

The Children's Garden Developmental Pre-School at El Dorado Park West Parent Handbook



The Children's Garden Developmental Pre-School

Philosophy Statement

We believe:

- There is interconnectedness between children, family, and the community.
- Each adult and child is valuable as an individual, capable of reaching his or her potential, when supported and encouraged by best practices.
- Learning occurs through active participation, which honors the process as well as the product in a developmentally appropriate environment.
- Parent and teacher cooperation is an integral part of child learning

Curriculum

Curriculum at the Children's Garden is based on the premise that children learn by doing. We believe that your child will discover and learn by making the decisions needed to work through an activity, rather than being told exactly how to accomplish a task. As a result of this process-oriented approach, you will find that no two art projects look the same, and your child will discover many individual approaches to accomplish a task, thus, your child will not be asked or required to complete activities in a specific manner. Rather, we support the interest of each child, helping them grow in their socio-emotional and cognitive skill development through hands-on experimentation with materials and concepts. Our curriculum is built around ideas of interest to the children. Each day there are opportunities for all children to explore materials and create meaningful experiences. Our emergent curriculum provides opportunities in several basic skill areas:

- Language and Literacy – children are encouraged to talk, sing, listen, and experience written material. Examples are flannel board stories, books, dramatic story telling, and puppet play.
- Mathematical Thinking – children are encouraged to develop a sense of number. Examples are activities that include counting, determining more or less, larger or smaller, how many, how much, recognizing patterns, recognizing shapes, and developing a sense of time awareness.
- Scientific Thinking – children focus on the world they know and understand. Knowledge grows from the child's innate need to discover. Examples are measuring, comparing, using the five senses, questioning, prediction, and analyzing results.
- Social Studies – children explore the roles and relationships in their world. Examples are dramatic play; block building; recognizing similarities and differences in people, families, and professions; and understanding the reasons for social expectations.
- Personal and Social Development – children are encouraged to develop a self-concept and self-control through interacting with others, problem solving, and conflict resolution.
- Physical Development – includes large and small motor development, and an understanding of personal health and safety.
- The Arts – encourages children to express creativity through art, self-expression, music, and dramatic play.

The day is a blend of child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities including group time, choice times, outdoor play, and snacks.

What enrollment forms are required?

The Long Beach Parks and Recreation department requires that participating parents sign their children in and out upon arriving at the park each day. The teachers require that an enrollment card located in each child's file be filled out and left in the file for reference in case of an emergency.

Health and Safety

What is the wellness policy?

Adults and children are expected to be in good health and able to participate in the planned activities. **To reduce the spread of illness, please remain home if you or your child has had a non-clear nasal discharge, unexplained rash, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach/ear ache, swollen glands, fever over 100° without medications, or strong cough during the previous 24-hour period.**

What happens when a child is injured or becomes ill at school?

If a child is injured or becomes ill, we will contact the parent immediately. If we cannot reach the parent after several attempts, we will call the numbers listed on the emergency card.

Please keep information (persons to contact and phone numbers) current on your child's emergency card. Leave a note of where you can be reached on the sign-in sheet if you will not be in the usual place.

What should I do if my child or I have a communicable disease?

Please inform us promptly if you suspect that you or your child has contracted a communicable disease: chicken pox, lice, conjunctivitis (pink eye), strep throat, hand, foot and mouth disease, scarlet fever. Such reports are treated with confidentiality. When necessary, parents will be notified of possible exposure.

What should I do if my child or I have allergies?

Please make sure we are aware of all allergies. Extreme allergies should be outlined on paper and given to the teachers.

What are the policies about sanitation?

Clean hands are the most effective way to keep illness out of our Center and away from your child. All adults and children need to wash hands with soap and water:

- Upon entering the classroom,
- Before handling food,
- After toileting,
- After assisting a child with toileting,
- After using a tissue.

Remember to turn off water using a paper towel, NOT YOUR CLEAN HANDS.

***Remind children to flush the toilet before they wash their hands.
Check toilets and flush as you walk through the bathrooms.***

Safety

Happiness is feeling safe. Our first responsibility is to provide a safe indoor and outdoor environment for children. A participating parent will be assigned to supervise the perimeter of the playground during outside playtime. Fencing will be constructed to keep kids safely in the area of the play structure unless being directly supervised by an adult.

Keep all traffic pattern areas free of objects (blocks, toys, paper towels, etc.) and ensure that all spills are wiped up immediately. Encourage children to wipe up their own spills and to pick up what they have dropped. If, at any time, you are concerned about the safety of a particular situation, please ask a teacher.

What should my child wear to school?

Dress children in play clothes that will not concern you or the child if the clothes become soiled or torn. Long skirts and dresses, scarves, jacket hood strings, or other clothing that can be caught on equipment are dangerous when a child plays or uses school equipment. Dressing your child in layers will ensure their comfort as the temperature changes throughout the day.

Shoes that fasten or tie are preferred because they provide more security when children use large motor equipment. Closed-toe shoes prevent injuries. Tennis shoes are recommended to enable safe running, climbing, and balancing activities.

***Label all garments with your child's name.
Unlabeled garments will be put in the lost and found basket and donated.***

***We reserve the right to restrict a child's activities or
offer them alternate clothing.***

***Parents must provide an extra set of seasonal clothing, including
underwear and socks, in case of accidents or spills.***

Sunscreen

It is strongly recommended that children wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn. Parents should apply sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher before children come to school.

Parking Safety

Please practice *extreme* caution while driving or walking to and from the park. *Hold* children's hands, use *crosswalks* where available, and *model* safe practices for your child. When car-pooling, keep your adult-child ratios safe, and discuss and agree on safety rules with adults and children.

Never leave any child alone in the car no matter how short the time!

Program Policies

Arrival and Departure

What do my child and I do when we get to school?

- Sign child in on classroom sign-in sheet.
- Remind the child to wash his or her hands.
- Stay until the teacher has seen and greeted the child.
- Leave a contact number or destination on the sign-in sheet if you will not be at any previously listed number in case of illness or emergency.
- Make sure to say good-bye to your child before leaving. After you have said good-bye, leave. Continuous good-byes make separation more difficult.

Who can pick up my child?

- Any adult (age 18 or older) authorized on the enrollment card by the enrolling parent. A photo I.D. will be required.

What happens if I am late picking up my child?

CALL US when you realize you will be late.

Late pick-up refers to any time a child is picked up after their scheduled hours. Late pick-up is worrisome for a child and the staff. Exchange cell-phone numbers with other parents so you can cover for one another if someone is running late.

Sandi cell – 562 787-3214

Cathy cell – 562 508-8831

Leave a message if we do not answer, our phones will not be constantly accessible, as we will be working with the children.

Classroom Participation Policies

Please NO cell phone use during your participation day. We need and want you to use this time to be completely focused on the children.

What happens if I cannot make my scheduled participation day?

If you or your child is ill and you are unable to attend your scheduled participation day, it is your responsibility to cover the absence. If you are unable to cover it, your child will not be permitted to attend school that day and you will be fined \$20.

What happens if I miss the mandatory parent education nights?

Any parent missing more than one parent education night jeopardizes their chance to reenroll in the program for the following months.

How should adults dress when participating in the classroom?

Clothing should be comfortable! Wear clothes that will not concern you if they become soiled. Shoes that fasten or tie are preferred because they provide more security when playing with the children. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the premises.

How will my child's birthday be celebrated?

Special but appropriate birthday snacks may be brought to school to celebrate your child's birthday! Birthday bread, muffins, your child's favorite fruit, pancakes, etc. are good healthy birthday celebration choices. Please see Cathy or Sandi for additional ideas. We also will celebrate with a special birthday cape, crown, and sprinkling of confetti on the birthday child and singing a special birthday song. This is all optional. If your child does not wish to engage in these birthday traditions, please let us know. Some children do not feel comfortable at the center of attention. That is perfectly OK!

What are my responsibilities on my participation day?

Supervision

There are many important things that we do, but the most important task, the one that makes all of the parent, and child learning possible, is to keep the children in our care safe. The #1 way we keep children safe is by making sure that **all** children are observed by an adult at **all** times. For parents this can be very different from home, where we trust that the children out of our sight in the living room or back yard are safe. At school, we work together to make sure that all of the children are watched while at play. The following is a list of reminders for when you are supervising children at our school.

- If you are assigned an area to watch, know that you are assisting to watch all of the children who enter that area- not just your own child.
- Know that you are not alone, we are working with you as a team to keep all of the children safe.
- Although we discourage casual conversation between adults while supervising, it is important for adults to keep communicating about the areas they are watching.
- If you need to leave your area to assist a child or go to the bathroom, make sure that someone else has taken over for you before you leave.
- If you are watching a particular area, it is up to you to enforce safety limits. For example, if you observe a child riding a bike without shoes, do not wait for someone else to set a limit with them—stop them and let the child know you will hold their bike for them while they get their shoes.

Guidance and Discipline

The goal of the program’s discipline policy is to assist children in developing emotional regulation and self-discipline through respectful interactions that support children’s emotional growth. The preschool years are a time of immense cognitive, physical, and emotional growth for young children. Young children are still egocentric, meaning they still think mostly of their own needs and wants as opposed to the needs of others. Because of this, it is not unusual for young children to use physical or verbal aggression in an attempt to get their needs met. It is our job as the adults in the environment to guide children through this time by setting clear limits and following through appropriately and consistently.

What are the “Rules”?

In our environment there are three basic rules, or behaviors that need to be stopped by adults:

1. Physical aggression is unacceptable
 - Hitting, slapping, pinching
 - Throwing objects at others
2. Willful destruction of school property is unacceptable
 - Ripping books
 - Breaking toys
3. Engaging in activities that may be physically or emotionally harmful to themselves or others
 - Teasing, name calling, or threatening language
 - Using equipment in a dangerous way

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect Yourself • Respect Others • Respect Property |
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This list is not meant to cover every eventuality that may occur. It is important that the adults in the environment take each case individually. Supervising parents should consult with teachers if they are unsure whether behavior needs to be stopped.

Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Behavior

If a child has a specific unacceptable behavior that persists over time, the following procedure will be followed:

- The teacher will attempt to help the child change the behavior. If the behavior continues to be disruptive to the classroom environment, further action will be taken, including parent conferences, consultations, and referrals. If the behavior continues, and is a deterrent to the program, the child may be removed from the program.

Interacting with Children

The interactions between children and the adults in a pre-school environment are extremely important. It is through interaction that we guide children to reach their full potential physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Although we value the skills and knowledge that each individual adult brings to their

interactions with the children in their care, it is important that all of our interactions follow a consistent format so that we can ensure a high quality experience for each child each day. To that end, the following are guidelines for adult-child interactions in a variety of situations.

At the snack table

- Introduce yourself.
- Use children's first names.
- If children are not talking, try to start conversation.
- When children start talking, LISTEN and follow their lead for conversation.
- Guide children to serve themselves.
- Guide children to clean up their own messes (do not jump up to get a towel for a spill).
- Teach manners by example; never insist that children say "please" or "thank you".

During play time

- Let children guide the play. Avoid becoming the center of attention or telling children how to use equipment or materials.
- Look for opportunities for "teachable moments", that is, make observations of children's play so they become aware of their discoveries.
- Incorporate concept words such as color, shape, size, number, and relationship when possible.
- When children argue (as long as it is not physically or emotionally abusive), they are learning social skills. Let children negotiate. Step in only when necessary and then use ACTIVE LISTENING, LIMIT SETTING, OR PROBLEM SOLVING steps.
- Look for opportunities to support children's imaginative play by adding equipment that may add a new dimension to play such as bringing pencils and paper to the block area when children are talking about building a castle.

When assisting with an adult-directed activity

- When presenting science, creative, physical, or cognitive activities to a small group of children remember that THEIR discovery is the most important part of the activity. Children learn more by doing than by instruction. This means that it is O.K. if the activity does not turn out exactly as planned.
- Guide children to use materials appropriately, but remember there may be more than one version of "appropriate". For instance: it is appropriate to decide to splatter paint with a paintbrush instead of using regular brush strokes, but it is inappropriate to paint your friend's hair with the paintbrush
- Avoid comparing or judging children's work. Keep your comments positive and focus on skills and effort.

When a child needs help

Young children will look to the adults in the environment to help them get their needs met in a variety of ways. They may need help putting on a jacket or pouring water, or they may want an adult to draw them a picture or play a game with them. It is important to remember that doing things for children is not always helping them. Young children need our guidance but not necessarily for us to do things for them. When a child comes to you for help, consider the following:

- Young children learn through experience, so attempt to guide a child through a process instead of doing for them. For example, when a child asks you to put on their jacket for them, you might say, "How can I help?" and then listen to their suggestions before you walk them step by step in the process of how to put on a jacket or pour water etc.
- It is O.K. for children to be frustrated when learning a new skill; this is an integral part of learning for many children.

- Make sure to encourage children along the way; “You got the first arm in all by yourself!”
- There is a fine line between frustration that challenges and frustration that defeats. Watch carefully when children need you to step in and when they need you to step back.
- Remember to “ACTIVE LISTEN” (1. get close, 2. really listen, 3. restate what you hear, 4. add information, and 5. clarify).

When there is a problem between two children

- If there is physical or verbal aggression, stop the behavior (gently and respectfully). The easiest way to do this is to physically place your self between the two children. When children are arguing over a toy, put your hand on the toy but do not attempt to take it away.
- Get down to the child’s level.
- Make an active listening or opening statement that shows you recognize feelings and needs.
- Remain calm, and do not take one child’s side.
- Listen to what the children have to say and help them to define the problem; “You both want to play with this truck, but there is only one truck and two of you, what do you want to do now?”
- Assist the children in negotiating a solution to the problem – do not solve the problem for them.
- If children seem stuck, ask them if they would like to hear your ideas – remember that they may or may not accept one of your ideas.
- If the children agree to take turns and decide on a time limit, follow through by letting them know when the time is up.

When a limit needs to be set

- Set limits only when you have determined that the behavior is harmful to someone or something.
- Be close enough to the child to touch them before saying anything (do not shout across the yard).
Steps:
 1. Stop the inappropriate behavior.
 2. Validate the child’s feelings; “You are having a lot of fun throwing balls.”
 3. Explain the inappropriateness of the behavior in this place or at this time, “When you throw balls over the fence, they are lost, and we do not have them to play with.”
 4. Help the child find an appropriate alternative behavior, “Where do you think you can throw balls where they won’t get lost?”
 5. Make sure to follow through.
 6. If a child continues to break the same limit, ask a teacher for help.

General Interaction Guidelines

- Offer choices only when there are real choices available. For example saying, “It’s time to go home, okay?” implies that the child *has* a choice to go home or not. Saying, “You have to sit here at rug time,” implies that there is not a choice when *there is* one.
- Remember that every behavior has a feeling and a need behind it. Children never do something “for no reason”.
- There are no “bad children”, only behaviors we do not like.
- Focus on the positive, but do not ignore children’s negative emotions, they have value too.

Nutrition Guidelines

- As children are dismissed from the group, 2 parents go to bathroom and assist with paper towels. Keep the children moving, so lines do not become too long.
- If you are not in the bathrooms, go to a table and direct the first children to arrive to pass out cups and napkins – one for each chair (good reinforcement for math and one-to-one correspondence). Count as the child passes out the items.
- As more children arrive, quickly escort them to a seat. One adult should be seated at each table before a second adult joins a table.
- Wait with hands on laps for the thank you song.
- Even when children are finished, they should stay at the table and visit until the adult is ready to dismiss. (10 minutes is not unreasonable).
- Remember:
 - Children serve themselves and pour their own drink. They clean up spills themselves using sponges available on the tray.
 - Help children determine how many of each item each person should take to start. (Usually 2 to 5).
 - Children may choose not to try anything. Notice when children do try something new.
 - Model good manners – recognize the use of “please” and “thank you”.
 - Make sure children throw away all of their trash and put cups in the tub before going to play.
- Maintaining conversation:
 - Use this opportunity for recall of the day’s events. What did you enjoy most today?
 - Ask the children if they had a chance to do the art, dramatic play, motor activity, etc.
 - Talk about the snack – color, shape, taste, fruit or vegetable, etc.
 - Discuss favorites – animals, movies, places to go, anything related to the week’s theme.
 - Mention what you did the night before or what you ate for dinner/breakfast.
 - Often by making a comment, you will spark conversation topics you hadn’t thought of.
- Only foods manufactured and packaged in the United States may be used for snack.
- Use of dairy products (other than milk), eggs, or packaged luncheon meats require the Child Development Specialist’s approval.
- ALL foods must be prepared at school.
- Peanuts, popcorn, seeds, hot dots, chewing gum, marshmallows, and candy are NOT used at Children’s Garden. We encourage low sugar, low salt, low fat, and minimal use of additives such

as food coloring, preservatives, and flavors. For sanitation and safety reasons, **food that is prepared or handled by children MUST be clearly labeled so each child receives and eats his own product.**

- Cooking utensils (knives, forks, oven mixers, griddles, hot plates, etc.) require careful supervision AT ALL TIMES.

Additional Information

Signing In & Out

Parents or their Authorized Persons must sign their child in and out with their full legal signature on the attendance record sheet each time he/she leaves and returns. This is required Parks and Rec. and is a safety matter, as this is the primary record we have that your child is present at school. We will use this to take role during any fire and emergency situations. Children are only released to their parent unless you authorize someone else (over 18 years of age) to pick up your child by completing the appropriate form ahead of time.

Toys from home

We ask that children do not bring their toys to school. Exceptions apply when children show the need for a transitional object, such as a stuffed toy or favorite book, to provide a link between home and school. Please discuss these situations individually with the teachers.

***A Rule of Thumb** – if you are worried about it (clothing or toys), don't send it! We will do everything we can to help you and your child care for their personal belongings.*