



Glassell Park Infant, Toddler and Preschool Parent Handbook 2026-2027

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WELCOME!

We are glad you chose SPARK Preschool and look forward to an exciting and satisfying experience together. This handbook is intended to familiarize you with the school and to act as a resource for our philosophy, programs, operating procedures, school policies, and general guidelines. Please keep this handy as it will answer many of your questions. If you don't find it here, please feel free to ask the Director. If the Director cannot meet with you immediately, an appointment or phone call will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Parent Handbook

Our School and Philosophy

SPARK Preschool is based on the developmental philosophies of Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky, and their principles about the growth and development of children. Children go through a predictable order of development; however, the timing and rhythm of those stages is unique to each child. The curriculum and the room environment are planned to promote children's advancement through the developmental stages at their own rate of growth. We blend child-initiated, teacher-initiated, and emergent curriculum, which allows us to meet the individual needs of the child.

We seek to teach the whole child. We feel that a high-quality, development program fosters the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative growth of the child. Utilizing an integrated curriculum, learning centers, and a low teacher ratio, we provide rich learning experiences that enhance all the developmental domains. We believe learning is best done through a discovery process that encourages experiential, "hands-on" learning. We provide an environment where the child can reach as far as his/her development allows.

We believe that play is the child's natural way of learning. Our preschool indoor environment is created to offer a wide variety of choices in the block building, reading, art, writing and drawing, science, puzzles, and manipulative areas. Our outdoor environment offers a variety of physical experiences including a climbing structure, swings, trikes, sandbox, and water tables. We offer a program and environment that has different levels of difficulty so children can make choices that are challenging and exciting but lacking in stress. When children play a significant role in choosing the experiences of their day, they explore what is meaningful to them as well as develop self-reliance and independence.

We feel it is essential to provide a setting where children feel cared for, valued, nurtured, and encouraged. Only then will they feel secure enough to move out into their school world, make choices, try new experiences, and face new challenges with confidence and be comfortable making mistakes and trying again. In an emotionally safe environment, children are stimulated to ask questions, to share thoughts and ideas, and to explore creative solutions to problems. In these ways, children will develop the self-esteem that is so important to a healthy self.

Within a climate of teacher caring and support, we seek to help children recognize their many and varied emotions and to help them develop skills to safely express them. We also work to develop a child's understanding of self in relation to others, to learn to recognize other children's needs and feelings, to develop concern and empathy for others. We use a peaceful conflict resolution model to help children to problem solve during their day.

Through many prosocial activities, we help the children refine their skills to develop and keep friendships. We utilize circle time (and other activities) with storytelling, book reading, singing, moving, listening, and taking turns to help children develop group skills.

We value a diverse community, ethnically, racially, culturally, and religiously. We will explore the rich heritage, customs, and traditions of our community and the larger world. We want each child to begin to discover the uniqueness and value of themselves and every other person. We have an anti-bias curriculum that permeates the learning life of the children.

Parents and other caretakers are a vital part of children's lives at the school. As a parent involvement school, we welcome and encourage you to be actively involved in the children's school lives. Through parent conversations, both formal and informal, parent gatherings, parent coffees, parent potlucks, educational sessions, and volunteering, each family can find ways to be part of the school life that offers both parents and children opportunities for growth and support. We encourage your involvement; however, we recognize that each family will participate in its own way as it has its own time demands and interests.

Our Programs

Our programs are designed to offer a high-quality preschool experience that meets a variety of different family needs. We serve children ages 4 months to 5 years old until they enter kindergarten.

We are open Monday through Friday. We have a full-day program for Infant from 8-5pm, Toddlers from 8:45-4pm and for our Preschoolers from 9am-4:15pm. Children can attend four or five full days a week. We also offer a 5 day per week, half-day program for our young 2 year olds, new to preschool. Lunch is to be provided by parents. Please provide a lunch box for your child daily; it will be kept in the child's cubby. Refrigeration cannot be provided, and ice packs should be used to keep certain foods cold. Please provide food that needs to be kept warm in a thermos since we do not heat up food.

Morning and afternoon care are available as part of the toddler and preschool programs. Morning care is between 8:00am and 9:00am. Afternoon care begins at 4:15pm and ends at 5:00pm promptly. Our daily morning schedule involves a balance of indoor and outdoor time; the session will also include snack, group time, singing time, and active play. Lunch will take place around noon each day.

Infant Program (4 - 24 months old)

Our infant program provides a warm, nurturing, and responsive environment for our youngest learners, beginning as early as 4 months old. In this classroom, infants build secure attachments with caregivers who are attuned to their individual needs, rhythms, and cues. Our teachers create a calm and predictable atmosphere that supports healthy development in all areas—physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language.

Throughout the day, infants engage in developmentally appropriate experiences that promote curiosity and connection. These include tummy time, music and singing, early literacy through stories and picture books, gentle sensory exploration, fine-motor play with soft and graspable materials, outdoor time, and opportunities for movement such as crawling, cruising, and supported walking. Teachers narrate experiences, offer rich language input, and encourage early communication through gestures, sounds, and simple sign language.

Our program emphasizes individualized care: each baby follows their own feeding, sleeping, and diapering schedule, ensuring they grow and learn comfortably at their own pace. With consistent routines, loving relationships, and endless opportunities to explore, our infant program lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning.

Toddler Program (18 - 36 months old)

Our toddler program offers a classroom for children ages 18 to 36 months. In our toddler program, children experience a caring and supportive environment where they build trust with other adults and start forming friendships. They engage in a variety of hands-on activities and new experiences that encourage exploration and discovery of the world around them. Activities include singing, dancing, storytelling, conversations, listening exercises, cooking, painting, playing with toys, outdoor play, dramatic play, and sensory exploration with materials like sand, water, cornmeal, or foam. The program is designed to support each child's individual development, allowing them to progress at their own pace.

Preschool Program (2-6 years old)

Our preschool program provides a vibrant, play-based learning environment designed to inspire curiosity, confidence, and independence in children ages 2 to 6. At this stage, children are eager to explore, build relationships, express their ideas, and make sense of the world around them. Our teachers create engaging, thoughtfully prepared classrooms that support social-emotional growth, early academics, creativity, and problem-solving through hands-on experiences.

Children participate in a rich variety of activities each day, including art, music, dramatic play, building and engineering, early math and literacy experiences, science exploration, cooking projects, outdoor play, and group games. Circle times help foster community, language, and listening skills, while small-group activities encourage children to collaborate, ask questions, and develop new skills at their own pace.

Our curriculum is rooted in developmentally appropriate practice, allowing children to learn through play, imagination, and real-world experiences. Teachers model empathy, communication, and cooperation, helping children build strong friendships and self-regulation skills. With a balance of structure and freedom, our preschool program prepares each child for kindergarten and beyond—academically, socially, and emotionally—while nurturing their natural joy and love of learning.

Toddler Program Placement & Written Parental Permission

At SPARK Preschool, the Toddler Program is designed to support the unique developmental needs of younger children by providing a nurturing, safe, and engaging environment that encourages early learning, social connection, and independence.

In accordance with Community Care Licensing regulations, written parental permission is required before a child may be placed in the Toddler Program. This permission confirms that families understand the nature of the toddler setting and agree to their child's participation in the program.

Prior to enrollment or transition into the Toddler Program, parents or guardians will be asked to review and sign the following authorization in their enrollment packet and prior to placement in the toddler program:

Toddler Program Parental Permission

I understand that my child is being placed in the Toddler Program at SPARK Preschool, which serves children under the age of three. I acknowledge that I have been informed about the structure of the Toddler Program, including classroom routines, supervision practices, and licensing requirements specific to toddler care.

I hereby give my written permission for my child to participate in the Toddler Program at SPARK Preschool.

Child's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

This signed authorization will be maintained in the child's file as required by Community Care Licensing.

If you have any questions about the Toddler Program or would like to discuss whether this placement is the right fit for your child, we encourage you to reach out. We value open communication and look forward to partnering with your family during this important stage of development.

Operating Policies and Procedures

Enrollment

Enrollment is open to all children regardless of race, color, creed, sex, religion, or national origin. We may accept children with developmental delays, disabilities, or handicaps on a case-by-case basis and at the sole discretion of the Director. If it is determined that the child and the school will benefit from the child's enrollment and the staff is able to meet the needs of the individual child as well as the needs of the other children, an individualized plan will be created with the parents that may involve professional support/intervention and inclusion specialists. Parents must adhere to the individualized plan or risk the child's removal from the school. This removal is at the sole discretion of the Director/Owner.

A child must be a minimum of 4 months old to be enrolled and we accept children until they reach kindergarten age.

SPARK Preschool operates on a year-round basis from August to July. We are closed most federal holidays, 2 days over Thanksgiving, roughly two weeks for winter break, 1 week for spring break, certain Jewish High Holy Days, and approximately 2 weeks in Summer. The school's yearly calendar will list specific dates.

Admissions Procedures

We want the opportunity for the parents of the school to become familiar with our school, its philosophy, and its programs. We also want to get to know the parents of each child on a personal basis, therefore, the admission process is as follows:

- Parent tour: The Director will set up a tour. This time allows you to come to know the school and ask any questions you have about the school.
- The application is sent via Brightwheel including an application fee upon submission.
- The application should be submitted via Brightwheel, so the Director can review the application.
- When your child is accepted an Admissions Agreement will be sent via Brightwheel; it acts as the contract with the school. It must be completed and submitted with a non-refundable \$500 deposit to guarantee a space for your child. The deposit will be applied to your child's first month's tuition.
- Finally, an enrollment packet will be shared which includes Preschool and Department of Social Services forms that are required to be kept in your child's file. Please complete them and upload them as soon as possible. No child may begin attending unless the forms are completed. These forms include the following:
 1. Acknowledgement of Personal Rights Acknowledgement of Parent's Right LIC613A
 2. Consent - Emergency Medical Treatment LIC627
 3. Identification and Emergency Information LIC700
 4. Physician's Report including immunizations and physician's signature LIC701
 5. Child's Preadmission Health History LIC702
 6. Parents Rights LIC995
 7. Caregiver Background Check Process Acknowledgement LIC995E
 8. Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

Once you have agreed to a start date, tuition will start on that date, even if you decide to delay entry. This is the only way we can hold a space for your child. The first 30 days are considered to be a trial period by the preschool to determine if the program is suitable to the child's and school's needs.

School Attendance

Once your child begins, we ask that you make every effort to be on time at the beginning of the child's session to help him or her join in easily and to not disrupt the other children. At the end of the child's session, we ask that you are prompt to pick-up your child. It can be very worrisome for a child to be the last child picked up. If you must be late, please contact the Preschool at (323) 422-9690 or email/Brightwheel message the Director so we can prepare the child. A pattern of late pick-ups will require a fee and/or a review of your child's enrollment status.

Sign In and Sign Out Procedures and Policy

The State of California and SPARK Preschool require that a responsible adult, over 18 years old, sign each child in and out of the preschool every day with a printed and full and legible legal signature. The school shall assume responsibility for the child after the child has been signed in and shall retain responsibility until the child is signed out by a parent, guardian, or designated representative of the child's parents or guardians. Here's a quick recap of our sign-in and sign-out procedures:

1. Morning Drop-off (Sign-in): When you arrive, please ensure that you check-in your child with the QR code via Brightwheel. This helps us verify their attendance and maintain an accurate record of their arrival time.

2. Afternoon Pick-up (Sign-out): Similarly, when you come to pick up your child in the afternoon, please remember to check them out. This ensures we know who is responsible for your child at all times and aids in our dismissal process.

SPARK will charge a small fee of \$2 for instances where parents/approved pickups fail to properly sign in and sign out their child. This fee will be imposed to encourage adherence to our policies and to cover any potential administrative costs associated with tracking down missing information or licensing citations.

A list of designated representatives is maintained on the Identification and Emergency Form in the child's file. Children are released only to persons authorized on that form and the school must be informed on each pick-up occurrence. If you would like to authorize a permanent person to pick up your child from school (i.e., relative, nanny, or a permanent carpool arrangement), please add the new person's information to all the copies of your information forms.

If an unauthorized person is picking up the child, s/he must have a specific written permission from the parents or guardians for that day only; it must be dated and signed and list the person's name. The pick-up person will be asked to show the teacher a valid picture I.D. One parent or guardian can act for both in this situation unless the parents or guardians are separated or divorced. In that case, the custodial parent or guardian must sign the permission. Only written communication is valid; no verbal arrangements are valid. Children will never be released to any adult, parent or otherwise, suspected of intoxication from alcohol or drugs. We will call someone from the emergency list to pick the child up. We apologize if we are in error, but we would rather be safe than sorry. No child will be released to any adult who does not provide and use a proper child safety seat in his/her motor vehicle.

Never leave your child unattended at the curbside, hallway, front gate area, playground, parking lot or classroom. Every child must be signed in and out with a teacher present.

Changes, Withdrawal and Termination

An eight-week written, and dated notice is required if you plan to reduce the number of attendance days or hours. This allows the school the time it needs to fill the space. Because we are a year-round school, June and July tuition are required payments regardless of written notice of change or termination during the year. If an unforeseen problem or change arises, please see the Director immediately.

- ***Termination of Care by Parent-*** If parents decide to terminate the childcare agreement, if possible, they must give two month's written notice to the Director. Because we are a year-round school, June and July tuition are required payments regardless of written notice of change or termination during the year. If there is a problem, every effort will be made to work with parents and guardians to resolve any difficulties that may occur at the school, both on the phone and in parent conferences. However, we recognize that not every situation is appropriate for every child. If, after a significant effort on both sides, this program is found to be unsatisfactory for your child, we'll try and help you find a suitable placement.

- *Termination of Care by the Program*- If we feel that we are unable to meet the specific needs of a particular child, we may schedule a meeting to discuss in detail. Alternatively, if the child's needs are sufficiently outside our ability to meet them, require an inordinate amount of 1 on 1 attention from teachers, and/ or if the child's dysfunctional behavior poses a threat to himself or the emotional or physical safety of the other children, we reserve the right to terminate the care agreement on a timeline that is in the child's and school's best interest, which, under rare circumstances, may be immediately.
- To preserve a high-quality and consistent classroom experience for each child, our make-up policy is that we cannot swap days throughout the school year.

Other reasons that may result in the termination of a specific care agreement are as follows:

- Non-payment for childcare services and/or lack of adherence to our tuition payment policies.
- Lack of parental cooperation with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings.
- Failure to comply with the school's schedule, policies, regulations, and procedures.
- Parent exhibits behavior endangering the children, families, or staff, including abusive behaviors and/or verbal threats by parents toward the program staff or other parents (may be grounds for immediate termination).
- Child exhibits special needs or needs related to serious illnesses that the program cannot meet. In this case, the program staff will make every effort to involve the parents, and possibly other persons (as appropriate), in order to decide on the best course of action for this child, prior to any termination.
- In addition, care may be terminated if the child is chronically disruptive to the other resting children, is unable to quietly rest during the rest period, or requires significant 1 on 1 attention from a teacher in order to rest. This may include disruptive movement, talking, and/ or conflict with teachers.

Tuition and Fees

The school's financial arrangement with the parents is contained in the admission agreement. Rates will be increased as needed in September of each school year to cover the costs of increased expenses. Rate increases will be announced at least 30 days in advance.

Tuition is due every month regardless of school closures, school holidays, vacations, child's illness, etc.

Tuition is due and payable by the 1st of the month. It is considered late on the 5th.

Communication

Your child's care is of the utmost importance to us. The more accurately informed our staff is, the better we care for your child. There are also a variety of ways we can give you information about your child's progress.

1. Important information is encouraged along with sharing the information with the head teacher or Director. Information about a bad night's sleep, a traveling parent, visitors staying in the home, family illness, change of pick up routine and similar items help us to provide responsive care to your child.

2. In order that we may properly inform all staff members, please message about child pick-ups. Do not give verbal messages. They are too easily forgotten in the activities of caring for your child. Brightwheel, email and/or text messages can be used to communicate information.
3. Phone conferencing is a quick and easy way for all to communicate or email. The Director will get back to you at the earliest convenience.
4. For more in-depth discussions, please schedule an appointment with the Director.
5. In addition to ongoing informal discussions, bi-yearly parent conferences may be requested.

Drop Off & Pick Up

Parents must sign their child in and out each day and are encouraged to bring their children to school no later than 9:15am. A child who arrives when other children are cleaning up may feel frustrated and have a difficult time transitioning in the mornings.

SPARK Preschool closes promptly at 5:00pm each evening. Pick-up time is at 4pm for Toddler and 4:15pm for Preschool. Aftercare ends at 5:00pm sharp. The preschool's clock will serve as the "official clock" for determining time. Please synchronize your watch with this clock. Parents that have a lengthy departure routine must arrive early enough to meet the time criteria. A 'No Exception Policy' is in place for several reasons:

- Most preschooler's internal body clocks know when their usual pick-up time is. Children can become nervous or fearful when they are at school later than normal. Please know that your child will always be comforted and safe, even in the event of a late pick up.
- Teachers give their best to your children each day. They also have responsibilities to their own children and family. They need to know they can end their school day reliably at their scheduled time.
- Late pick-ups require SPARK Preschool to pay their teacher's overtime. These additional costs must be passed on to parents who create the need for overtime.

Our Late Policy is as follows: A fee of \$1 for every minute that your child is on the property after their departure time is applied per family. After 5 minutes, this late pick-up fee goes to \$2 per minute. If this becomes a frequent problem, the Director will meet with parent(s) to resolve and create alternative solutions.

Please note that all late fees will be added to the parent's tuition bill. If a parent has not arrived to pick up their child and cannot be reached by phone within 15 minutes of closing time, we will call the emergency contact(s) listed on their enrollment forms.

General Health and Safety

At the preschool, we do all that we can to ensure the health and safety of your child. California State Licensing has cleared all employees and regular volunteers who work at the Preschool through the Department of Justice, FBI, and Child Abuse Index Check. The employees have had physicals and negative TB tests.

Our environment is safe and clean; we provide nutritious food; we encourage regular handwashing. We try to do everything that we can to prevent injuries. You can help us by dressing your child in appropriate clothing for movement. Dress children in simple, washable, play clothes. Shoes that are easy and safe to run in are a necessity. Tennis shoes or closed toe shoes with Velcro closures are the

best for climbing and running. Please, no sandals, flip flops, boots, open toed shoes, clogs, or long dresses; they are not safe. Please have your child arrive at school in the shoes they will wear all day.

Parents must complete a health form for their child, including the name and phone numbers of the child's physician and dentist, complete an Identification and Emergency Form, provide a health screening form from the child's physician/pediatrician, and provide a valid immunization record that shows up-to-date and complete immunizations.

As parents and legal guardians, you are our partners in keeping your child healthy and safe. Please keep us informed about your child, including changes in medical status, the phone numbers of medical personnel, and additions or changes to the list of authorized people who can be contacted in case of emergency or for sick child pick-up.

Illnesses Policy

In case of illness, please make arrangements to have your sick or child with symptoms remain at home. This includes, but is not limited to, children who have any contagious disease with symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, fever, pinkeye, strep, or a cold. Children with signs of cold, stuffy nose, watery eyes, cough, sore throat, and/or fever for more than 24 hours should not be sent to school. While the running nose and mild cough may not seem severe, colds can spread very quickly in childcare. Other important criteria for keeping a child at home are red throat, spots on throat, earache, swollen neck glands, unexplained rash or skin eruptions, severe cough, tonsillitis, loss of appetite over several days or any behavior that is noticeably out of ordinary.

Please report illness or contagious diseases immediately so that parents of other children in the group can be alerted. After having a contagious disease, the child will need a re-admittance slip from your doctor or from the public health nurse or doctor. Children who come to school sick will be sent home. Also, if the care/recovery process from an illness or injury results in a significant demand on the teacher's time, or if it prevents the child from participating fully in the school activities, the child will be asked to remain or return home.

In most cases, children must be free of symptoms and/or fever 24 hours before returning to school. In some cases, children may return once they have started medication for 24 hours if it relieves contagious and impactful symptoms.

The State of California strongly encourages all children attending school to obtain up-to-date immunizations. Personal exemptions are allowed although the parent must agree to remove their child from the school if an outbreak of any disease covered by the immunizations occurs. The child can return when the risk of contagion has passed. The school strongly urges parents to seek immunization for their child as there are several diseases that are experiencing a resurgence (pertussis in particular). Please indicate on the appropriate space provided on the Physician's Report as well as in the Immunization Record form the exact dates of each immunization.

If your child contracts one of the major childhood illnesses, please contact the Director immediately. The parents of all the children and the Health Department will be notified. Children must be completely recovered from the illness and have a doctor's note before returning to school.

A sick child will be sent home for these reasons (not complete list as judgment will be involved by the teacher or Director): a fever of 100 degrees or higher, severe runny nose and sniffing, vomiting, eye

infections or discharge from the eye, diarrhea, persistent cough, red sore throat, unidentified skin rash, impetigo, ringworm, and head lice.

When a child is sent home, it is important that the child be picked up as soon as possible. The child will often be isolated, and the Director will remain with him/her. Please ensure that you have people available to you to pick up your child in case of illness if you cannot. We will need prior authorization or written notice for anyone other than you or the people authorized on your Emergency and ID form to pick up your child. Please let us know who will be picking up. If they are unknown to us, we will ask for ID that proves who they are.

Head lice is a regrettable, but not uncommon, occurrence in schools these days. It has nothing to do with hygiene and ironically, it occurs more often in children who have shampoos every night. It is essential that head lice be responded to immediately and thoroughly to prevent spread not only at the preschool but also in your own home. There is a procedure form in the office that will give you some guidelines on how to treat head lice. Any child returning after having had head lice will carefully be inspected, in a private place to avoid embarrassment before they are returned to the classroom. Any sign of head lice or nits, alive or dead, will require that the child return home. (See Illness notification for more information)

Allergies

When a doctor diagnoses a child as having a food, medical, or environmental allergy, a statement to that effect must be given to the Preschool office in writing and included in their medical file. A notice of all food allergies will also be posted in the classroom.

Medication Policy

Certain prescription medications may be given to children after special arrangements have been made with the Director, who will administer the medication. The prescription medication and the prescription must be hand delivered to the Director, not the teacher, and the parent or authorized adult must fill out the medical logbook. No over-the-counter medications will be administered, including holistic or homeopathic ones. Any drug must have been administered for a minimum of 24 hours before the school will begin administering it, to ensure an absence of allergic reactions. Medications must be in their original, child-proof container, with proper dosage information, accompanied by a written prescription note from the doctor explaining its use, dosage, and purpose. Never send medication with your child in any way. Not all medications can be administered by the school and the decision to administer medications is at the sole discretion of the Director.

Incident/Ouch Reports

Even with careful supervision, accidents happen. When a child is injured, the member of the staff who observed the incident will fill out an Incident Report via Brightwheel. The report describes what happened, who was present, how the injury occurred, when and how the parent was notified, and what measures were taken.

The teachers and the Director are trained in First Aid. For small events, first aid will be used, and the parent will be notified by an Incident Report. For anything larger, the parent will be notified, and first aid administered. If we feel the child needs to be taken to the emergency room for a medical or dental emergency, we will attempt to contact the parent and then we will continue to try and contact the parents and persons on the authorized emergency list until someone is reached. We will also call the

child's physician or dentist. We will not leave your child unattended, unless it is necessary for a medical procedure, until someone is reached and comes to the hospital. All medical and dental expenses that arise from your child's emergency are the parents' or legal guardian's financial responsibility.

If the parent insists that the child be taken to a different hospital, a record of that request must be on file and the parent accepts all responsibility for the health of that child once they leave the school. Children's Hospital is two blocks away and the school cannot be responsible for anything that might be caused by the delay while seeking help from a further hospital.

Emergency Policies and Procedures

At the Preschool, emergency drills are held every month. The school has been inspected and approved by the fire department.

In the case of an emergency, the Director and teachers will take appropriate action depending on the circumstances. In the case of an emergency or disaster that allows us to remain at the school, we will remain in the safest portion of the site. We have emergency supplies for 5 days for children and adults. We will remain with your children past the mandatory three-day period. We will remain with them until they are picked up by an authorized person or a city, state, county, or federal official makes appropriate arrangements for their care if an authorized person cannot be located after extensive efforts.

In case of disaster (earthquake, fire, toxic conditions, etc.) and the school is deemed unsafe, we will evacuate the premises to one of two emergency locations. A notice will be placed on the gate, if possible, indicating our location.

Our out-of-town contact number is: Linda Johnson (209) 815-8674

Nutrition Policies and Procedures

At SPARK Preschool, meal and snack times are enjoyable social experiences and an opportunity for children to slow down, connect with their teachers and friends, practice independence, and enjoy a variety of foods.

Snacks

Families are responsible for providing two snacks each day: one morning snack and one afternoon snack. Snacks should be packed in your child's lunch bag or backpack each morning. Teachers will collect the snacks and store them appropriately until snack time. Refrigeration is available for foods that need to remain cold.

If you have a preference for which snack your child eats in the morning or afternoon, please label the snacks "AM" and "PM." If they are not labeled, teachers will determine which snack to offer at each snack time.

If snacks are packed in reusable containers, please clearly label the container with your child's name so that we can make sure it is returned to the correct family.

We encourage families to send nutritious, balanced snacks that will give children the energy they need throughout their day. If your child regularly comes home with a significant amount of uneaten lunch, you may consider separating some of the foods you would normally pack for lunch and using them as your child's AM or PM snack instead. As always, teachers will observe children's eating habits and communicate with families if we notice that a child is consistently eating very little, running out of food, or coming home with a significant amount of uneaten food.

A history of each child's food allergies and any dietary, cultural, or family food restrictions or preferences will be collected during the admissions and transition process. Families are responsible for notifying SPARK of any changes. Known food allergies will be communicated to classroom staff and posted as required.

Lunch

Lunch is provided by families each day. We are unable to refrigerate, heat or cook food, so please pack accordingly.

We encourage families to provide a nutritious, well-balanced lunch that gives children the energy they need to participate in a full day of activities.

Water is available to children throughout the day. Please do not send candy or soda. Foods and treats for birthdays, celebrations, and other special occasions may be handled separately in accordance with SPARK's classroom and allergy policies.

Nut-Free School

Because of the seriousness of nut allergies, SPARK is a nut-free school. Please do not send foods containing peanuts or tree nuts in your child's lunch or snacks.

Please make sure that anyone who may prepare food for your child (including grandparents, caregivers, or other family members) is aware of this policy. Even small amounts of an allergen can pose a significant risk to a child with a severe allergy.

Choking Hazards

Families should also be mindful of foods that may present a choking hazard, particularly for children under four years old. Foods should be prepared and cut in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Please do not send the following foods in a form that presents a choking hazard:

- Raw whole corn kernels
- Large or hard pieces of raw vegetables, such as carrots
- Whole cherry tomatoes, grapes, berries, cherries, or melon balls that require cutting for safe consumption
- Popcorn

Teachers may choose not to serve a food if they believe it presents an immediate choking or safety concern. When appropriate, we will communicate with the family so that the food can be prepared differently in the future.

Our goal is to work in partnership with families to make mealtimes and snack times safe, positive, relaxed, and enjoyable for every child.

- Uncut cherry tomatoes, grapes, berries, cherries, or melon balls

Parent Involvement

School Visits

While we have a professional teaching staff, we welcome parent volunteers both in and outside the classroom. Reading stories, woodworking, cooking, art projects, and contributing at circle time are just a few ways. Please coordinate your participation through the teacher. This, of course, is completely optional since SPARK is not a co-op school.

If it does not negatively impact a child's healthy separation from the parent, any parent is welcome to remain for a while in the morning from time to time. We find especially that working and traveling parents enjoy being with their child in the morning during drop off.

Throughout the year, there are other opportunities to get involved with your child's classroom. Please let your teacher know if you are willing to help. We have regular "events" at the school, usually related to the current theme or time of year. We encourage parents to join us in these events.

Parent and Family Events

Several times a year, the school will have parent and family events to give everyone a chance to get to know one another. Events will be announced as the year proceeds.

Behavior

Positive Guidance and Discipline

At SPARK Preschool, we use a peaceful, non-violent, problem-solving, conflict resolution model as well as restorative practice. It is important to remember that angry, frustrated, and aggressive feelings in young children are a normal part of their development and that they are still learning appropriate strategies for handling feelings and difficulties when they occur. As teachers, we help the children learn conflict resolution skills to articulate their feelings, develop possible strategies for coping with their feelings or behavior, and develop ways of working with others using words and positive behaviors. Children learn these skills through modeling by the teachers, active support during conflicts and difficult times, and a setting that offers them outlets for their feelings.

Positive statements that give children feedback regarding what behaviors are accepted and desirable will be used. We will also use redirection when it is appropriate for the child. Children shall never be disciplined for toilet accidents.

The following types of discipline are prohibited in the Preschool:

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear

- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom
- Abusive or profane language
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment
- Any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child.

The preschool will support, teach, and guide a child to use appropriate means of expressing aggressive and angry feelings. Hitting, biting, scratching, and kicking behaviors can jeopardize the safety of the child, other children, and the staff. Licensing requirements state “each child shall have personal rights which include, but are not limited to, being accorded safe, healthful, and comfortable accommodations.” Therefore, if the hurtful behaviors continue, the Preschool will meet immediately with the parents to develop an individualized plan that may involve the parents seeking professional involvement, developing home strategies and changes, and adjusting the child’s school schedule. While we strive to provide the least restrictive environment possible for each child, we also seek to protect the children and staff in the school and to preserve the positive and stable environment of the classroom. If the efforts of the school, family and professionals are unsuccessful or the aggressive behavior is too inappropriate for school safety, the school has the right to require the child and family to withdraw from the school.

Behavior Management Policy

SPARK Preschool is committed to helping children develop to their fullest potential; every individual who enters our door is required to treat all others and their property in a positive and respectful manner. We believe that all decisions relating to how situations are handled will be made “based on the developmental capabilities of the individual child”.

SPARK Preschool shall not permit, practice, or inflict any form of physical punishment, verbal or emotional abuse, or denial of physical necessities for any child in attendance.

Physical punishment includes striking a child, either directly or with an object, shaking, shoving or spanking the child. It also includes forcing a child to repeat physical movements, or any other action carried out which results in physical injury to the child.

Verbal or emotional abuse includes any harsh, belittling, or degrading response by an adult in the center, which would humiliate or undermine a child’s self-respect.

The denial of physical necessities includes normal comforts such as shelter, clothing, food, bedding or toileting.

In the situation where it has been determined that discipline is required, the following steps will be taken.

1. The child will be approached on a one to one basis by the nearest staff member. The staff will get down to the child’s level, make eye contact and speak in a calm and non-threatening manner, directly to him/her.
2. Staff will actively listen to all parties involved.

3. Staff will encourage and assist the child with solving the problem as well as coming up with a workable solution for all.
4. The staff will explain (if necessary) and ensure that the child understands what is expected of him/her, and why his/her actions were in question.
5. The staff will redirect the child by offering choices.
6. Should the behavior persist, the staff will give a warning to the child. The warning will be direct and with a natural consequence. E.g. "Keep the craft supplies at the craft table or you will have to leave the craft table and choose a new activity to participate in."
7. Should the behavior persist, put another child or staff in an unsafe situation or infringe on the rights of others, the child will be removed from the group. The time removed will be based on the child's development level. After a brief time the staff and child will discuss the incident together. He/she will then be directed back into the program.
8. Should the unacceptable behavior continue throughout the day, and if it is of an aggressive nature, SPARK's "Aggressive Behavior Policy" will be implemented.

Please note: parents will be informed of incidents that inflict injury upon another person, or that are recurring in nature. In the case of recurring behaviors, it may be necessary to invite the parents/guardians to meet with the director to discuss the situation and to develop a plan of action that can result in success for the child.

Aggressive Behavior Policy

As Early Childhood Educators, it is our responsibility to ensure the physical safety and total well being of all children within our care. The center has adopted the following policy regarding aggression:

Aggression means, "any physical, emotional or verbal act which may result in placing him/herself, other children and/or staff members within the center in an emotional, physical, harmful, hurtful or unsafe situation. "

In dealing with aggressive behavior, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The child will be removed from the group and the center's BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY will be implemented by staff, to redirect the child and to stop the aggressive behavior.
2. On the second offense, the parent(s) will be contacted about the specific incident at the end of the day or sooner as deemed appropriate by the staff members.
3. On the third offense, the parent/guardian or alternate pick up person (in that order) will be contacted to immediately pick up the child to be removed from the preschool immediately for the remainder of the day. Documented report(s) of the incidents will be given to the child's parent. A copy will also be made to keep in the child's file. At this point, seeking assistance for the child's behavior is strongly recommended. The teacher can provide information on how to access community resources.

4. On the fourth offense, the parent(s) will be called and the child must be removed from the preschool immediately for the remainder of the day. The child will be removed until a meeting including the Parent(s), staff and director to discuss a behavior plan to be implemented.
5. On the fifth offense, the child may not be allowed to return to preschool and his/her place may be forfeited.

SPARK Preschool has the right to

- A. Impose a suspension of preschool privileges
- B. Consult a Behavior Management Specialist
- C. Limit the child's hours of attendance
- D. Terminate the space. In case of termination, the two-week notice period may be waived.

Please note: Any aggressive, violent or intentional aggressive behavior that endangers the child, other children, staff, equipment, or building cannot be tolerated. In these extreme cases, the child will be automatically suspended for three days or have their spot permanently revoked without prior warning.

Once again, we state that the number one priority is the welfare, safety, and security of all children and staff within our program.

Third Party Programming Policy

SPARK Preschool reserves the right to decide whether external programming offered by third parties is allowed within the preschool facility.

Babysitting

We appreciate your confidence in our staff members and understand your desire to have them babysit. However, SPARK cannot be responsible for outside arrangements made with staff members and all such arrangements must be made in advance to avoid interrupting staff at work. SPARK cannot be responsible for messages left on voicemail regarding babysitting. Please note any individual arrangements are strictly between the parent and the individual. SPARK Preschool is not responsible in any way for these individual agreements.

Parent Grievance Policy

SPARK Preschool is licensed by California Department of Social Services, Community Licensing Division. CCLD retains full rights to inspect all files and facilities at any time.

We understand that differences and disagreements are a part of life, and we seek to find solutions to problems in a peaceful, problem-solving manner. If you have a grievance, we ask that you first go to that person and explain your concern or situation. Also, the teacher in your child's room often can answer most questions and concerns.

If you feel the issue is unresolved or feel that it warrants the attention of the Director, please contact the Director. Please do not leave a verbal message with the teachers. Every effort will be exerted to find an appropriate solution to the difficulty or complaint.

If you need to file a serious complaint with the Community Licensing Division, contact (323) 981-3350. Our goal is to establish an open and healthy line of communication with the family of every child; please don't hesitate to contact us at the Preschool.

Community Care Licensing Division

The Preschool is licensed by the California Department of Social Services, Community Licensing Division. As a result, they can perform random visits to the Preschool to ensure its safety and compliance with licensing rules and regulations. Additionally, the parties to this agreement are here notified of the Community Care Licensing right to interview your or any child and the school staff, and to inspect and audit all records maintained by the school without securing prior consent. (LIC 101200)

General Guidelines

Separation

Separation is a key time for a child, and we are committed to a positive and emotionally secure transition for the child into Preschool. On the first day of school for your child, please plan on remaining with them until they are ready for their goodbye transition. Then please work with the Director and the child's teacher to create an individual plan and a good-bye routine. Leave time when your child starts in the first days to remain with them until they are ready to have you leave. Each situation and children are different. Sometimes the separation process involves several days. We will never allow children to be left without saying good-bye or to experience undo sadness.

Share Items

From time to time, children share items brought from home. Sometimes they will be at our request, such as a teddy bear for the teddy bear week and picnic. Sometimes, they are important to the child or are educational. The items to share might include stories or books, photographs, things from nature, science or objects related to our classroom. In our classrooms, there is a wide array of carefully selected items geared specially to meet the needs of your children. Toys, jewelry, etc. brought from home are difficult for other children to cope with and hard for children to share in play; they should remain at home and be saved for play date visits. We appreciate your cooperation and help with this request.

Clothing

Children participate at the preschool in active and messy activities. Please send appropriate clothing that is comfortable, washable, and not valuable. Clothing that allows for self-dressing is important for self-reliance. We cannot be responsible for lost clothing; please mark your child's clothing with his/her name. Dresses with ruffles, bows, and tricky zippers and pants with difficult belts and fastening should be avoided.

Every child must have an extra set of clothes in case of toilet accidents, spills and water and sand play. In the warm months, it is a good idea to have two sets.

Shoes: Closed toe shoes or tennis shoes are necessary and required to protect your child. Velcro shoes are very practical. No other shoes are allowed, including sandals, boots, jellies, etc. This is both for safety and the ability of your child to participate fully in the program and its activities. Please abide by this safety rule. Group preschool situations and demands are different from those at home or at a park.

Naps

Children five years and younger will take naps on mats. This is a rest time for children and no child will be forced to sleep. They will also not be forced to wake up unless the child is having an early pick-up. Please send a child sized blanket and a child sized pillow. A child's special transitional object or comfort item can be brought to school each day or left with the napping supplies. These items should be labeled with your child's name. Remember to take your child's bedding home on Fridays for laundering and bring the clean ones in on Monday. Per licensing preschools shall ensure that children in care are offered a daily opportunity for rest or sleep in an environment that provides a low noise level and freedom from distractions. Additionally, naps shall not exceed two hours daily unless the child is very tired and needs more rest.

Potty-Training Policy

SPARK Preschool believes there are stages or steps to potty-training or learning to be independent and toilet confident. These stages are:

1. A child who can use the toilet BUT it is the adult who gets the child to the bathroom on time by putting the child on the toilet, assists with clothing wiping and prompts to wash and dry hands. At this stage, the child often needs assistance with the whole toileting process. Accidents occur frequently in this stage. This is the first stage toward becoming toilet learned or potty trained.
2. The child is not only capable of using the toilet BUT has the developmental ability to express the need to go (both urine and bowel movement). In this stage, the child will demonstrate all or most of the readiness signs as listed below. Accidents occur, but very infrequently in this stage.

Verbal Stages of Toilet Learning Readiness

1. Basic verbal skills—the child can speak in three-to-four-word sentences.
2. The child tells you when he/she has wet his/her diaper (recognizes he or she is wet).
3. The child tells you when he/she is wetting his/her diaper (recognizes the sensation of wetting a diaper).
4. The child tells you that he or she needs to go to the bathroom (has control and goes to use the toilet).

Physical, Social, and Psychological Signs of Toilet Learning Readiness

1. A child stays dry for a long time—able to hold their urine or bowel movements.
2. Has bowel movements at regular times. The child chooses when to have a bowel movement.
3. Adults can recognize when the child is having a bowel movement.
4. The child can undress and pull up their own clothing/pants.
5. Child initiates using the toilet and asks to wear underwear. This is also a sign of wanting to be independent, which is very important.
6. Emotionally ready for this independent learning skill.

7. Can follow three to four step instructions. This is critical to learning to pee, wipe, flush, remove and pull up clothing, and wash and dry hands.

Potty training should be a positive experience for everyone involved. It should only take a short period of time when your child is truly ready. Problems arise when adults (parents and caregivers) do not pay attention to the child's lack of readiness. It should be determined on an individual basis much like learning to walk. No two children will potty train in the exact same time frame or even in the same manner. We will schedule a meeting to discuss potty training prior to starting the journey.

Potty training or toilet learning should begin at home with the child's parents or caregivers and at a time when there are not a lot of changes in the child's life. Life must be fairly stress free during this time for the child.

We will assist your child in becoming potty trained once the signs of readiness found on the potty-training readiness information page have been observed by the parents, as well as a classroom teacher. Many children may show these signs of readiness at home, but not at school and sometimes vice versa. It is encouraged that the first steps toward potty training begin at home when the parents can devote time to the child and to the process.

Please notify your child's teacher that your child has underwear on and not a diaper or pull up. At that time, the teacher will gently remind your child from time to time to remember to go in and use the potty. Please remember it may be challenging for the teachers to remind each child every half hour to go in and use the potty, while also caring for others in the class. For that reason, your child needs to be able to communicate the need to go potty without constant prompts.

There are times in the daily schedule that teachers remind the children to go in and go, but it is not on a set time or schedule the reminders come naturally throughout the day such as, transitioning to the playground, before and after snack, before and after lunch time and before rest time.

We request that the following guidelines are followed when children are potty training or wearing underwear at school:

- Your child **MUST** wear loose fitting clothing, easy for the child to pull up and push down.
- **NO** overalls, pants that require the use of a belt, t-shirts/tops with snaps between the legs, or pants with snaps and zippers.
- Three sets of clothing, underwear, and socks that are kept in your child's cubby in the event of an accident. Please be sure to swap out clothes when the weather changes.
- An extra pair of shoes, if available. These get wet too!
- Your choice of training pants or pull-ups.
- Keep a supply of pull-ups at the school until the child has shown naptime dryness for a week. Your child will be in a pull-up during naptime until he or she has shown that they can stay dry for that time.
- If your child is male, inform the teachers if your son will be sitting or standing. This should be determined right from the beginning of the potty-training process.
- We do not rinse out or wash soiled clothing, so any clothing that becomes soiled during the day will need to go home that afternoon. Your child's teacher will place them in a plastic bag and will put them in your child's cubby.

There may be a period when your child is potty trained at home and not at school. That is perfectly normal. If your child comes to school with underwear on and has two accidents in a short period of time, a pull-up will be put on your child, and we can try again another day when he or she shows signs of being ready at school. Patience is very important during this time.

Daily Activity Schedule (Subject to change)

INFANT CLASSROOM SCHEDULE (8:00am–5:00pm)

- 8:00–9:15am — Arrival & Free Exploration
- Quiet play, soft toys, early diaper check
 - Tummy time, books
 - Sensory baskets, soft blocks, floor time
 - Diaper check
- 9:15–9:40am — Circle Time
- Songs, fingerplays, baby sign, puppets
- 9:40–10:20am — Outdoor Exploration
- Shaded yard, stroller walk, tummy-time mat outside
- 10:20–11:00am — Individual Bottles & Play
- Bottle feeding according to each infant’s schedule
 - One-on-one floor play
 - Diaper check
- 11:00–11:45am — Sensory & Table Activities
- Edible sensory, soft art, fine-motor trays
- 11:45am–12:20pm — Lunch
- High-chair meals (as developmentally appropriate)
 - Handwashing, cleanup
 - Diaper check
- 12:20–3:30pm — Naps (As Needed Per Their Plan of Care)
- Infants follow their individualized sleep schedules
 - Some sleep earlier or later
 - Quiet activities for awake infants
 - Diapering upon waking
- 3:30–4:00pm — Outdoor/Movement Exploration
- Fresh air, stroller walk, balls and music
- 4:00–5:00pm — After Care
- Calm sensory play, board books, snuggles
 - Final diaper check

TODDLER CLASSROOM SCHEDULE (8:45am–4:00pm)

Morning Care 8:00–8:45am · After Care 4:00–5:00pm

- 8:00–8:45am — Morning Care
- Mixed-age play, blocks, table
 - Bathroom/diaper check at 8:
- 8:45–9:00am — Arrival & Free Play
- Open centers, dramatic play,
- 9:00–9:20am — Morning Circle
- Songs, stories, visual schedule
- 9:20–10:10am — Outdoor Play
- Bikes, sandbox/mud kitchen, running
- 10:10–10:25am — Potty & Diaper Check
- Potty time

- Diaper changes
- 10:25–11:15am — Centers & Table Activities
- Art, sensory, STEAM trays, dramatic play
- 11:15–11:35am — LUNCH
- Family-style as appropriate
 - Handwashing routines
- 11:35am–2:30pm — NAP TIME
- Wind-down books/music
 - Full nap (2–2.5 hours)
 - Quiet activities for early wakers after ~2pm
- 2:30–2:50pm — Wake-Up & Potty
- Toileting & diaper check
 - Light snack (optional if part of your program)
- 2:50–3:30pm — Afternoon Outdoor Play
- Gross motor, playground exploration
- 3:30–4:00pm — Closing Activities
- Story, music, or calm centers
- 4:00–5:00pm — After Care
- Calm play, books, small-group activities
 - Final potty/diaper check

PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM SCHEDULE (9:00am–4:15pm)

Morning Care 8:00–9:00am · After Care 4:15–5:00pm

- 8:00–9:00am — Morning Care
- Quiet centers, drawing, manipulatives
 - Bathroom break at 8:
- 9:00–9:20am — Arrival & Morning Work
- Journals, puzzles, fine-motor
- 9:20–9:40am — Morning Circle
- Calendar, weather, classroom
 - Read-aloud or theme
- 9:40–10:40am — Outdoor Play
- Climbing structures, scooters, chalk,
- 10:40–11:00am — Bathroom Break
- Whole-group transition
- 11:00–12:00pm — Learning Centers & Small Groups
- Literacy, math,
 - Art studio, sensory
 - Teacher-led small
- 12:00–12:30pm — LUNCH
- Family-style when
 - Clean-up &
- 12:30–2:30pm — NAP / REST
- Rest mats, quiet
 - Quiet table work for early wakers after 1:45
- 2:30–2:45pm — Bathroom Break & Transition
- Potty
 - Pack-away jobs
- 2:45–3:30pm — Afternoon Outdoor Play
- Large motor, cooperative games
- 3:30–4:00pm — Afternoon Centers
- STEAM provocations, art, dramatic play
- 4:00–4:15pm — Closing Circle

- Songs, gratitude/reflection, story
- 4:15–5:00pm — After Care
- Calm choices, reading, drawing, building

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special day! Please talk to your classroom teacher ahead of time to make arrangements. We must post, by licensing regulations, a snack menu, therefore, please notify us of any special treat so that we can include it in the menu. Please try to bring nutritious treats for the children and /or limit the size and depth of icing of a sweet treat.

Photographs

Photographs are taken of the children for use in the classrooms, newsletters, and documentation purposes. We may also use photographs in updates to parents to show them their child's activities or reassure them that all is well with their child during transitions. The parents of any child receiving a picture of any other child are strictly forbidden to show or use the photograph with anyone other than their spouse and family. They may never be circulated. This is for the protection of the children.

We will provide a form for you to indicate whether we may or may not use your child's photo in photo flyers, outside newsletters, our website, and other promotional material.

Your child's name will never be used. While we appreciate the opportunity to use your child's picture to share the school with prospective parents, we respect your wishes whatever your decisions are.

Violent Toys and Discriminatory, Violent Clothing and Costumes

Toy guns or other warfare weapons are not permitted at the Preschool. "Violent costumes" and clothing should be kept at home and not worn at school. Please talk to the Director if you have a concern or question about this policy.

Invitations

As a general rule for all parties and gatherings sponsored by individual families, unless every child in a particular classroom is invited to the party or gathering, invitations should be mailed to the home or can be sent by email. It is very hurtful to a child to leave out one or two children from a group invitation: please be mindful of children's feelings when planning a party or event. If you have any concerns, please feel free to talk to the Director.

Contact Information

Addresses and phone number of SPARK Preschool

3838 Eagle Rock Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90065
(323) 422- 9690
shannon@ourccp.com
www.mysparkpreschool.com

Thank you for choosing SPARK Preschool. We look forward to an exciting and rewarding experience together.