Parent Handbook 2025-2026

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Welcome to Playgroup

We are honored that you have chosen Playgroup for your child's early education experience. Playgroup supports a peaceful learning environment by being open to all of the potential lessons that surround our children every day. Children have a natural curiosity for the world around them. At Playgroup we explore their interests, questions, and expressions resulting in an all encompassing type of learning. A main goal for our school is to preserve and foster children's disposition to be active learners.

It is known fact that children thrive through parent involvement. Playgroup's educational philosophy, daily operations, and environment rely on parent participation. parents and teachers collaborate in a variety of ways, such as community event planning and fundraising.

The information contained in this handbook will help you understand our school. Please recognize that this handbook is continuously changing and growing as is Playgroup. If there are updates released, please file with your handbook so you will always have an updated copy on hand.

Sincerely,

Playgroup

Playgroup

Echo Park Silverlake Peoples Child Care Center

1953 Lake Shore Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif. 90039

323-660-9665

info@ourplaygroup.org

Our History

Founded in 1970 by a group of neighbors who needed affordable child care, Playgroup quickly developed a reputation for excellence under the direction of founder Ruth Beaglehole. Playgroup was in incorporated as the Echo Park Silverlake People's Child Care Center, a non-profit community organization, in 1974. Playgroup was a pioneer in the use of the anti-bias curriculum and has been a vocal advocate for children and families throughout its history.

Philosophy

Our philosophy is to encourage and facilitate quality learning experiences that allow children to flourish cognitively, physically, and socially. We view the child as a capable and intelligent individual. We believe knowledge is co-constructed, where we learn as individuals and as a community through respectful, responsive, and reciprocal experiences.

Mission

Playgroup is a special place where children's unique thinking flourishes. We are an early school made up of educators and families who believe in the importance of developmentally appropriate, hands-on learning, arts exposure and social guidance for the youngest of people. Reflecting the ethnic and social-economic diversity of our local community is of paramount importance. All children and families are supported to make meaningful connections with themselves, others and the greater community.

Teachers

All teachers meet or exceed requirements established by the Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing. Teachers continuously participate in professional development workshops and higher education in order to have current knowledge in early childhood education.

Playgroup Teachers and Administration

Pescaditos (Little Fish)

Karen Martinez

Leslie Parada

Delfines (Dolphins)

Jocelyn Rodriguez

Tonya Zezza

Ballenas (Whales)

Dianet Hernandez

Viviana H. Silva*

Assistant Director*

Viviana Hernandez

Executive Director

Adriana Duran

Playgroup Board of Directors

Arpi Idolor-Board Chair Anthony

Minero-Financial Officer

Elizabeth Schenck-Secretary

Tina Minero

Maha Saab

Curriculum

At Playgroup we practice the emergent curriculum with inspiration from schools in Reggio Emilia. Through this approach we view the child as capable, intelligent learners. Teachers and parents work alongside children, co-building a unique curriculum with every experience.

Children's interests, play and needs are observed by educators. Educators use tools of documentation, such as note taking and video, to reveal children's thought process and to extend a line of inquiry/exploration. This documentation is made visible for the community to see and reflect on. Through documentation parents are able to dialogue with children on specific experiences, creating an important home-school connection to learning. Parents and teachers extend the experiences with different languages such as art, music, science, and literature as well as different materials such as paint, clay, fabric, light, beads, recycled materials, and blocks.

Explorations can become both short and long term projects. Children are asked to hear and reflect on each other's expressions and theories. Teachers work alongside the children, asking stimulating questions or suggesting fun challenges. Examples of reflective teacher questions are: "What makes a mobile spin?" "Tell us more about what you mean when you say mobile need air..." "This artist made mobiles, how do think she made it?" "What materials can we use to make a mobile?"

An example of how children's play may turn into a small group exploration is as follows: When on a community walk, teacher's observe children interested in holes in the ground. A small group of children might first be asked to hear each other's ideas. They may then practice making holes in our garden area and/or use dimensional materials where they can continue to study holes such as a block of clay that teachers have intentionally set up. They may write a story or paint a picture about what they discovered. They may continuously visit the original holes to observe any changes and be offered a camera to photograph to record what they notice. Throughout the process teacher's document the experience. This documentation can be found in daily notes, displays on the wall and monthly

newsletters. Parents may then bring in books or extra shovels to continue the learning.

Lastly, at Playgroup, the environment is the third teacher. In other words, all indoor and outdoor environments have safe, peaceful, diverse, clear, natural, considered and open ended avenues of exploration. There are spaces for comfort, transformation and fun challenges throughout. Reflective of the curriculum, the environment is inspired and designed by children, teachers, and parents input.

Your First Week At Playgroup

The first week can be exciting and intimidating. This is all so brand new to your family. As a staff we are here to facilitate a smooth transition. We recommend guidelines to all families that have helped: consistent drop-offs and pick-ups, acknowledging your child's feelings, making sure you say "good-bye," and bringing a family book and family picture on the first day.

Acknowledging Feelings

During the first few weeks your child may feel some anxiety, sadness, etc., this is a normal reaction to a change in his/her routine. Please acknowledge these feelings by letting him or her know that these feelings are fully acceptable to you and that you understand how hard this can be. "Tommy I see that you are crying, I understand that this must be hard for you when we say good-bye, it is hard for me as well. I am really excited to pick you up later today and then we will be together again."

Consistent Drop-Offs

We recommend you to drop-off and pick-up your child within the same window of time each day. When saying "good-bye" try keeping it to a 5 minute length of time.

Saying Good-Bye

When you leave your child at Playgroup, you must say goodbye. Do not sneak away. This is important for all ages. The process of trust begins with direct good-byes. As you are getting ready to leave it really helps to give a 5 minute warning.

What to say and what to do:

☺"In 5 minutes mommy is going to leave" you may add "teacher...will take good care of you while you are here" and/or "I will always come back to get you and tonight we will have dinner at home like we always do."

☺If you would like some help, carry your child to a teacher and let the teacher know you need some assistance. "We are having a hard time saying good-bye, can you help us?" Tell your child the teacher will take good care of him/her and then hand your child over. The teacher will hold your child as you walk away and they will assure your child that he/she will be taken care of and that you will come back. Acknowledge your child's feelings. Let your child know you understand that this is hard, and that you love them and you will be back to pick them up. Give them a big hug and kiss, smile and then walk away.

Family Book and Picture

Parents must bring a family photo on the first day of school. We highly recommend to create a family and school picture book. Children use these tools throughout the day for comfort.

What to Bring

On your first day at Playgroup, please bring the following:

- One pair of shoes and season appropriate back up clothes to be stored in your child's cubby.
- Sunscreen/Insect Repellent
- A family picture
- A light blanket, crib sheet, and any type of snuggle toy for nap time.
- If your child is in diapers please bring a supply of diapers, wipes, and diaper cream. Please have a constant supply at Playgroup.
- Please label all of your child's belongings.

Earthquake/Emergency Kit (Please place in a zip lock bag)

- 1-2 Complete change of clothes
- 1 Pair of shoes
- Family picture and love note

Parent Hours and Fund-Raising

Monthly Parent Hours

Each family, regardless of the number of children attending Playgroup, agrees to volunteer a minimum of 2 hours of service to Playgroup per month. Check-in with teachers and/or director for specific needs within the classroom and school.

Fund-Raising

Playgroup operations costs are not covered through monthly tuition alone. In order to be a quality educational center and meet market demands, we require parent fundraising efforts. Playgroup fund-raising efforts will be used to enhance children's learning by providing extra-curricular specialist and/or enrichment, environmental sustainability, financial aid for families in need, and teacher education. ***Therefore, Playgroup requires a minimum of $300 in yearly fundraising efforts.*** Failure to participate in fundraising efforts will result in a charge of $300 at the end of the year.

Annual Playgroup Fundraisers:

TBA

General Procedures

Arrival Time

If you arrive during your classrooms morning meeting or circle time we ask that you wait to enter the class until the meeting is done (about 15 to 20 minutes). Below are the times that the classrooms have their morning meetings. It is always best to arrive at least ½ hour prior to circle time so your child may acclimate.

The Pescadito Room 9:30 am
The Delfine Room 9:30 am
The Ballena Room 9:30 am

Pick Up Procedure

Once you are at Playgroup, your child is legally your responsibility. For safety reasons children are not to be unattended. Please be aware of your child during arrival and pick-up times.

Sign In and Sign Out Your Child

You are required by law to sign your child in and out each day. Playgroup refers to Sign-In sheet in case of emergency to accurately count children in attendance. It is also our legal record of daily attendance.

Cubbies

Every child has his/her own cubby. Please make sure that is stocked with at least one full changes of clothes that are weather appropriate

Clothing

- Please dress your child in play clothes. This is a play and art based Preschool. Throughout the year the children at Playgroup will be exposed to various art media that will stain clothing. Children naturally love to explore and it's important that they feel free to do this without worrying about their clothes.
- Please be sure your child's clothing is comfortable and weather appropriate.
- Please label all outerwear with your child's name using a sharpie pen on the tag.
- We encourage children to manage their bathroom and changing needs as independently as possible. Clothes that are easily removable will make this process easier.

Potty

Children do not have to be potty trained to enter Playgroup. Using the toilet is a learning process and we honor each child's individual pace. Children are brought to the bathroom on a regular basis and during this time they are asked if they want to use the potty. If the child is not ready he/she will still have the opportunity to see other children using the potty on a regular basis. This aids the child in becoming more comfortable with the idea of using the toilet. When you feel your child is ready to use the potty please let us know. The whole process will work more smoothly if it is a group effort.

Classroom Movement

All children at Playgroup receive a developmentally appropriate experience regardless of age and the classroom that they are enrolled in. When the time is right for a child to move up to the next classroom many factors are taken into account, such as adequate space in classrooms, cohort of children, and developmental readiness of child. Before we begin any move we contact the parents to let them know that

we think that the child is ready, we then discuss with the parents their thoughts on the move. Anytime we move a child to a new class it takes time, the child may move back and forth from their old class to their new class until they are comfortable enough to stay in their new room; this transition usually takes about a week. We try to move children in pairs or groups but in the end all moves are as individual as the children.

Toys

Personal toys are better left at home. This does not include stuffed animals etc that comfort the child while napping.

Lunch

- We ask that everyone respect other parents' decisions for lunches/snacks they pack for their child
- Parents must provide lunch, a non-heat lunch.
- If you pack grapes, cut them in half
- Do not pack nuts or peanut butter *This may vary based on our student body.
- If you pack chicken or fish, leave out the bones
- Because of allergies, teachers will not allow children to share their lunch
- Alert staff to any allergies your child may have
- Because of storage and space limitations lunches are stored at room temperature-Please include ice pack.
- We recommend using an ice pack to maintain cold lunches "cold" and a thermos to keep warm lunches "warm."
- We provide water for children at lunch
- Label all lunch dishware with your child's name

Birthday

We celebrate Birthdays by having a "banana party" in the classroom with your child and their classmates. We slice a banana, decorate it with other fruit and veggies and place a birthday candle on it and sing Happy Birthday for the celebrant. We serve sliced bananas to the rest of the children. If your child's Birthday falls on a weekend discuss with your teacher the best day to celebrate it while your child is attending Playgroup. The children love the banana parties!!☺

Nap/Rest Time

As a full-time, full-day California Licensed Child Care Center, we are legally required to provide our students with a period during the day to rest and/or sleep. Rest time at Playgroup is from 12:30-2:30pm.

Title 22, Div 12, Chap 1, Art 6 Regulation 101230 ACTIVITIES/NAPPING

We follow early childhood education best practices, which include a period of rest and quiet time during our full day program. During nap time our staff may play soft music, turn off lights and offer back pats for those children that would like a back pat.

We are unable to keep children from falling asleep; especially if they are visibly tired and asking to rest during our scheduled rest-time.

Additionally, this time allows children to process the mornings activities before they move into the late afternoon. Children are encouraged to take a rest after lunchtime and the majority of the children fall asleep. The children rest on padded mats. Each child will need a small blanket, a crib sheet, and stuffy; nap-mats also work great! All items must be labeled with the child's name. Parents are asked to take child's bedding home on Friday to wash them and bring them back on Monday.

Visiting Children

All visiting children you bring to Playgroup are your responsibility. If you bring children with you while you complete parent hours they are not to be left with the teachers unless they are students and are enrolled on that day.

Email List

Once you are accepted to Playgroup you will be automatically added to the Playgroup email list. The Playgroup email list is one way only. We now have a Playgroup Public Parent Directory, if you wish not to be on the public email lists please inform Directors.

Release of Child

Playgroup will only release children to parents with legal custody or the child's legal guardian, anyone authorized by the legal parent/guardian in writing, upon presentation of ID or police or welfare workers with proper authorization and ID. Parents need to provide written authorization for all persons dropping off and picking up children. Parents also need to provide copies to Playgroup of any court orders that limit the parental rights of custody and/or visitation rights. Playgroup will not release the child to anyone who is intoxicated. Playgroup will make alternative transportation arrangements and temporary childcare arrangements, if deemed necessary, to ensure the safety of the child.

Our Children's Needs Agreement

Here at Playgroup we do our best to honor all of our children. If there is a time when our teachers and staff are not able to meet the needs of any of the children enrolled at our center a meeting will be called with the child's parents or guardians to discuss options available to assist the teachers and the child within the Playgroup environment. We recognize that occasional hitting, biting, and pushing are all age appropriate behaviors for preschool children. If a child exhibits behavior of this type frequently and if it persists over a 2 to 3 week period we will contact his/her parents regarding the behavior and if need be a qualified behaviorist will be brought in to do an observation. The parents of this child may be asked to pay for either a portion or the entire cost of the observation. If after the observation is concluded the parents may then be asked to pay for an aid to help their child with self regulation until the behavior improves.

Playgroup Practices

At Playgroup we practice mindfulness of our words and actions, especially when encountering our children. If you ever find yourself frustrated or need help redirecting your own child and/or another child at Playgroup, please call a teacher or director for assistance. We are here to help and facilitate a positive atmosphere for all our Playgroup community.

Illness

Children should be kept home when they have any of the following symptoms: fever, diarrhea, vomiting, conjunctivitis (pink eye) or discharge from eyes, severe coughing, skin rash of unknown diagnosis, difficult or rapid breathing, or nits on hair from head lice. If a symptom of an illness manifests while a child is at school, the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately and if possible, the child will be cared for away from other children while waiting to be picked up by parent/guardian. *Please follow Covid-19 policies and guidelines outlined in our Illness Policy.

Diarrhea: A first excessively loose stool will constitute a call to the parent. New diet may be the cause. 2nd loose stool, child will be sent home until diarrhea subsides and normal stools are produced at home. When a child returns after a diarrhea bout, it is a provisional return; if the child experiences another bout of diarrhea, he or she must be picked up immediately.

Fever: If a child has an ear temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, parent will be asked to pick up the child. The child may return when he/she is fever free and after being kept home for at least 24 hours. This means that your child will be out of the center for one full day after being sent home.

Vomiting: Exclusion for vomiting is decided by incident. Two or more episodes will be cause for exclusion. A first vomiting episode may cause exclusion if the teacher determines that the situation for the child is extreme or debilitating.

Eye Discharge: Eyes must be free of mucus or running substance. Children are asked to be kept home until medication is being administered. Clogged tear gland conditions must have a written physician's note.

Skin Rash: If a child has a rash of any kind, the child will be sent home until the rash is gone or until a physician's note has been received stating that the rash is not contagious. Prior to the child being readmitted after an illness, the admitting teacher will do a health check. Parents will remain with the child until it is determined whether or not to readmit the child to school. Teachers will be available by phone to discuss with parents any question they have regarding returning their child to school after an illness. A physician's certificate of good health may be required to return to the center.

Infection Control

Teachers practice universal infection control by using gloves when changing diapers, treating wounds, or at any other bodily fluid contact times. The children do not seem concerned about this. If they do ask, teachers tell them it is to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Medication

Prescription Medications: All prescription medication must be in an original childproof pharmacy container labeled with the child's name, name of drug, strength, dosage, physician or dentist name, date of original prescription, expiration date and legible instructions for administration and storage.

Non-Prescriptions Medication: Specific written instructions for administration signed by a physician. Medication must be in original container with label and expiration date.

Non-Prescription Ointments: Diaper creams, tropical lotions (sunscreen). The center requires a form signed by a parent/guardian. They must be in original container with child's name. Parents are responsible for providing a medication dispenser with clearly marked measurement. Medication will not be given without a dispenser which measures the dosage as written in the prescription. Medications are stored in a box in the kitchen refrigerator. No medication may be given to mask symptoms.

Chronic Medical Conditions: If your child has a chronic medical condition, which needs "as needed" treatment (e.g. asthma, eczema, seizures due to high fever), we need physician instructions on file at the center.

In Closing

We are honored that you have chosen Playgroup for your child's early education experience. We hope your child's experience at our school is a positive introduction to education and learning that will last a lifetime.