children choose which art projects they wish to experience and may not bring home an art project each day. Some children do not like to do a "product" oriented piece of artwork, their project "may not be dry yet", or we are saving it for display or for individual portfolios given out at the end of the year.

PRESCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

PRESCHOOL GOALS

We strive to provide your child with enriching, stimulating and enjoyable experiences in all areas of child development involving social, emotional, behavioral, physical, sensori-motor, cognitive and creative growth. Enhancement of your child's self-esteem is our primary goal. We hope each day will be wonderful, fun and fulfilling for your child.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Preschool is a time to develop social skills of sharing, taking turns, expressing feelings sensitively, listening to friends and teachers, and following directions and routines. Misunderstandings, conflicts, and a certain amount of misbehavior is normal and expected. Our teachers use a positive approach to discipline, explaining and modeling appropriate behavior.

Occasionally, a child's behavior at school may endanger his/her or another child's safety. If this occurs, the parents will be called and the situation will be discussed. If the situation warrants, the child may be asked to leave for the remainder of the day. If the misbehavior continues, please refer to the school's Policy Manual for detailed steps that will be taken.

UPSET AND UNHAPPY CHILDREN

If a child becomes upset at school and cannot be calmed by a teacher, parents will be telephoned and requested to come to school to help their child feel better. A teacher will always be close by to comfort a distressed child, but there are times when only a mom or dad will do!

RESPECT FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

We expect parents to be respectful of others in our school community by avoiding gossip and being respectful of diverse parenting styles and children's personalities.

PRESCHOOL EVENTS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Our Parent Board of Trustees welcomes comments, suggestions, questions, and volunteers! Each parent is automatically a member of the Strawberry-Tamalpais Preschool Corporation. As such, parents are expected to attend the Annual Board Meeting held in the Spring, vote for new Board Members, and observe the Board Policies as they pertain to parents. The Policy Manual is available in the Preschool Office and parents are invited to read it as their leisure.

FUNDRAISING

We have an Annual Fund Campaign that begins in November. The donations allow us to provide the children with music and science specialists, new equipment and facility improvements. We encourage parents to sign up for our eScrip program, as an easy way to earn additional funding for the school.

PRESCHOOL EVENTS

Tamalpais Preschool hosts several events for families throughout the year. Parents are notified of these occasions in the newsletters and special flyers.

BABYSITTING

To maintain a professional student/teacher relationship, and for insurance liability requirements, teachers and staff of Tamalpais-Strawberry Preschools are **prohibited** from working for families currently enrolled at the preschools in a capacity in which the teacher is solely responsible for the enrolled child (i.e. babysitting, chauffeuring, etc.).

CALENDAR

Tamalpais Preschool runs from late August to June, and also offers a summer program in June and July. We try to follow the local public school calendar as much as possible, with respect to holidays and staff in-service days.

TUITION & BILLING PROCEDURES

BILLING QUESTIONS

Any questions about billing should be addressed to Tassy Harms, Financial Administrator. Her telephone number is 415-383-2934. School staff and teachers cannot answer billing questions.

TUITION

Tuition fees are based on our "September through June" calendar and are divided into ten equal monthly payments for your convenience. Full fees are due for the months in which holidays occur. The operating expenses of the school must be met each month from tuition fees. No refund is given for days missed, including absence for illness or vacation.

Bills are sent out at the beginning of each month. Tuition is paid in advance and Child Care charges are billed in arrears. Payment is due by the 25th of the month; a \$15 late fee will be charged for tuition not received by the 25th. In addition, there will be a charge at an annual interest rate of 18% (1.5% per month) on any unpaid balance over 30 days. There will be a \$10 fee charged for all returned checks.

CHILD CARE

Questions regarding Child Care hours should be addressed to the Preschool Director or the Child Care staff.

Late pick-up from Extended Hours results in additional fees. When lateness for the 1:00 and 3:00 pm blocks occurs, the charge incurred is the amount of an additional Child Care Block. When the first lateness for the 5:00 pm block occurs, a \$5 fine is charged for any part of each 15 minute segment of time. Subsequent 5:00 pm lateness incidents result in a \$25 fine for any part of each 15 minute segment of time. Abuse of pick-up promptness may result in loss of Extended Hour privileges.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE WITHDRAWAL

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

When parents have a concern or complaint, the following steps should be taken:

Step 1: Parents are encouraged to attempt to resolve concerns directly with the child's teacher and Director of the school. Often problems are reconciled at this level.

Step 2: If the problem is not resolved to the parents' satisfaction, a phone call should be placed to the President of the Board of Trustees. The President will then schedule a meeting with all parties involved, and attempt to reconcile the issue.

Step 3: If the issue is still not resolved to the parents' satisfaction, they may address the Board of Trustees directly. This is done by contacting the President and setting an appointment to attend the next scheduled monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Step 4: The Board of Trustees will then respond to all parties involved in writing in a timely manner. The Board's decision will be final and without provision for appeal.

WITHDRAWAL

During the September-January semester, withdrawal may be made in any month provided 30 days notice is given before the beginning of the next month or full fee for that month must be paid. However, withdrawal from the February-June semester must be made by notification prior to January 20th, or full tuition will be charged for the February through June period. Due notice of withdrawal is notification by mail or telephone to the Director.

The school reserves the right to exclude children from enrollment or attendance if parents do not abide by Corporation Policies, if a child does not abide by standards of conduct as determined by the staff, or if a child appears ill, over-fatigued, or immature for the daily program.

HOURS OF OPERATION FOR PRESCHOOL

8:30 am – 9:00 am	Early Block
9:00 am – 1:00 pm	Daily Program
1:00 pm – 3:00* pm	Aftercare/Block 1
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Aftercare/Block 2

*There is a 30 minute rest time between 1:00 and 3:00 pm as required by California State Law for children who attend more than 5 hours.

Tamalpais Preschool Mailing Address
PO Box 1012
Mill Valley, California 94942