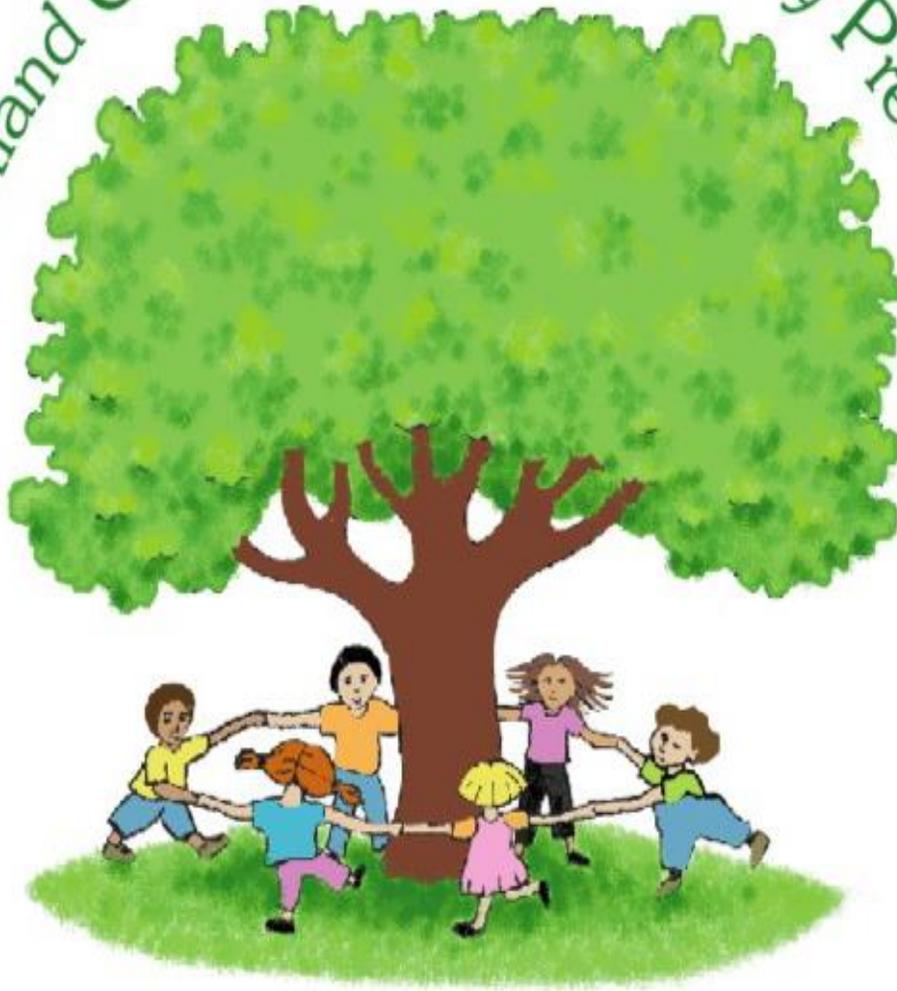


Portland Circle of Friends & Family Preschool



PRESCHOOL MEMBER HANDBOOK

Located in
Kern Park Christian Church
6828 SE Holgate Blvd
Portland, OR 97290

Established 1996

www.PortlandCircleofFriends.Org

The Portland Circle of Friends and Family Preschool Board may change, delete or discontinue parts of the handbook, at any time, without notice. In the event of any changes, all Circle of Friends preschool members will be notified.

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General Information

Mission Statement

Portland Circle of Friends and Family Preschool serves young children by providing a play-based program, which builds high self-esteem and encourages problem-solving skills.

Who We Are

Portland Circle of Friends and Family Preschool has been in existence as a cooperative preschool, in Portland, Oregon, since the fall of 1996. The preschool is operated by parents/guardians, and continues to provide a valuable educational service, at a low cost, to families within the community.

Our Philosophy

Portland Circle of Friends and Family Preschool offers an experiential hands-on learning environment that encourages independence, positive social interactions, and meaningful learning experiences.

We believe in helping children build high self-esteem in a non-competitive atmosphere where personal challenges are valued as a natural happening from which we learn. We believe it is of primary importance to help children learn to accept what is beautifully unique about themselves, others, and the world around them.

Our Teacher

Teacher Tami has raised two children and provided in-home childcare for 12 years. She has lived in the Lents neighborhood of East Portland for over 20 years and stays active in the community. Teacher Tami attends annual workshops and classes to continue her lifelong learning in early childhood education. Years ago, while doing childcare for Kelly Elementary School's Family Stories Group, Tami realized that our community lacked a high-quality preschool to meet the needs of its families. With the support of the school staff and other community organizations, Circle of Friends first opened its doors in the fall of 1996.

Teacher Tami truly believes that children learn best through a play-based curriculum. She believes that with the proper learning environment, where children can explore, participate in hands-on investigations and conduct experiments, they will build the foundation necessary for successful future educational experiences. She also believes that by playing both alongside and with other children, they will grow to have more self-confidence and be better equipped in group settings. Teacher Tami cites Bev Bos as her philosophical mentor, and agrees with her assertion that "Experience is not the best teacher, it is the only teacher."

How We Operate

The school term begins in September and continues through June. Our Caterpillar class is for children aged 2-3 and meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am-11:30am. Our Butterfly class is for children aged 4-5 and meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9am-12pm. Children need not be potty trained to enroll in either class.

Registration and Enrollment

New students must be 24 months or older by October 1st of that school year to be enrolled in the Caterpillar class. Students must be 4 years old by October 1st of the school year to enroll in the Butterfly class. These age requirements are guidelines set by the board. Only the board has the right to make the decision to place a child in a class that is not within the guidelines, after an observation by the teacher and a majority vote.

Returning students must communicate their intent to return for the next school year by April 1st to hold their place; a non-refundable registration fee is due by May 31st. Registration for the next year will be open until each class is full, after which, applicants can submit their names to a wait list.

Registration and Enrollment Requirements

- Read Preschool Member Handbook
- Complete and return the following forms:
 - Registration form, Medical Information Form, Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment, Permission to Walk/Photograph, Criminal Background Check, Getting to Know Your Child, Family Contract, Criminal Background Form, Current immunization report,
- Submit a registration fee, payable to Portland Circle of Friends and Family Preschool
- Attend Orientation

Tuition and Registration Fees

Annual registration for all students is \$75 per child. That covers one background check; all persons volunteering in the classroom must submit and pass a background check, and each additional background check will cost an additional \$5. If you have questions regarding registration, please contact the membership coordinator or president of the board.

Monthly tuition for the Caterpillar class is \$100. Monthly tuition for the Butterfly class is \$135. Families that are able to pay for the entire year (Caterpillars: \$900/Butterflies: \$1215) before September 31st will receive a discount equal to one month of tuition. These payments are nonrefundable. Monthly tuition is due, in full, no later than the 1st of the month. If the 1st of the month falls on a weekend please make arrangements to pay earlier. If tuition is not paid by the 1st of the month you will be charged a \$20 late fee with that month's tuition. All tuition, registration, and other fees are non-refundable. Fines may be disputed by submitting a letter of exception within three days of the missed commitment to a member of the board. If you have questions regarding tuition or fees, please contact the treasurer.

Membership Requirements

Families and Our School

Portland Circle of Friends and Family Preschool defines a “family member” as any adult who is significant in the child's life. We desire and value the active involvement of each child's family within the school. We welcome all parents, adult siblings, grandparents, and caregivers, provided each person has previously passed a background check.

The responsibility for the preschool's educational program is a continuous cooperative effort between the teacher and the co-op members. No one within the school is paid except our teacher. The teacher and board members hold a fall orientation and quarterly parent's meeting focused on developing our skills as caregivers. Because we are a cooperative, we practice share ownership of the school, and every member shares in the investment and ownership of the cooperative.

Parent Expectations:

- Bring your child to school well rested, healthy, in clean clothes, and having had a healthy breakfast.
- Interact with the other children and parents/guardians within the classroom.
- Stay with your child as long as you feel you need to, but when you tell your child you are leaving, do so. Some children become anxious when they are unsure as to whether their parent has really gone.
- If you come across issues, please bring them directly to the board or teacher, in order to have them resolved. Using our public forums is an unacceptable way to address issues within the school.

Family Expectations:

- Participate in orientation and fundraising, as required.
- Attend the 4 scheduled family meetings throughout the school year.:
 - Meetings last approximately an hour and a half. Families need to have one person in attendance at each of the scheduled meetings. A family's failure to participate in a family meeting will result in a \$20 fee, for each meeting not attended.
- Clean the preschool one time during the school year.
 - Keeping our school clean and sanitary for our children is a high priority and a team effort. Therefore, at least one adult from each child's family must participate in a classroom clean up once a year. A sign-up sheet will be posted at the beginning of the school year. Failure to complete a clean-up day that has been signed up for will result in a \$20 fee.
- Sign up for and fulfill a family job.
 - For the preschool to run smoothly, each family is required to sign up for at least one preschool job. Please select your top three job preferences at orientation; communicate with the board about the challenges and strengths of that job to ensure that you will be able to carry out your duties for the entire school year. Failure to fulfill a family job will result in a \$20 fee, applicable each month a family does not fulfill a job.
- Volunteer in the classroom two times per month or as needed to fulfill classroom needs.

Volunteering in the Classroom

Two family members will assist in the classroom during each class session, and each family is to sign up for two volunteer days per month, and one emergency day. A parent/guardian or visitor is welcome to stay during class time, but it will not count as their “volunteer day” unless they are scheduled for that day. Volunteer days must be signed up for quarterly, done at orientation and parent meetings.

Classroom volunteers need to arrive on time. If you are going to be more than 20 minutes late please call the teacher, or another parent, so they can ask someone to stay until you arrive. Failure to do so will result in a \$20 fee. If you are unable to volunteer on the day you signed up for, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. Failure to find a suitable replacement will result in a \$20 fee. If there is an emergency, please contact the “emergency parent” signed up for that day. Please do not email or call the school. When you use the emergency parent, you will pick up one of their days the following month at their discretion.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- Dress appropriately for working in a messy classroom.
- You are a role model for the children. Be playful and open to new experiences.
- Share your talents within the classroom; let the teacher know in advance if you have a special activity, song, story, or game to share.
- Please arrive on time on your volunteer day, and plan to stay until the classroom is cleaned up.
- Other children in your care may accompany you on your volunteer day.
- Please never talk about concerns regarding a child in the child's presence.
- Gently guide the children and redirect undesirable activities.
- The teacher will inform classroom volunteers of any special events, visitors or circumstances of the day. Occasionally, the teacher will be attending a conference, in which case a substitute teacher (usually a qualified parent/guardian) will be on duty.

Snack Time

A snack is offered to the children in the middle of each school day. Snack time offers many opportunities for children to practice skills such as serving and pouring, using utensils, using appropriate table manners, and choosing healthy foods. The volunteer classroom helpers are responsible for providing the class snacks on their volunteer days. Please note your planned snack on the calendar when signing up so that volunteers can coordinate their choices. Volunteers choose whether to serve individually or family-style depending on the food and age of group.

Please bring healthy snacks that are low in sugar. Some preferred snacks include: fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, raisins or other dried fruit, applesauce, crackers (gluten-free and not), yogurt, and cheese. Fresh vegetables (carrots, celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, broccoli, etc.)

There may be instances in which specific foods are not allowed in the classroom. If your child has food allergies or cannot eat specific foods, please indicate this on your registration forms, and make sure the teacher knows. All allergies will be posted to remind volunteers.

Guidance Tips

One of the most delicate tasks of raising children is helping them to develop their own internal controls. Our goal is to maintain an atmosphere of acceptance and warmth wherein the children can accept the necessary limits and frustrations of group interaction. Children are not allowed unlimited freedom to express hostility, whether physically or verbally, for it is essential that the children feel safe in this environment.

Your volunteer day is an opportunity for you to expand and practice your guidance skills with young children, to meet your child's friends, and get to know other co-op members. You will also have the chance to see your child interact with other adults in a supportive environment. We hope you will look forward to your time in the classroom. Without you it would not be possible for the class to run smoothly.

Enforcing Classroom Rules

Here are some general guidelines when interacting with children in the classroom regarding situations where boundaries need to be created and/or conflict is involved:

- If the child's safety is at stake, firmly tell the child “No,” or “Stop.”
- If a child is misusing equipment, or displaying inappropriate behavior, use positive statements, e.g. “The water stays in the touch table” rather than “No splashing”; or, “Walk please” rather than “No running.”
- If a problem occurs between two or more children, we find this problem solving method most effective:
 - Go to the children; do not yell across the room.
 - Get down to their eye level and use a low voice.
 - State the problem clearly, “You both want that block.”
 - Give children the chance to tell you what the problem is (often we have not seen the whole incident), and validate their perception by repeating their words.
 - Recognize each child's feelings: “You feel angry and frustrated because you want that block.”
 - Generate ideas from the children on how to solve the problem. “What could we do to help you solve the problem?” (Get another one, take play elsewhere, etc.)
 - Help the children evaluate the ideas and decide on what plan they will follow.
- Whenever possible, allow children to solve their own problems rather than immediately providing a solution. Hold back from facilitating as long as possible before getting involved.
- Time outs are not used in our classroom. If the above problem solving technique doesn't work, we will redirect in doing another activity. At no time will a child be abused, struck, or roughly handled. Our goal is always to help the children develop inner-control and confidence.
- The teacher reserves the right to contact the parents of any students at any time if disruptive behavior continues and we are not able to control the situation in the classroom.

General School Policies

Drop Off & Pickup

When you bring your child to school please walk with them all the way to the classroom door. If you arrive early, please wait quietly with your child until the teacher opens the door and is ready for school to begin. If someone different than usual will be picking up your child please let the teacher and volunteers know in advance; all family members who will be picking up children must be listed on the Registration Form.

When picking up your child you must come to the door of the classroom. If class is still in session, use this time to check your parent folder, art folder, and the parent board for announcements. Please be on time to pick up your child. If you are running late, call the school or another parent to let the teacher and volunteers know. Families will be charged a \$20 fee for picking up children more than 20 minutes after class has ended.

Health Policy

You are required to provide proof of your child's current immunization status during registration. Because we wish to prevent the spread of colds and infections, please do not bring your child to school if they exhibit any of the following: skin rashes, sore throat, persistent cough, vomiting, or fever. If your child has had these symptoms in the last 24 hours we expect you to keep your child home. You should notify us immediately if you learn your child has been exposed to any communicable conditions such as chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, whooping cough, etc. Remember that a child who does not feel well is not happy in school. When in doubt please keep your child at home. If your child is going to be absent from school, we would appreciate hearing from you, before school if possible.

Clothing

Play clothes are necessary, because children play on the floor and engage in messy activities, such as gluing, painting, and sand and water play. Soft-soled shoes with traction are recommended. Please dress your child according to the weather and always assume that we will have some outside time daily, unless weather conditions are extreme.

Personal Toys

Each child will have chances throughout the year to bring items from home to share during circle time, through activities such as the Share Bear or Letter Can. Please do not allow your child to bring toys when it isn't their sharing day. Toys are sometimes hard to share and can get lost or damaged. If personal toys are a necessity, they should be stored in the child's cubby until the end of the day.

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations should be low key; party favors are discouraged at school. Children can celebrate with a healthy snack and singing. Invitations to parties should not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited.