



Play-Based Learning for the Whole Family

**SAN DIEGO COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL
PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**

Revised 2021

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CONTACTING THE PRESCHOOL

Address:

San Diego Cooperative Preschool
4190 Front Street
San Diego, CA 92103

Phone: (619) 295-9860

Email: general@sdcooppreschool.org

Website: www.sdcooppreschool.org

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the San Diego Cooperative Preschool is to provide the highest quality care, while creating a nurturing and supportive community of children, parents, and highly skilled staff. Through a play-based program that attends to the whole child, we seek to enrich every child's experience, and to empower each child to joyfully develop at their own rate. Through the cooperative partnership of parents and staff, we provide a model of community that will sustain and enrich our children throughout their lives.

BACKGROUND

UCP San Diego, dba San Diego Cooperative preschool is a non-profit preschool licensed by the State of California, for children ages six weeks to kindergarten. Established by parents in 1963, it continues to be managed by a board of directors elected from and by the parents/guardians of enrolled children.

The Preschool is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and rents space within the First Unitarian Universalist Church. The Preschool does not incorporate any religious doctrine in its curriculum, but both the Preschool and the Church share basic humanistic values, which emphasize knowledge of and respect for the individual child.

PHILOSOPHY

SDCP follows a play-based philosophy, practicing an emergent curriculum that meets the needs and interests of each child. We believe children learn through play in a safe and nurturing environment. Staff, trained in the field of early childhood education, provide appropriate developmental experiences and opportunities for each child through careful planning and observations of their group of children. All teachers have been chosen for their qualities of warmth and responsiveness to children, as well as their educational qualifications. The curriculum is designed to enrich the whole child, including social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and creative development. We see children as unique individuals and respect and respond to their individual needs.

Respect for the role of parents, guardians, and families is a hallmark of our preschool. They are an integral part of the program and are encouraged to participate in all aspects of running the school. Families are encouraged to share their own special talents and interests with the school. In the classroom,

parent/guardian and grandparent participation through co-oping is at the cornerstone of our preschool's philosophy. This participation offers a unique opportunity for the parents/guardians and grandparents to deepen their relationship with the child. Parents/guardians and grandparents are able to learn about their preschooler's development as well as skills and techniques for guiding young children. Outside the classroom, parents/guardians play a critical role in running the school. The school jobs which parents/guardians fulfill enhance the activities of the school at all levels – from providing guidance for policies and procedures (on the Board) to planning enrichment activities and school events.

The idea of a cooperative extends beyond the actual operation and maintenance of the Preschool. We could not function without the thoughtful consideration of each other and the development of a sense of community.

"Families are the wellspring that creates and nurtures the children in our classrooms. When working closely with families, we help to foster their sense of belonging and their confidence. We help to strengthen parent's capacity to support their children over a lifetime." Gale Fischer and Bridget Murray, in "When Teachers Reflect."

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

San Diego Cooperative Preschool does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, provision of services, or administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

LICENSING REQUIRED DOCUMENTS BEFORE START DATE

- Identification and Emergency Information
- Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Child's Pre-admission Health History
- Notification of Parent's Rights and Child's Rights
- Child's Pre-admission Health Evaluation - Physician's Report
- Immunization Report
- Child Blood Lead Test Compliance Form
- Health Screening Report – Facility Personnel (for parent volunteers)

Note, these forms, together with other forms required by the preschool, will be distributed by SDCP administration and must be returned prior to a child's start date.

I. CURRICULUM

OVERVIEW

All curriculums at this school are child-driven and child-centered.

All planning is centered on the basic knowledge that children learn through a play-based program.

All schedules and routines are in place to show inherent respect for children's developmental levels and are based on their needs.

All planning is based on children's interests. The use of themes is recognized as useful, but not absolutely necessary.

All areas of a child's development are emphasized, including social, emotional, physical, cognitive, imaginative, and creative.

All curriculums have a variety of sources, including: teachers' interests, children's interests, things in the physical environment, people in the social environment, curriculum resource materials, serendipity: unexpected events, living together: conflict resolution, care-giving and routines, and values held in the school, community, family, and culture.

All assessment of a child's progress and development is done with respect, and is based on teacher observations, anecdotal records, and parents'/guardians' observations and input. Assessment of young children is most valid when it takes place in the child's natural environment. All assessment is grounded in the knowledge that children develop at widely differing rates and patterns and need to be considered as individuals.

All curriculums at the Preschool are designed to be inclusive of special needs and to enhance and support individual skills, learning-styles, and developmental stages.

All curriculums at the Preschool must help create for our children a vision of a future in which each child plays an integral part as a doer, leader, and nurturer. We strive to encourage children to develop life-long, heart-felt values and to be sensitive to each other, their environment, and the world at large.

Following are some specific areas of your child's development, and ways in which they are supported in the classroom environment.

SELF-CONCEPT/POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

One of the most important goals throughout the school year is to give each child a positive sense of self-worth. Each class starts out the school year with the "ME" theme, addressing the questions "who am I, and who are the members of my family."

We allow room for growth by waiting to help a child until after they have first tried and then ask for help. To show that we have confidence in the child, we give choices within limits and respect a child's choices. When discipline is necessary, the child is supported and positive redirection is given. Self-esteem is never ignored-- it is the action we dislike, not the child that does the action.

IMAGINATIVE PROCESS

The child's world is essentially an imaginative one; they need the opportunity to play out inner fantasies and feelings with other children. This is encouraged through role-playing, block building, water play, music, movements, and stories. We encourage—in these and many other activities—respect for each child's self-esteem and feelings.

SENSORY PERCEPTION

The child learns about the world through the use of their senses. In order to develop a keenness of sense, the indoor and outdoor classroom environment provides activities to extend the use and awareness of touch, smell, feeling, seeing, and listening. These include, but are not limited to: cooking projects, canyon walks, water play, art media, collage works, play-dough, and sandbox play.

SOCIALIZING

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

- On-looker: Observing, talking; but not participating
- Solitary: Play nearby but without reference to other children
- Parallel: Play of a companionable nature with similar materials but without personal interaction.
- Associative: Play that is loosely organized around a common activity, shared interests, and materials.
- Cooperative: Play with different roles, common goals, usually with one or two leaders, of relatively long duration and complexity.
- Participating in Games with Rules: Young children are just in the beginning stages of being able to participate in games. By the time they reach 4 ½ - 5, they will have a true understanding of games and rules and are able to enjoy them more fully.

LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

One of our goals is for the children to communicate and to appreciate the beauty of language. There is value in exposing children to languages other than English. We are fortunate that we have multiple staff members that are able to offer this to the children. Children develop communication through listening to stories, making up stories to be written down, songs, (they love rhyming and silly songs), dramatic play, puppetry, cooking and the use of picture recipes, and art descriptions. Every activity can be a basis for verbal expression.

LARGE AND SMALL MOTOR SKILLS

The "me-do-it" stage of the infant, toddler, and preschool child marks the point where whole-body mobility has been attained along with a determination to use it to the fullest. Because of this, we provide appropriate physical equipment and materials to challenge the children. A safe environment is a must, so the curriculum

reflects these needs. Open areas for running, jumping, climbing, rolling, crawling, sliding, and swinging are also important. Small muscle and eye-hand coordination is encouraged in every area of our curriculum. Characteristics of spontaneous play are as follows:

PRIMARY GROSS MOTOR

- Body movements: walking, running, skipping, sliding
- Climbing: through, over, under, around, besides, after, etc.
- Wheel toys: tricycles, skates, big wheels, pushing and pulling wagons, shopping carts, etc.

COMBINED GROSS AND FINE MOTOR

- Gathering or collecting materials
- Filling containers (with playdough, sand, water, etc.)
- Dumping (emptying these containers)
- Stacking
- Knocking down
- Painting

PRIMARY FINE MOTOR

- Trial-and-error manipulation (puzzles, stringing beads, Legos, Tinker toys, etc.)
- Sensory explorations (through nature, art media, the five senses)

Our programs show concern for all aspects of a child's development: intellectual, emotional, social, and physical. Our program reflects the fact that all aspects are interrelated and cannot stand-alone. Above all, we value learning through play in an environment that allows choices. Choice encourages the child's natural curiosity, a sense of independence, and positive self-esteem.

EARLY INTERVENTION HEALTH SCREENING

Speech and language screenings are traditionally held each year to check for early signs of developmental delays. The screenings are performed during school hours by volunteer health care professionals.

II. REGISTRATION & ENROLLMENT

In considering applications from the general public, the Director reserves the right to create a dynamic and diverse class.

PROCEDURE

The admissions procedure starts when a parent/guardian contacts the school regarding possible enrollment. A tour of the school is arranged with the Director, and the school philosophy and requirements for parent/guardian involvement are described.

Interested families complete a waitlist form upon completion of a school tour and are either placed on a waiting list or considered for immediate enrollment if an appropriate opening exists. Families are placed on the waiting list based on the date that they first contacted the Preschool and will be offered a spot based on that order. A \$40 application fee is charged at the time of placement on a waiting list. Prospective families must indicate whether or not they wish to co-op on the registration form when they apply for admission.

During the general public registration period in the spring, the school will contact parents/guardians on the waiting list to determine if they are still interested in enrollment. If so, the registration process is initiated. The priority for registration is as follows:

ENTRANCE PRIORITY

1. Returning students
2. Siblings of returning students
3. Children or siblings of alumni
4. Children of families enrolled in alternative payment programs through the YMCA and Child Development Associates
5. The general public

PRE-REGISTRATION OF CURRENTLY ENROLLED FAMILIES

Returning students are assured of the time slot they currently hold. Registration for current families takes place in the Winter. The registration process is complete when:

1. The non-refundable first month tuition has been paid.
2. The office has received signed copies of the Tuition Agreement.

There are various forms that the State of California requires us to have on file for each family. Parents/guardians are required to submit new/updated forms as requested by the office prior to the child's start date.

REGISTRATION OF NEW FAMILIES

Registration for the public at large will take place immediately following the currently enrolled family pre-registration. The registration process as listed above applies to new families as well.

CHANGING YOUR TIME SLOT

If you would like to change to another scheduling option, please contact the office and complete an **Internal Waiting List form**. Any requests for time slot changes will be honored on a first-come-first-served basis, at the discretion of the Director.

SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES

The Preschool will enroll children with special needs as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and The Manual of Policies and Procedures distributed by Community Care Licensing.

TUITION

1. Parents/guardians may pay tuition monthly, or they may pay tuition for the year in one lump sum. Parents/guardians who pay tuition in one lump sum receive a 2% discount. If one payment is made for the year, it should be paid at the time of the child's enrollment. For parents/guardians who choose to pay tuition monthly, the first month of their child's tuition must be paid at the time of enrollment. Tuition is due on the first of each month and is considered late if it is not paid by the 10th. If the 10th falls on a weekend or holiday, tuition must be paid by the preceding business day. A \$35 charge will be added if tuition is paid late. In addition, after 30 days, interest will accrue on any unpaid amount at the rate of 10% per annum. Once tuition is 45 days delinquent, the child will not be able to attend class and may forfeit their spot in school. In addition, if a family pays tuition but does not pay any fines stated on the invoice, the family will be subject to a \$35 late charge. If parents/guardians are unable to fulfill their tuition obligation for the month, we ask that they please notify the office administrator before the tenth of the month. When a family is 30 days late paying tuition, the child's place in the school may be lost.
2. First month's tuition is nonrefundable and must be paid at time of enrollment.
3. If a family withdraws their child during the school year, one-month written notice is required. It is exceedingly difficult for the preschool to fill vacancies after the enrollment period ends. For this reason, a parent/guardian withdrawing their child from the Preschool after the date of enrollment will be charged full tuition through the end of the school year. A child is considered enrolled when their parent/guardian has signed and returned the Tuition Agreement. The Director will make reasonable efforts to fill these vacancies. If they are able to do so, the amount of tuition owed as a result of the vacancy will be offset by the new student's tuition, less an administrative fee of \$150. The parent/guardian will then receive a refund in the appropriate amount.
4. In the event of an extended absence, tuition must still be paid if space is to be held for the child.
5. In the case of an extended school closure related to a force majeure event, SDCP may charge reduced tuition.

REGISTRATION/ACTIVITY FEE

A \$250 registration fee is charged each year to secure a spot for your child in the program. This fee covers administrative costs related to registration and classroom supplies. This eliminates the teachers' need to collect additional fees throughout the year for special projects. The registration fee is non-refundable and is required each year that your child is enrolled in the school. A 50% discount is applied to the second sibling for the registration fee.

ADDITIONAL HOURS CARE

Additional Hours: Children who stay until 3:30 p.m. can occasionally extend their hours until 5:30 p.m. (notification ahead of time required) for a \$50 fee.

FINES & FEES

Fines and Fees are collected on occasion to help us recoup real costs to the Preschool for late payments, late pickups, and other missed dates for volunteerism and engagement that are essential components of our Preschool community. Fines and fee payments are due the last working day of the month in which they are incurred and will be billed accordingly.

In the event that there are extenuating circumstances, fines and fees can be appealed to the Preschool Director on a case-by-case basis.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition payments will be considered late after the 10th of the month and will be subject to a \$35 late fee. In addition, if a late fee or fine remains unpaid 60 days after the date it is incurred, interest will be accrued at the rate of 10% per annum.

When setting up payment plans inside Brightwheel for tuition, we encourage parents to use the automated payment program allowing for bank transfers (checking account only). This method of payment, often referred to as ACH (Automated Clearing House), only costs our preschool 60 cents per transaction. The processing fees for ACH transactions are less than those applied to credit cards which cost up to 2.9% per transaction. Parents/guardians may choose to use credit cards, but our Board of Directors has instituted a policy to charge back those processing fees for use of credit cards to pay tuition, saving us over \$10,000/year. If you choose to use a credit card, this will be noticed and charged back on your tuition bill as part of your monthly payment.

LATE PICK-UP OF CHILDREN

SDCP incurs extra costs when a teacher is required to stay late. After the first incident of late pick-up, families will receive a warning. Subsequently, families will be assessed a late fee of \$10 per 5 minutes or portion thereof for the first late pick-up, \$15 per 5 minutes or portion thereof for the second late pick-up, and \$20 per 5 minutes or portion thereof for the third late pick-up. Families who pick up their children late without pre-approval more than three times are subject to further penalties.

MISSED/LATE CO-OPING

Parents/guardians who do not arrange for a substitute when they cannot co-op will be assessed a \$55 fine.

RETURNED CHECK FEE

A \$35 fee will be assessed for each returned check.

WORK PARTY NON-PARTICIPATION FEE

Families may also choose to buy out of their work party commitment for a \$150 fee. In the event that a family fails to participate in the Work Party without prior arrangements, a fine of \$200 will be assessed to their account. Please note, in lieu of a fee, families who are not able to work at least four hours during the annual Work Party are permitted to do an after-party job within 30 days.

TERMINATION POLICY

SDCP is mindful of the way we handle challenging behaviors. It is not common practice to terminate a child's enrollment in the program.

This policy describes the conditions and procedures for termination of a child's enrollment in the program. Additionally, please refer to **Appendix VI** for the **CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**.

1. In the event the Preschool, in its sole discretion, determines that the program does not meet the child's needs (e.g., behavior and health), the Preschool shall provide 20 days written notice to the parents/guardians in order to facilitate the relocation of the child by the parents/guardians for alternative care. In this situation, at the conclusion of 20 days, the Tuition Agreement will terminate and any tuition credit due from the date of written notice shall be refunded.
2. In the event a parent/guardian demonstrates the inability to act in a safe or appropriate manner with the children, staff, or other parents/guardians or other family members, the Preschool reserves the right to take action deemed appropriate by the Director, including exclusion from the classroom and/or the Preschool.
3. In the event a child demonstrates the inability to act in a safe or appropriate manner with the children, staff, or other parents/guardians or other family members, the Preschool reserves the right to take action deemed appropriate by the Director, including exclusion from the classroom and/or the Preschool.

Parents/guardians also acknowledge, per Licensing's requirements, that:

- *State Community Care Licensing has the authority to interview children or staff without prior consent.*
- *The Preschool shall ensure that provisions are made for private interviews with any children or staff members. (-01200 INSPECTION AUTHORITY OF THE DEPARTMENT 101200)*

III. DAILY OPERATIONS

PARKING

Preschool parents/guardians and grandparents are able to park in the Ace lot adjacent to the Church, in the stalls reserved for drop-off/co-oping use, or in any other spots that are not otherwise reserved.

It is not permissible to avoid parking by sending your child in alone. California licensing requires that no child shall be accepted without contact between the Preschool staff and the adult who is dropping off.

Your access to the Ace parking that is included as part of tuition, is for SDCP-related business only. If you use the Ace parking lot for non SDCP-related business, you must pay for parking. We appreciate your cooperation regarding the use of the lot.

PLEASE BE MINDFUL OF TRAFFIC WHEN IN THE PARKING LOT. IT CAN BE HARD FOR VEHICLES TO SEE CHILDREN AS THEY ENTER/EXIT THE PRESCHOOL CAMPUS.

DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

DROPPING OFF

All persons approved to drop off a child must check them in using the QR code on the Brightwheel app. A full signature is required. Community Care Licensing mandates this procedure. In the event of a disaster, the Brightwheel app is how we take attendance, and the child's welfare may depend upon this accuracy.

California State law also requires that you **bring your child to the supervising teacher upon your arrival at school.** This is a very important opportunity for us to greet your child and also to determine that they are feeling well and are ready for their busy day at preschool. This process also ensures that responsibility for the child is transferred from the parent/guardian to the teacher.

PICKING UP

Use the Brightwheel app to sign your child out when you pick them up. A full signature is required. Check the pocket with your family's name on it for messages. Only adults who are authorized on the Emergency Contact Form on file in the Preschool office and who have been added as an approved pick up on the Brightwheel app will be allowed to pick up a child. A parent/guardian may not prohibit a child's other parent/guardian from picking up their child unless the prohibition is supported by legal documents on file in the Preschool office. If you have made arrangements to have a friend or other family member pick up your child, please be sure that you inform the teacher and/or office – *they will also be required to show I.D.*

No adult will be allowed to pick up any child if the adult appears unable to safely drive and/or safely care for the child. Your child's emergency and information form will be used to find an alternative ride home.

Please stay with your child upon pick-up and walk them out to the car holding their hand or carrying them, especially in the parking lot area.

TIPS FOR EASING THE TRANSITION AT DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

Transitions can be challenging for young children, as any parent/guardian who has tried to rush a two-year-old to bed knows well. One of our goals has always been to make drop-off and pick-up time a positive experience for everyone. A helpful way to ease transitions at drop-off and pick-up is to allow extra time in your morning or afternoon so that you do not feel rushed during these times. Your child may want to show you something in their classroom, have you read them a book, or may just need some extra attention. If your drop-off or pick-up needs to be done quickly that is okay. Please communicate this with your child so they know what to expect.

The teacher in your child's classroom is always available to help ease transitions. If these transitions are challenging for your child, it may be helpful to work out a plan with the teacher so that they can give support when needed.

A simple routine may work best: check the child's cubby; check the family information pocket; say goodbye to friends and the teacher.

ROOM ASSIGNMENTS

Room 111 (Infant and young toddler): Lead Teacher, Victoria Leahy - Infant 6 weeks to 24 months

Room 109 (Toddlers): Lead Teacher, Ljiljana Jotanovic - Toddlers 18 months to 2½ years

Room 105 (PS1): Lead Teacher, Caroline Garcia - 2 and 3 year-olds

Room 107 (PS2): Lead Teacher, Andrea Leal - 3 and 4 year-olds

Room 103 (Pre-K): Lead Teacher, Erica Nager - 4 year-old to kindergarten

DAILY SCHEDULE

7:30 a.m. School opens; parents/guardians begin dropping-off their children in their classrooms.

9:00 a.m. When the second teacher arrives for the day, children can choose to play both indoors and outdoors in all classrooms.

10:00 a.m. Group Time in all classrooms except the infant room.

10:15 - 11:00 a.m. After group time (varies by each classroom) children wash their hands and have a morning snack (child brings snack).

11:00 - 11:45 a.m. Open choice activities—indoors and outdoors.

11:45 a.m. Group time, followed by hand washing and lunch (child brings lunch).

12:00 p.m. Lunch, farewell to children whose timeslot ends at 12:00 in the toddler classroom

12:15 p.m. Farewell to children whose timeslot ends at 12:15 and the transition to nap time starts.

12:45 - 2:45 p.m. Naptime (varies in each classroom).

3:00 p.m. Afternoon snack (provided by the Preschool)

3:30 p.m. Farewell to children whose timeslot ends at 3:30 p.m. Afternoon activities begin.

5:10 p.m.- 5:30 p.m. Children prepare to be picked up. Shoes are put on and belongings are gathered.

5:30 p.m. School closes

*Note: Bathroom breaks and diaper changing happen throughout the day in each classroom. Families are responsible for providing diapers/diaper cream, and the preschool provides the wipes.

NAPS

Children in all rooms are encouraged to rest quietly. The Preschool provides mats; however, each child brings napping sheets and blankets from home, which are stored in their own individual bags. It is required that each mat or cot be covered by a sheet and blanket. We recommend purchasing a crib sheet, as they fit our mats well. Please keep your child's sheets and blankets in a small, sealed bag, as space can be an issue. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to take bedding home each Friday for washing and to be returned each Monday morning. Please use blankets that are small and fit into your child's personal bag.

Note: In accordance with Community Care Licensing, an uninterrupted rest time is required, and the Preschool cannot prevent a child from sleeping.

When picking your child up in the afternoon, please be respectful of naptime – an interrupted nap can be an unpleasant experience for you, your child, and other napping children. Whenever possible, avoid pick-up between the hours of 12:30-2:30 p.m.

FOOD

SNACKS/LUNCH

In all classes, children will need to bring a refillable water bottle and a lunchbox that includes enough food for a morning snack and lunch time. Water is always available to students in the classroom.

The school supplies a nutritious snack at about 3:00 p.m. The snack calendar is posted on the bulletin board in the Preschool hallway as well as in the office.

The school policy is to avoid sharing snacks and/or lunch food. This allows parents/guardians to monitor what their children eat, prevents children from eating food they are allergic to, and allows children to enjoy their own lunches.

FOOD SAFETY

Hard candies of any kind, popcorn, hot dog rounds, whole hot dogs, whole grapes and anything grape-sized, such as cheese cubes, present a choking hazard to small children and are not allowed.

On a child's birthday, their parents/guardians are welcome to bring a special snack for the entire classroom to enjoy. We strive to make the event both low-key and child focused. **Please be aware of any allergies in the classroom.**

PACKING YOUR CHILD'S LUNCHBOX

Snack and lunch are not only exciting, social moments, but they also are a well-needed opportunity for your child to refuel during a busy preschool day. For many children, the lunch they eat at school will be their biggest meal of the day; therefore, it is important to make this meal count nutritionally.

When packing your child's lunchbox, try to make a well-rounded meal by packing a variety of food. Following are some suggestions:

FRUITS

Melon, apples, oranges, kiwi, bananas, applesauce, raisins or other dried fruit, grapes (cut in half). Fruit can be cut in different ways, e.g., apples/oranges sliced in rounds - presenting something familiar in a new shape often reawakens interest. A new mix (kiwis and watermelon) is good for this too.

VEGGIES

Carrots with ranch dip, cucumber slices, celery filled with cream cheese or peanut butter, cherry tomatoes (cut in half), peas, green beans, corn. Frozen vegetables can be packed straight from the freezer to the lunchbox – they will thaw.

PROTEINS

Last night's dinner leftovers, string cheese, chicken, beef, tofu, hard-boiled eggs, nuts, trail mix, yogurt, pizza, quesadillas, and burritos are common sources of protein in preschooler's lunches.

GRAINS

Rice cakes, pita bread, bagels, muffins, whole wheat crackers, whole wheat pretzels, pasta, a slice of whole wheat bread (made into a half-sandwich), granola or other cereal, fruit bars, granola bars.

SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Ice packs in the lunchbox helps to keep food cold.

There is a microwave in each classroom to be used for heating up your child's food if desired.

When introducing new foods, offer just one at a time. If your child turns it down, try it again in a month. Taste's change. It may be helpful to let your child's teacher know when you are introducing a new food.

Teachers will have children leave uneaten food in their lunchbox, which is helpful for parents/guardians to know how much their child is eating throughout the day.

MEDICATION

1. All prescription and nonprescription medications shall be maintained with the child's name and shall be dated. All medication must be in its original container.
2. Children who need medication, must have a form filled out by the parent/guardian and left on file in the office.

3. Medicines shall be kept in a safe place inaccessible to children.
4. A medicine log is also in the office. Parents/guardians fill in medication information, and the Director or child's teacher logs when it has been administered.
5. Medication is not to be kept in a lunchbox or cubby.
6. The Preschool discourages the use of cough medication at school, as it sedates the child. Children requiring cough medicine should be kept at home.

SUNSCREEN

Parents are requested to send their children with sunscreen already on, teachers can reapply as necessary for children over 6 months of age.

CUBBIES & FAMILY INFORMATION POCKETS

Children are provided with a drawer or "cubby" in their classroom. Cubbies are the children's private space in which they keep their lunchbox, extra clothes, and any other possessions they have brought from home. Parents/guardians **should regularly clean out their child's cubby** by removing dirty clothes to be washed and to see what might need to be replaced. Please make sure your child has extra clothes in their cubby in case of an accident or change in weather.

Notes to parents/guardians will be placed in the family information pocket on the classroom door. Please check your pocket daily for important information about school events.

SUGGESTED CLOTHING

Due to the nature of children's activities, and for safety reasons, we highly recommend that tennis shoes be worn at the Preschool. Your child may also be barefoot while at preschool as long as they have a pair of shoes if needed. We have read information from physicians, that wearing well-fitting shoes is very important for young children. Please do not wear shoes such as "Crocs" to preschool. We continue to see sliding, slipping and tripping accidents with that type of shoe.

A complete change of clothing, including socks and underwear, should be available in your child's cubby every school day in case of accidents or water play. To avoid mix-ups, parents/guardians should put their child's name on all clothes.

TOILETING & TOILET TRAINING

We encourage toileting independence when appropriate. Communication is important, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your child. We do not rush or require any of the children enrolled at SDCP to be toilet trained.

SHARING

Some classes offer the children an opportunity to share something brought from home. The staff has established the following guidelines:

If a toy is brought from home and brought into the classroom, we understand this to mean that the child would like to share the toy with the entire class. If they do not want to share their toy, then it must either be kept at home or stored in their cubby. In classes with assigned sharing days, children should bring something only on that day.

Weapons (guns, swords) or any potentially dangerous toys are not allowed on campus. We want children to feel safe while attending school and pretend weapons can be scary to many children, so we do not allow them.

FIELD TRIPS

Classes sometimes leave the classroom to go on short walks in the immediate neighborhood. In addition, classes may go on longer field trips throughout the year. Field trips are always scheduled in advance so that parents can be notified. On field trip days, we recruit extra parents to ensure adequate supervision of the children.

TEACHER-PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION

Good communication between staff and home is key. There are several ways for parents/guardians to communicate with us by sending a message on Brightwheel or via email. Verbal communication at drop-off and pick-up is also strongly encouraged.

Teachers should be informed about changes in home life, i.e., parents/guardians going out of town, illness or death of a relative or pet, new sibling, etc. Such situations may cause changes in a child's behavior. An informed teacher can be more sensitive to the child's needs.

HANDLING CLASSROOM CONCERNS

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

Schedule non-classroom time for a private discussion with the teacher (can be by phone).

1. State the problem, issue, or concern.
2. Listen to the teacher's observations and perspectives regarding your concerns.
3. If this process does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, use the problem-solving steps outlined in the policy manual. **See the *policy for contract termination in the appendices*.**

HOME VISITS

A home visit will take place at the beginning of the school year. At this time, the teacher will come to the child's home for some special attention on a one-to-one basis. This individual time spent with the teacher is very important to the child. It's an opportunity to bond with the teacher and to play freely without the competition of other classmates for the teacher's attention. This time should be spent building the

relationship between your child and their teacher. In that regard, please try to minimize interruptions from other family members.

PARENT/GUARDIAN-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences take place in the Spring. The teacher will provide written information about your child regarding developmental stages and observed behaviors. The conferences also provide an excellent opportunity for discussion of parent/guardian concerns or questions regarding their child's development.

IV. PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES & CO-OPING

The Preschool is a cooperative, which thrives on the active participation of our families. Our school is a rich community of parents and guardians with different skills and interests; they provide a wide range of services and expertise. An important result of this participation is positive role modeling as well as a sense of belonging and community for the children.

PARENT/GUARDIAN OBLIGATIONS

1. Attending room meetings called by teachers (for a description of room and other meetings listed, see section XIII – Events and Meetings).
2. Performing one school job each year per family (e.g., Fundraising Committee, Room Representative on Board of Directors, Room Parent, etc.) Please see the Director for a complete listing of School Jobs.
3. Attending Fall Orientation each year.
4. Participating in the annual Work Party (a minimum four-hour commitment per family).
5. Working in the classrooms, called co-oping *(see The Choice to Co-op section below).

Optional Responsibilities Include:

6. Attending Board of Directors meetings.

WORK PARTY

The Work Party is an annual community event designed to incorporate major school maintenance with socializing. Each teacher makes a list of items in need of construction, repair, or replacement; equipment which needs to be painted; sandboxes to be filled, etc. Every family is required to participate for a minimum of four hours in the classroom in which their child is enrolled. (Families with more than one child can work 2 hours in each child's room. A fee can be assessed in lieu of work party participation. Childcare (for children aged 18 months and up) and refreshments are provided.

THE CHOICE TO CO-OP

SDCP offers both morning and afternoon co-oping options, available to parents/guardians and grandparents. Parents/Guardians must indicate whether or not they wish to co-op when they register each Fall. Non-co-op and half co-op slots are awarded at the discretion of the Director. Co-oping is not available in our infant classroom due to the nature of the classroom, however, as with all classrooms, this classroom has an open-door policy for parents/guardians.

THE BENEFITS OF CO-OPING

The decision to enroll your child in a cooperative preschool has a great commitment attached to it. You will have to decide how the two half-day monthly commitments are met. We greatly appreciate your commitment to do this. It is important to get the full benefit of those hours spent co-oping. Get involved,

enjoy the children, listen to how the teacher communicates with the children in the classroom to learn new ways of handling various situations. The rewards you receive from time well spent will be numerous, but we will try to name just a few here:

- You will learn phraseology that will teach your child the verbal skills necessary to resolve conflict.
- You will see your child beam with pride as they take credit for the “other adult” in the classroom (not always, but most of the time).
- You will get the chance to observe your child in peer group situations.
- You will help to build community by volunteering time in your child’s classroom.
- You will set the expectation of involvement in their life (knowing their classmates and friends as well as their parents/guardians).
- You will provide the other children, as their parents/guardians will to yours, adult connections that promote confidence in themselves and their ability to relate to all ages.
- You will be doing some hands-on parenting in a learning environment outside of your home.
- You will be in an emotionally safe environment to encourage your child to practice the social skills they are learning (teamwork, joining groups, good citizenship, etc.).
- You will be there to witness the birth of possible lifelong friendships for your child.
- You will have the opportunity to be an active participant in your child's early school days.
- You will develop an even greater commitment to your child's academic life (many alumni parents/guardians go on to be volunteers, thereby making significant contributions to the school system at large).

WHO CAN CO-OP?

Supporting the family-child relationship is inherent in our school philosophy, and co-oping is a key to this. We invite parents, stepparents, guardians, and grandparents to co-op.

As per state law, all co-operators must provide the office with a physician-completed health history, including proof that they are clear of active TB, and proof of immunizations before their first day of co-oping. These immunizations include MMR, TDAP, COVID-19, and Flu (may opt out of Flu).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CO-OPERS

1. Work in their child's classroom two mornings or afternoons a month. Each class holds a meeting for the parents/guardians to work out a system to sign up for their days in the classroom. The Room Parent can help with scheduling problems or adjustments.

2. The co-oping commitment is from 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Because of the importance of classroom readiness, those who are late for co-oping will be fined (please see section above on late co-op fines). Co-oping parents/guardians and grandparents are required to sign in on the Co-oping sign-in/sign out sheet in their child's classroom. Fines are charged by the Office Administrator.
3. Make arrangements with another parent/guardian if you are unable to co-op on a scheduled day. The class list of families in your child's class will help you contact another parent/guardian to substitute for you. Parents/guardians who do not arrange for a substitute when they cannot co-op will be assessed a \$55 fine the first time and another \$75 if a second day is missed.
4. Check with the teacher to see what needs to be done, both in terms of supervision of the children and necessary cleaning.

Dedicate your time and attention to the children.

5. Please make childcare arrangements for siblings on co-oping days. Due to state licensing considerations and safety concerns, both older and younger siblings, including infants, are not allowed to accompany a co-oper while in the classroom. A caregiver (other than the co-oper) may bring an infant to the Preschool on co-oping days so that the co-oper may feed the infant, as needed, outside the classroom.
6. Communicate with the teacher your observations of each child's interests and behaviors.
7. Refrain from using *cell phones while in the classroom*.
8. Keep hot liquids out of the reach of children at all times. If you bring coffee, please keep it on a high counter away from the children's reach. You need both hands free to work in the classroom.

Note: Co-operators do not help other children with toileting or diaper changes (only their own child).

THE CO-OPING DAY

When co-oping, remember that you are there to assist the teachers with all of the children in the class, not just your own child (although this may be hard for your child to understand at first). Your primary focus should be on the classroom.

ARRIVAL

Please sign in on the co-operators sign-in sheet, located in your child's classroom. Upon arrival in the classroom, check in with the teacher, and see where you are needed most. Often, supervision of the children is the highest priority while the teacher sets up the daily activities and greets arriving children and their parents/guardians.

OPEN CHOICE

The room is divided into various interest centers such as Blocks, Dramatic Play, Art, and Discovery Table. Your help may be needed at one of the art tables, supervising outside, reading a book to a child, or sitting down on the floor with a few children playing with puzzles, legos, or blocks. Ask for direction if you're unsure where you will be most needed.

OUTDOOR PLAY TIME

Supervision of the children in the yard and indoors is especially important. Outdoors, you could climb the structure, explore the garden, dig in the sandbox with a few children, read a story to a child on the bench, or just observe the exuberance of children at play.

GROUP TIME

Group time activities vary from classroom to classroom. Children are given 5-minute reminders for the transition into group time. This is important so that group time does not come as a surprise when they are deep into play. Group time may take place both inside or outside. During group, your main responsibility is to help in maintaining the children's attention and focus. Please remember that group is an important social experience for the children. We understand that sometimes you all will get involved and will want to participate, but when it comes to talking about experiences at home, what we are trying to do is to stimulate the child's imagination and offer them an opportunity to express themselves. So, as much as possible please let them develop their participation in-group on their own. (Of course, we need all the help we can get when it comes to singing, dancing, and so on).

SNACK TIME

When snack time is called, assist children with hand washing at the sinks located in the classroom and not in the bathrooms. During snack, please help children when needed. This may involve heating up food items or opening up food packages. If no help is needed it is nice to sit with the group and talk. Bring a snack for yourself as well!

LUNCH

Children need assistance with hand washing before sitting down to eat their lunch. The teacher generally sits with the children at lunch and greets parents/guardians who arrive to pick up their children.

CO-OPING GUIDELINES

Note: Guidelines will vary from classroom to classroom depending on the age of the children and the environment.

Here is one example:

GENERAL OUTDOOR GUIDELINES

- Ask the teacher for guidelines on play structure use.
- Sand stays low to the ground.
- Toys aren't allowed to be held while climbing on the play structures (we ask children to use both hands for climbing). It may be helpful to hold a toy for a child while they climb.
- Contents of the sensory table stay at the sensory table for all children to enjoy.
- Please ask the teacher if you have any questions or need direction – each yard and classroom will have rules based on the environment and the children's ages.

INDOOR CLEAN UP

Co-ops are responsible for assisting with classroom maintenance. Clean-up duties may vary, depending on the teacher's needs.

Prior to snack and lunch, the tables need to be cleared off and wiped with disinfectant.

After snack and lunch, tables need to be cleaned again and the floor swept.

OUTDOOR CLEAN UP

The sidewalk, climbing structures and planks need to be swept, and sand around the climbing structures need to be raked to provide a cushion of protection.

At the end of your co-oping day, clean paint brushes and paint cups. If there is still paint remaining in the paint cups, please save these and cover them.

Collect any toys left out in the yard and place them in the appropriate container- encourage children to help.

GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Keeping children safe while engaging in play is a top priority.
2. Throughout the day a variety of scenarios arise, and it is helpful to have a familiar phrase to facilitate a positive outcome. Please read "Phrases That Usually Work" and "What to Say to Children Instead of Be Careful" that are posted in each classroom.
3. Judgments and labeling children, i.e., "That's bad," or "That's mean," should be avoided. The word, "bad," should not be used by co-ops. Instead, they can say, "That's not okay," or "Hitting

hurts." Use your hands for digging, painting, etc." This method helps a child learn the appropriate behavior. (See the article "Giving Children Positive Verbal Direction" in the Resource appendix).

4. Preventive intervention (or positive redirection) is the preferred method of discipline at the Preschool. Time outs are not a preferred practice unless the child feels *out of control*. Only Preschool staff will determine when a time out is appropriate. There is no corporal punishment.
5. The adult should be sure that they have a child's attention. The adult should then make a request or direction as simply as possible.
6. Giving children choices helps them to feel empowered. An example of what to say when a child is having a challenging day may be: "You can show kindness to your friends and let them play on the structure or you can choose another activity, what is your choice?" or "You can choose which blocks you want to share with your friends or I can choose them for you, what would you like to do?"
7. When commenting on the children's work, co-ops might say, "Tell me about your picture," rather than "What is it?" Most children naturally assume you should know what it is, and some may not have a name for their creation. For further information about talking to children about their artwork, see the article "How to talk to a Scribbler" in the Resource appendix.
8. A child is the only one who knows if their artwork is finished. Adults can ask them when they are done and then make sure that a name and date are on the picture. This aids in evaluating their child's developmental progress.
9. The most important contribution you can make is to show interest in the children and their choices.
10. An important building block in early childhood education is to encourage children to gain independence. We want to help children become less dependent on adults while ensuring that they feel comfortable to ask for help when needed. You can let the child know that "I am here if you need my help." Struggling to find a solution is part of learning and gaining independence. If we offer our help too quickly, we are inhibiting this growth.
11. Reading books to children helps to spark their imagination. Take time to stop reading to answer questions the children may have. If children ask an adult to join their play, the adult can join in but try not to direct their play. This should be the children's socialization experience.
12. Adults should engage the children's help during clean up. Adults can keep the job from looking too big by helping and starting a little bit before clean-up time and working with them during clean up.
13. Co-ops who most effectively build up children's self-esteem and feelings of competence are those whose voices combine warmth and sureness; they are ones whose faces are relaxed and pleasant; steady without being severe. The Resource appendix in this handbook should help to hone these skills.

SIMPLE STEPS FOR OBTAINING A CHILD'S COOPERATION

Speak clearly to the child, especially when you are giving instructions or direction.

If you have a lot to communicate to a child, it is helpful to bring yourself down to their level for better eye contact. This practice mirrors the behavior we want children to give to others, by showing respect and being considerate.

Feel confident in the message that you are communicating to children and show it in the tone of your voice. (See the article "Giving Children Positive Verbal Direction" in the Resource appendix).

If there is no choice for the child, do not offer a choice (Would you like to...). Say, "It is time to come inside for lunch now," in a positive tone. But do not expect instant agreement. **REMEMBER ALWAYS THAT A CHILD'S TEMPO IS SLOWER THAN OURS IS.** Studies have shown that it is, in fact, three to four times slower. Give the child time to understand and digest your instruction, and to react and to respond. If the child is doing something, give them a little warning; for example: "In 5 minutes, your lunch will be ready," or "After you go down the slide, it will be time to wash your hands for lunch." Then stay with it, and lovingly but firmly help them follow. Give the child a little leeway but work steadily toward the objective.

V. ANNUAL SCHEDULE, EVENTS & MEETINGS

SCHEDULE & HOLIDAYS

The Preschool year begins the Monday prior to Labor Day and ends the second Thursday in August. We are closed for the following holidays (these follow the calendar set each year by the San Diego Unified School District):

- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Vacation (closed W, T, F of Thanksgiving Week).
- Winter Vacation (closed two weeks)
- Martin Luther King Day
- Lincoln Observance
- Washington Observance
- Spring Vacation (closed one week)
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day

EVENTS

Because the Preschool emphasizes family learning and interaction, several events are organized during the year (New Family and Fall Orientation, health screenings for children, community service projects, community get togethers at parks, etc.).

NEW FAMILY ORIENTATION

This in-depth meeting is held prior to the start of the school year for families who are new to the Preschool and is designed to introduce new families to the Preschool philosophy and various policies and procedures. Children do not attend this event.

FALL ORIENTATION

This **required meeting** is held the first week of school. Traditionally, there is a potluck. The Director then welcomes new families and introduces the staff, as well as representatives of the Preschool Board of Directors. The group then breaks up and meets in their children's classrooms, where the teachers discuss curriculum and classroom procedures. Children do not attend the Fall Orientation meeting.

FALL GATHERING

This event is held at a local park. Families are invited to pack a picnic lunch and join us at a park. It is a nice opportunity for children and families to get to know each other while enjoying the fresh air. The Preschool sets up tables with crafts for the children to enjoy.

COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENT

Holiday Drive and Cookie decorating: this event is an opportunity to get involved in the spirit of giving and to have your children participate in the joy of helping others. Families can bring in items to donate (such as toys, blankets, clothing, etc.). Children attending will also be able to get creative by decorating cookies to enjoy.

WORK PARTY

Work party is an annual event. A description can be found in the [Parent/Guardian Responsibilities](#) section of this handbook.

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Each year, generally in the spring, SDCP holds a fundraising event, which is a combination dinner and silent/live auction. This is both a fun social gathering for parents/guardians and an important fundraiser for the Preschool. The Fundraising Committee determines what events will take place each school year. Children do not attend the Annual Fundraiser.

MEETINGS

ROOM MEETINGS

Room meetings consist of the teacher and the parents/guardians of all the children in a particular class. **Attendance at these meetings is required**, since their main purpose is to establish a close relationship between parents/guardians and teachers. This is a good time for the teacher to explain the curriculum in detail and to discuss the developmental progress of children in that age group. Parents/guardians also benefit from the informal exchange of ideas. This is typically when families sign up for co-oping dates. There are usually four meetings per school year. The Fall Orientation meeting held the first week of school counts as one of the required meetings. Room Meetings are generally held at the home of a parent/guardian, and food and refreshments are potluck.

BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are held once a month at 6:00 p.m. at the Preschool. Although only Board members (including Room Representatives) are required to attend these meetings, all parents/guardians and staff are encouraged to come and participate. Any questions about school policies or suggestions are welcome. The date, place, and agenda of each Board meeting will be publicized in advance of the meeting.

KEEPING A CHILD HOME

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

The child's comfort should be assessed before leaving for school. If a child is listless, complains of a headache, is pale or unusually irritable, this would be a good day to *stay home*. Working parents/guardians should have a back-up plan in place before their child becomes ill. **If cough or cold medicine is needed at school, the child should be kept at home.**

The school should be contacted if a child will be staying home due to illness. Please notify the Preschool if you suspect that your child has an infectious disease. These include, but are not limited to COVID-19, conjunctivitis (pink eye), fifth disease, impetigo, chicken pox, strep throat, scarlet fever, and bacterial diarrhea. If your child may have been exposed to one of these illnesses at the Preschool, we will distribute a notice to alert you.

A child **must be kept home** if they have:

1. A fever of 100.0 degrees F or higher. A child must stay home until a normal temperature has been maintained for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.
2. An unusual rash that might be a symptom of a contagious disease.
3. A contagious virus such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, roseola, fifth's disease, hand foot & mouth, or any diarrhea illness.
4. Pink eye (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with discharge). Children may not return until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
5. An ear or throat infection. Once the child has been examined, placed on medication, and made comfortable, they may return to school when no longer contagious. The typical timeline for returning to school is 24 hours after receiving medication.
6. A cold. A child should stay home until the symptoms of a cold such as *coughing, sneezing, watery eyes*, and thick, green mucus secretions have subsided. It is difficult for a child to enjoy preschool with these symptoms, and they may be contagious.
7. Diarrhea, vomiting and/or symptoms of flu. Children need to be kept out of school for 24 hours from the time diarrhea or vomiting last occurred.
8. Difficulty breathing or uncontrolled coughing.
9. Lice or scabies. Children may not return until 24 hours after treatment.
10. They are recuperating from any illness – please allow them *enough time* at home to fully recover.
11. SDCP has specific policies and procedures in place for COVID-19, which can be accessed in Brightwheel. SDCP will continue to follow the COVID-19 Symptom Decision Tree guidance set forth by the County of San Diego Health and Human Service Agency as well as Community Care Licensing.

Note: If your child is ill, it is important to allow them enough time at home to truly recuperate.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of an emergency involving your child, **it is imperative that we be able to reach you in a timely manner**. Provide the school with any and all means of contacting you – cell, work phone, home phone, etc. Be sure to inform the office whenever there are changes to your phone numbers or addresses and also make any updates in Brightwheel.

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

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The Preschool holds fire and disaster drills and is prepared to care for children for up to 72 hours in the **event** of a natural disaster. All SDCP staff have CPR/first aid training. Parents/guardians are required to provide an emergency supplies pack for each child, as described in a communication to parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year.

GENERAL CAMPUS SAFETY AND FIRST AID

FOUNTAIN SAFETY

Children are not permitted to play in the courtyard fountain. The bottom is very slippery, and we want to avoid injuries.

CHURCH CAMPUS AND LANDSCAPING

Please be mindful when you leave the Preschool hallway, and your child is playing on the church's campus. Children are not permitted to play in their decorative "river rocks" or landscaped areas. Safety is a main concern, as well as consideration for church staff that have offices adjacent to the area, and the church campus itself.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS INJURED

If a child becomes injured at the Preschool, the staff on duty will administer first aid. The staff have been trained in first aid procedures and CPR. In the event of serious or life-threatening injury, the staff will take advantage of the Preschool's proximity to UCSD Medical Center and will summon help. All parents/guardians sign the consent for emergency medical treatment Form LIC 627 upon enrollment.

Minor injuries (i.e., scraped knee, bumped head, etc.) which do not require a doctor's care will be reported to the parent/guardian via the Brightwheel app on an "Incident Report". In the case of a major injury, one in which the teacher and/or director feel may require a doctor's visit, you will be notified as soon as possible by phone.

HAND WASHING

Five Steps to Washing Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

WHEN to wash hands

- When children, staff, and parents/guardians come to the Preschool in the morning.
- Before preparing or serving food.
- After diapering a child or wiping their nose or cleaning up messes.
- After they've been to the bathroom - either with a child or by themselves.

APPENDICES

VI. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING CLASSROOM ISSUES

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline parent/guardian and staff procedures for resolving concerns that arise in the day-to-day classroom environment at the preschool. This policy does not apply to director-initiated actions regarding staff performance issues.

POLICY

Individuals with concerns about classroom issues are responsible for initiating a constructive problem-solving process directly with the other adults involved. The following guidelines are to be followed by both parents/guardians and staff, with mutual respect and concern for the best interests of the child. The first step for resolving classroom concerns is always a parent/guardian-teacher discussion. Though it might be difficult for a concerned parent/guardian to directly approach a teacher, it is an essential first step. The teacher cannot participate in problem solving if they are uninformed and/or uninvolved.

PROCEDURE

- a. Schedule non-classroom time for a private discussion between the teacher and the parent/guardian. Either the parent/guardian or the teacher can initiate this procedure and let the other party (whether parent/guardian or teacher) know in advance that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss a problem or concern and give them a brief idea of what the issue is.
- b. Begin the meeting by stating your concern.
- c. Listen to the other participant's observations and perspectives regarding your concerns.
- d. If, after this exchange of views, either party feels that there is still an issue requiring resolution, the teacher and the parent/guardian should jointly define:
 1. A statement of the issues/problem
 2. A goal that, once reached, would indicate that the problem is resolved
 3. The actions that each will take to reach that goal
 4. A specific timeline for implementing the actions
 5. A follow-up meeting date to review progress and evaluate whether the plan is working or needs revision.
- e. A conference report is to be completed by the teacher summarizing points 1) through 5) with copies to the parent/guardian and the child's file.

- f. In the event no acceptable resolution of the problem has been reached at the classroom level, the matter can be brought to the Executive Director. If no acceptable resolution of the problem has been reached at the Executive Director level or if the matter involves the Executive Director, the matter can be brought to the SDCP Grievance Committee. The SDCP Grievance Committee is made up of three (3) Board Members and does not include the Executive Director. A parent/guardian may reach out to any Board Member, including their own classroom's representative to the Board, to obtain the names and contact information of individuals currently serving on the Grievance Committee. Once contact has been initiated, a meeting will be scheduled between the parent/guardian and at least 2 of the 3 members of the Grievance Committee. It may not be possible to keep matters brought to the Grievance Committee confidential, as issues such as safety of students and staff must be addressed, and the authority to do so lies outside of the committee. The committee will use good judgement when bringing grievances to the Board Co-Presidents or Board of Directors, such as having any discussions in closed meetings and/or asking Board Members involved in the conflict to be excused from hearing the report.

VII. SEXUAL ABUSE AND MOLESTATION POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

It shall be the policy of San Diego Cooperative Preschool (SDCP) to do everything in our power to prevent physical, emotional or sexual abuse against any children who attend SDCP or activities sponsored by SDCP. As a licensed childcare provider in the State of California, we are aware of our legal responsibilities to act in the best interest of those who have been abused or those who are most vulnerable to abuse. SDCP shall be in compliance with all local and state laws and meet all statutory requirements and regulations pertaining to preventing and reporting abuse and neglect.

SCOPE

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all management, employees, and classroom volunteers who have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth who attend SDCP or activities sponsored by SDCP. Effective 8/01/2020, no person under the age of 18 will be certified by the Administration to work or volunteer, directly with any children in our care.

BACKGROUND SCREENING

As mandated by the State of California, SDCP will screen persons in management and employment who have direct or indirect contact with children and will report all instances of abuse. All new employees are required to undergo background screening through Live Scan or submit proof of Criminal Background Clearance prior to employment. Additionally, new employees must sign a Statement Acknowledging Requirement to Report Child Abuse.

TRAINING

All employees of SDCP are required to take and pass the "Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training" (<https://mandatedreporter.ca.com/>) required by the California Department of Social Services, the regulatory agency that licenses SDCP. All employees must take both modules which include both the General Training (4 hours) to provide an overview of the California Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Act and the Childcare Providers Training (3 hours) which satisfies the requirements of AB1207 for all employees that work in a licensed childcare facility. A certificate of passing is required bi-annually and kept in each employee file.

ETHICS POLICY

All management and employees of SDCP shall not engage in sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and physical abuse, physical neglect, lack of supervision, emotional maltreatment, educational maltreatment, and/or moral-legal maltreatment of any children who attend SDCP or activities sponsored by SDCP.

DEFINITIONS

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse means unwanted physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexual contact or sexualized behavior and may include, by example, touching, fondling, other physical contact and sexual relations. Child/youth/adult with developmental disabilities sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. It includes but is not limited to: (1) incest, (2) rape, (3) prostitution, (4) any sexual intercourse, or deviant sexual conduct with, or fondling of a child, or youth, or adult with developmental disabilities who attend SDCP or activities sponsored by SDCP.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.

Sexual Misconduct: Sexual misconduct means a chargeable offense.

Physical Abuse - Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. This definition includes any non-accidental physical injury. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child, youth or adult with developmental disabilities.

Physical Neglect – Individual in charge does not take adequate precautions (given a child's, youth or vulnerable person's particular emotional developmental needs) to ensure his or her safety in and out of the preschool.

Lack of Supervision- individual in charge does not take adequate precautions (given a child's, youth or vulnerable person's particular emotional developmental needs) to ensure his or her safety in and out of the preschool.

Emotional Maltreatment- Persistent or extreme thwarting of a child's, youth or vulnerable person's basic emotional needs (such as the need to feel safe and accepted).

Educational Maltreatment- Individual in charge fails to ensure that a child, youth or vulnerable person receives adequate education.

Moral-Legal Maltreatment- Individual in charge exposes or involves a child, youth or vulnerable person in illegal or other activities that may foster delinquency or antisocial behavior.

STANDARD PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

SDCP shall maintain and update its policies and procedures to ensure the following:

- Adoption of clear written policies prohibiting unauthorized conduct.
- Adoption of supervision guidelines for all staff.
- Clear description of duties and responsibilities that are communicated and documented with all staff (No one-on-one isolated situations should apply to unauthorized staff and all Volunteers)
- Develop and maintain all job descriptions on an annual basis.
- Notify guardians of activities, behavior and practices that are unacceptable.

All members of the Board of Directors of SDCP shall be responsible and held accountable for safety policies and procedures set forth by SDCP. On an annual basis the Executive Committee shall examine compliance of the written policy and procedures to communicate rules and duties expected to be followed, to audit and monitor the due diligence and compliance of safety policies, including updates of such policies and procedures in the Employee and Parent/Guardian Handbook.

IMPLEMENTATION

All employees, parents/guardians, and volunteers shall be provided a copy of this policy and shall receive training information to assist in the understanding and implementation of this policy.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Persons who have knowledge of possible violations of this policy by management and employees shall report to the Preschool Executive Director and/or the Board Co-Presidents. The SDCP Administration will take action in investigation, reporting, due process, and take action to seek justice.

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS

All incidents shall be immediately reported to management and an incident report shall be filed. Management shall retain all incident reports for reference. When the necessity of reporting occurs, the protection of children in the preschool's care must be paramount.

1. An incident shall be reported immediately upon receipt of an allegation of violation of policy management on duty. The Executive Director shall be notified additionally. The Executive Director will facilitate reporting to law enforcement agencies as appropriate according to State and Federal reporting guidelines and shall also notify the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.
2. The person against whom an allegation has been made ("Respondent") will immediately be suspended.
3. If a minor is involved, that person's parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified of the alleged violation of policy by the Executive Director.

4. The Executive Director shall assist the investigation of the complaint and the process to use to work through the complaint. This may include assistance with legal and public relations issues as well as interviews necessary for the investigation of the complaint. Decisions of resolution shall ultimately rest with the Board of Directors.
5. The person or persons who first report the alleged violation of policy will be asked to document their knowledge of this incident(s) and provide that documentation to the Executive Director.
6. The Crisis Management Team which includes the Executive Director and the Co-Presidents of the Board of Directors, will determine who needs to be interviewed to determine the nature of the alleged violation and its impact. All conversations shall be documented including such things as (but not exclusive of) date, time, place, and names of persons involved. In addition, the substance of the conversation shall be documented, with the person interviewed asked to review notes for accuracy and to sign such notes. In addition, all contacts made, and actions taken by the Crisis Management Team are to be documented.
7. If a formal complaint is made, the Executive Director shall provide the respondent with a copy of the complaint.
8. Those making the allegations ("Plaintiff"), the parent(s)/guardian(s) of any minor involved, the Respondent, and any persons who supervise such persons shall be notified of any result of the investigation and final decision of the SDCP. Documentation shall be retained in a confidential, personal file.
9. The Executive Director will determine when and with whom information needs to be shared. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come from a spokesperson.
10. It shall be the goals of SDCP to provide supportive care to both the Plaintiff and the Respondent, and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system and appropriate counseling referrals.
11. If the Plaintiff should desire to appeal the decision of SDCP, the Executive Director and/or Board of Directors' legal counsel will be consulted.

RESOURCES

VIII. WHY PLAY IS SO VERY IMPORTANT

By James L. Hymes

Ask any young child what happened at school. You will almost always get the same answer: "Played." And when you visit school you are apt to have the same overall impression: "They're just playing." But don't be misled by that word "play." Children in early childhood groups do play - no question about that. But they don't play games with rules and scores and teams, the way older children play. Young children's play isn't that kind. And their play isn't like that of grown-ups playing golf or bridge. Young children's play isn't recreation. It isn't a dessert when the day's work is done. It isn't a change of pace.

Nor is their play giggles and laughter. Young children playing are very intent and earnest. Children's "play" - there ought to be a better word for it! - is a very serious business.

Young children "play" with playthings: with paints, clay, riding their trikes, climbing, building with blocks in the sandbox, with their dolls, doing puzzles, on the swings, on the slide, on the jungle gym... But young children "play" even when they are busy with ordinary, realistic, down-to-earth activities: when they are toileting, taking a bath, feeding an animal. Listen and you suddenly realize: they're not all here their minds are elsewhere. They are "playing." Young children can have their feet on the ground at the same time that the rest of their body and soul is imagining, pretending and making-believe. The young child sees a chair. A chair is to sit on and a chair is a horse, a plane, a boat, a car, a bus, a house, a cave, a garage.

Watch a youngster at an easel. The child consciously, carefully, deliberately puts red exactly where he or she wants the red to go. That is "play" and that is thinking. Listen to a child

on top of a jungle gym: "This must be our house and I must be the mother." That is "play" *and* that is a child with a plan, a child with an idea.

Whether the child speaks the words out loud or simply thinks them, in play the child always feels: "I have an idea." The idea doesn't have to be our grown-up kind of idea; the chair doesn't have to look like a horse or smell like a horse. Later, when the child is older, ideas will have to meet the harsh test of reality, and the child will want them to. Now, when the child is under age six, what counts is that the child thought up the idea. It is "play" and it is the beginning of thinking. The notion can surprise you but the fact is: "Play" - happy-sounding, seemingly easy-going - involves very vigorous intellectual activity.

Play serves a second important purpose in development: *Play is the young child's emotional equalizer*. Every young child meets some blows and disappointments, even under the best of conditions. Inevitably, adults are busy time passes slowly...toys break or get lost...day becomes night...Young children need some defenses against the realities of life, and "play" does that job.

Through play, children can feel more loved, more cared for, more protected, whenever any of these feelings would make life a little sweeter. All they have to do is say: "I must be the baby"... "I must be sick"... "I must be your prisoner"... Just as easily, through play children can feel more important, more powerful, more

impressive. It is easy to do: "I must be the driver"... "Giddy yap horsey, go, go"... "I must be the conductor. I collect the tickets."

Play is solace, play is strengthener. Play is comforter, play is courage-builder. "Play" - simple sounding - makes children stronger, better able to take whatever life sends their way.

Play turns children into social human beings - that is the third contribution to development. Children do play alone at times, even in school groups, but usually "Play" means people. It means listening to what the other children say; it means speaking up for your ideas. It means going along with what the others do; it means persuading others to follow you.

Play times are practice sessions in not being too bossy, not being selfish or grabby and not being too meek or too mild or too shy. *"Play" starts a child on the way to becoming civilized - a companion, a contributor.*

Play brings so much good to young children - it is built so deeply into their bones- that it goes on, for better or worse, whether we adults nourish it or not. But support for children's play is important.

Without it the play can turn downhill. It can become repetitive - the same old activity over and over again. Or play can become wild and out-of-bounds. Or the urge to play can be pushed down within the child, submerged exclusively into daydreaming.

What can we do to help? Children don't need our Ideas or direction from us - child play has to be their idea. But we can help by being sure that children have space that play needs at home and at school. We can help by providing the age mates that make play richer. We can help by making available the kinds of materials that let play flow easily: blocks, sand, clay, paints, dolls, dress-up clothes...

We help most of all simply by believing in the worth of and in the importance of play. The temptation is to become impatient with an activity so misleadingly named. Now that they are in school, the temptation is to push children into "serious things," forgetting how serious play is to them. The temptation is to prize only achievements and accomplishments that we can recognize, ignoring the basic contributions to mental and emotional and social development that play makes.

If you find yourself tempted to minimize child's play, keep this in mind: It grows and blossom only in this particular under-six span of years. For that short span in life, it touches almost all of the activities that fill up almost all of the minutes of the child's day. We ought to think twice before taking too lightly something so impressive.

Anything can be anything in the child's own "play" world. Anybody can be anybody, and anybody can do anything: "I must be the boss and you must be the worker. And you must do what I tell you..."

Anybody can be anybody, anybody can do anything; even nobodies who don't exist can do anything! In their special world, young children often talk to people who really aren't there. They have make-believe friends whom we can't see at all! Why? What's the good of this very different, under-six kind of play?

This is the unique characteristic of the under-six age: It lives in two worlds. One we call "the real world." But the other world is even more real to the young child: the private world, the "play world," the world within the boy or girl's mind. You and I see a chair. A chair is to sit on.

This play serves three very important purposes in nourishing the young child's development. First and foremost: *Play promotes very significant mental capacities*. It stretches the attention span. It builds the child's vocabulary. It develops perseverance. And most important: Play is the young child's distinctive way of beginning to organize ideas and to plan and to think.

Opportunity for creativity and (2) acting as an interested observer. This article goes beyond this to focusing on the importance of "talk" between adult and child.

How many sensible things can one say about a scribble? Or even about the picture of an older child? They need encouragement in the form of verbal approval and respect. Beyond that, they benefit by hearing language that stimulates awareness of the creative process and gives names to things. This sort of language development is important in providing basic equipment needed to develop more mature thought.

Principles suggested include:

- Communication must be geared to the level of the child. Be specific, relate comments to work the child has done. Adults can mention:
- The child's movements, emphasizing the actual physical process, the act of creating. "Look how fast your hand is moving back and forth." "You are really pushing hard on that crayon, aren't you!"
- The way things look. "You've made some little dots and a long curvy line." The adult might even point to the little dots when mentioning them.
- The feelings that are apparent. Clues to a child's feelings can come from body language, facial expression, or noted in color or work preferences. "You worked a long time on that painting; you must have enjoyed it very much." "It's exciting to find new things to do with a crayon."

When children initiate a conversation, adults have a lead to follow. If the child says, "See my big man," the adult might encourage awareness of personal aspects by asking who the big man is or what the child thinks about the man. For example, "Your man is so big he fills up the whole paper. Is he someone you know?" The child must feel free to disregard the adults, and they must accept it.

When children are reluctant to comment, the adult might ask "Would you like to tell me something about the things you have painted?" Children who cannot comment may be developmentally unready or may just want to keep them in their own private world. Adults might make a positive comment like "I'm glad you are having fun painting." (Remember, you don't need to talk, and neither does the child.)

Children who are not motivated to even scribble may get involved with group work, with an adult suggesting they choose crayon or felt pen and just move it around. A positive comment like, "I enjoyed sitting with you.

Maybe we can do something special next time," is a positive note if the child still won't cooperate.

Some children hum or sing as they work and shouldn't be interrupted. Some even stare into space, with the motor activity obviously most important. When a child is fully involved in the activity, it is best not to make comments, but when the work is done there may be an appropriate gesture or phrase. Adults should avoid questions such as "What are you drawing?" or "What's this?" because they put the child on the spot.

You might comment on the nice bright red used but avoid repeating stock phrases. As one child said, "Oh, Mrs. Merrill, you say that to everybody! "

IX. GIVING CHILDREN POSITIVE VERBAL DIRECTION

From The Nursery School: A Human Relationship Laboratory by Kathryn Read

Consistency of staff members and co-oping parents in guiding and limiting behavior contributes to the development of desirable behavior, as well as, to the child's feeling of success in learning. Put requests in positive rather than negative terms and avoid asking the child's opinion about doing something if they don't really have an option.

| Say | Avoid Saying |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Sit down when you slide | Don't stand up when you slide |
| Keep the sand low | Don't throw sand |
| Sit in the swing | Don't stand in the swing |
| Use both hands when you climb | You'll fall if you don't watch out |
| Climb down the ladder | Don't jump off the box |
| Throw the stick over the fence | Don't play with the stick; you might hurt someone |
| Keep the puzzle pieces together | Don't scatter the pieces all over |
| Turn the pages carefully | Don't tear the book |
| Talk in a quiet voice | Don't shout |
| Wipe your hands on the paper towel | Don't put your hands on anything |
| Be sure the ladder is safe | Be careful, you might fall |
| Keep your chair flat on the floor | Don't rock the chair |
| Walk around the swing | Be careful, the swing might hit you |
| Wipe your brush on the jar | Don't drip paint on the floor |
| Put your apron on | Don't you want to put your apron on? |
| Time to go inside | Shall we go inside? |
| Wash your hands | Don't you want to wash your hands? |
| Drink your milk | Don't you want your milk? |
| Drink out of your own glass | Don't bother the other children |

X. DEFENDING CHILDHOOD – ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO BE THEMSELVES

From *Childcare Information Exchange*, January 2001, by Johann Christoph Arnold

Despite all the talk about putting children first, our society is becoming increasingly hostile to its young. How different our schools, homes, and childcare centers would be if parents and educators would defend children's right to a childhood, instead of fixating on their progress and success.

The pressure to excel is undermining childhood as never before. Naturally, parents have always wanted their offspring to "do well," both academically and socially. No one wants their child to be the slowest in the class, or the last to be picked for a game on the field. But what is it about the culture we live in that has made that natural worry into such an obsessive fear, and what is it doing to our children?

Why are we so keen to mold them into successful adults, instead of treasuring their genuineness and carefree innocence? As my friend and fellow children's advocate Jonathan Kozol said in a recent interview: "It's almost as though we view those qualities as useless, as though we don't value children for their gentleness, but only as future economic units, as future workers, as future assets and deficits."

Of all the ways in which we push children to meet adult expectations, the trend toward high-pressure academics may be the most widespread, and the worst. I say "worst" because of the age at which we begin to subject them to it, and the fact that for some of them school quickly becomes a place they dread, and a source of misery they cannot escape for months at a time.

In my book *Endangered: Your child in a Hostile World*, I quote Melinda, a veteran preschool teacher in California. "We have parents asking whether their two-and-a-half-year-olds are learning to read yet, and grumbling if they can't. I see kids literally shaking and crying because they don't want to go into testing. I've even seen parents dragging their child into the room."

Of course, children ought to be stretched and intellectually stimulated. They should be taught to articulate their feelings, to write, to read, to develop and defend an idea, to think critically. But what is the purpose of the best academic education if it fails to prepare young people for the 'real' world beyond the confines of the classroom? What about those life-skills that can never be taught by putting a child on a bus and sending him to school?

It is not just schools that are pressuring children into growing up too fast. The practice of rushing them into adulthood is so widely accepted and so thoroughly ingrained that people often go blank when you voice concern about the matter. Take, for example, the number of parents who tie up their children's after-school hours in extracurricular activities. On the surface, the explosion of opportunities for "growth" in areas like music and sports looks like the perfect answer to the boredom faced by millions of latchkey children, but the reality is not always so pretty.

It's one thing when a child picks up a hobby, a sport, or an instrument on her own steam, but quite another when the driving force is a parent with an overly competitive edge. The pattern is

all too familiar: ambitious expectations are followed by the pressure to meet them, and what was once a perfectly happy part of a child's life becomes a burden that is impossible to bear.

As an author I became aware, after completing my first book, of something I had never noticed previously: the importance of white space. White space is the room between the lines of type, the margins, extra space at the beginning of a chapter, a page left blank at the beginning of the book. It allows the type to “breathe” and gives the eye a place to rest. White space is not something you're conscious of when you read a book. It is what *isn't* there.

Just as books require white space, so do children. That is, they need room to grow. The ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu reminds us that “it is not the clay the potter throws that gives the jar its usefulness, but the space within.” Our tendency to overbook children, emotionally and time-wise, robs them of the space and flexibility they need to develop at their own pace. They need stimulation and guidance, but they also need time to themselves. Hours spent alone in daydreams or quiet, unstructured activities instill a sense of security and independence and provide a necessary lull in the rhythm of the day.

It is a beautiful thing to see children absorbed in play; in fact, it is hard to think of a purer, more spiritual activity. Play brings joy, contentment, and detachment from the troubles of the day.

Especially nowadays, in our hectic, time- and money-driven culture, the importance of play cannot be emphasized enough. Friedrich Froebel, the father of the modern kindergarten, says, “ a child who plays thoroughly and perseveringly, until physical fatigue forbids, will be a determined adult, capable of self-sacrifice both for his own welfare and that of others.” In an age when fears of playground injuries and the misguided idea that play interferes with “real” learning has led some 40% of the school districts across the county to do away with recess, one can only hope that the wisdom of these words will not go entirely unheeded.

Allowing children the room to grow at their own pace does not mean ignoring them. Clearly, the bedrock of their security from day to day is the knowledge that we who care for them are always at hand, ready to help them, to talk with them, to give them what they need, and simply to “be there” for them. But how often are we swayed instead by our own ideas of what they want or need?

The answer, of course, is to drop our adult expectations entirely, to get down on the same level as our children and look them in the eye. Only when we lay aside our ambitions for them will we begin to hear what they are saying, find out what they are thinking, and see the goals we have set for them from their point of view.

Obviously, every child is different. Some seem to get all the lucky breaks, while others have a rough time simply coping with life. One child consistently brings home perfect scores, while the next is always at the bottom of the class. Another is gifted and popular, while still another, no matter how hard he tries, is always in trouble and often gets forgotten. As parents and caregivers, we must refrain from comparing children. Above all, we must refrain from pushing them to become something that their unique personal makeup may never allow them to be.

Wanting children to be “good” and “well behaved” is a dubious goal in the first place. Getting into trouble can be a vital part of building character. As Polish pediatrician Janusz Korczak points out: “The good child cries very little, he sleeps through the night, he is confident and good-natured. He is well behaved, convenient, obedient, and good. Yet no consideration is given to the fact that he may grow up to be indolent and stagnant.”

When we welcome the prospect of caring for the problematic child with these things in mind, we will begin to see our frustrations as moments that can awaken our best qualities. We will remember that children who break the rules often make more self-reliant and independent adults than those whose limits are never tried. By helping us to discover the limitations of “goodness” and the boredom of conformity, they can teach us the necessity of genuineness, the wisdom of humility, and finally, the reality that nothing good is won without struggle. “Unlearning” our adult mindsets is never easy, especially when children sometimes seem more of a bother than a gift. When there are children around, things just don’t always go as planned. Furniture gets scratched, flowerbeds trampled, new clothes torn or muddied, toys lost and broken. Children want to have fun, to run in the aisles; they need space to be rambunctious, silly, and noisy. After all, they are not china dolls or little adults, but unpredictable rascals with sticky fingers and runny noses.

Yet, if we truly love them, we will welcome them as they are.

