



Growing Tree  
Preschool

# Parent Handbook for children enrolled in the 2 1/2-3 1/2 year old class

## 2023-2024



Gurnee  
Park District

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## Preschool Philosophy

Welcome to the Gurnee Park District Growing Tree Preschool! Our goal and purpose is reflected in our Preschool Philosophy, and we are confident that the Gurnee Park District Preschool will aid in the growth and development of your child.

The Gurnee Park District mission is Promoting Fun, and Preserving Nature, and our preschool philosophy carries forward that theme. In preschool our philosophy is to educate children through guided and free exploration in a play-based, creative and nurturing atmosphere. We believe that honoring and nurturing the individuality of each child will encourage respect for oneself and for others. We strive to develop a united common goal between families and preschool staff to build academic, social and self-help skills. Our ultimate goal is for children to love coming to school.

Our primary goal is to provide your child with the best possible preschool experience. We value the diversity of each family, and each child's individuality, and strive to build self-esteem and respect for others. We look forward to every day and the happiness we can bring to your child's learning experience.

Included in this handbook are our objectives, general information, policies and procedures utilized in preschool and other pertinent information. Please read the handbook carefully. Questions and additional information will be provided at the Parent Orientation Meeting.

### **Parent Orientation Meeting – for parents of children in the 2 ½ - 3 ½ year old class**

August 21, 2023

5:15-5:45 p.m.

Hunt Club Park Community Center Gym

920 N. Hunt Club Road, Gurnee

**This meeting is for parents only. No children of any age may attend.**

### **Meet the Teachers**

Tuesday, September 5, 2023 from 9:30-10:00a. The child enrolled and parents may attend the meet and greet.

### **Class Start/End Dates:**

Class begins on Thursday, September 7, 2023 and ends on Thursday, May 9, 2023

## Important Phone Numbers

Gurnee Park District (Main Office) (847) 623-7788  
Preschool room #1 (847) 599-5461

Sue McDougale, Director (847) 599-3767  
Aimee Schneider, Coordinator (847) 599-5499

## Program Location

Hunt Club Community Center  
920 N. Hunt Club Road  
Gurnee, IL 60031

Photography/video, for publicity purposes, may be taken during the program.

## Entrance Age Requirement

2 ½ years old on or before September 1, 2023

## Forms Required/Submitting Forms Using ePact

We utilize a digital form collection system, ePact. You will receive an email from [member.support@epactnetwork.com](mailto:member.support@epactnetwork.com) with instructions to set up your account and complete the form. You will upload your child's birth certificate and health examination form to your online ePact account. Please be sure to complete and sign the parent section of the health form prior to uploading it to ePact. We are unable to upload forms to your ePact account and we are unable to accept paper forms. **Your ePact account must be complete by August 21, 2023 or if registering after this date, at least five business days prior to your child's start date.**

### Forms Required

1. Online preschool information completed on ePact
2. Uploaded Copy of Birth Certificate to ePact
3. Uploaded Copy of Child Health Examination form listing necessary immunizations, signed and dated by the physician of record with the parent section (page 2) completed and signed by a parent. This form is available at every physician's office.

### **Required Immunizations**

Following are the required immunizations to be completed prior to starting school:

- 4 - DPT/DTaP: Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis
- 3 - IPV: Inactive Polio Vaccine
- 1 - MMR: Measles, Mumps, and Rubella
- 4 - Hib: Haemophilus b Conjugate Vaccine
- 3 - HepB: Hepatitis B
- 1 - Varicella

A Permission to Dispense Medication form is needed for children with potentially life-threatening allergies requiring medication while at preschool. Complete and upload this form to your ePact account. Medication in the original container must be given to the teachers on the first day of school. Please contact the Preschool Manager for the medication form.

## Preparing Your Child for Class

Help your child understand that you will come back by leaving your child with a trusted adult.

**Leave your child with a trusted adult at a location other than your home as many times as possible before school begins.**

Make sure your child understands the words/phrases (in English) that will be used in preschool:

- Mommy/Daddy always comes back
- Teacher
- No/yes
- Sit
- Wait
- Carpet (for circle time)
- Table/chair
- Wash hands
- Cubby (where your child will put belongings)
- Water bottle
- Later
- Listen
- Share
- Nice hands
- Quiet time
- Play time
- Do you have to go potty? (if independent using the bathroom)

## Adjusting To School

Because this class may be your child's first time participating in an activity without you, there may be a period of adjustment. Arriving too early or lingering too long in the classroom may cause your child to be anxious, nervous or unhappy when you leave.

- Tears do happen. This applies not only to your child, but to you as a parent. Talk to your child about going to school and the fun he/she will have with the other children.
- Be positive.
- Arrive on time. For those children who are upset, having any parent enter the room after the day has begun may start the tears flowing again.
- Have your child use the bathroom before entering the classroom. The classroom restroom is to be used during class time. If your child needs to be changed, there is a diaper station in the hallway restroom.
- Departing quickly allows the adjustment and school day to begin. Tell your child that you will return and understand that some children have to experience that you will come back before they can fully adjust.
- Your child may cry, cling, or seem upset when you leave, but this usually passes quickly or with time. Remaining with your child can extend the period of sadness and may cause a chain reaction with other children who realize a parent is still in the room. Once all parents have left and the class begins, the children can begin the process of adjustment. Engaging in an activity can help the crying stop.
- Parents are always welcome to remain in the building during class. If your child is upset, it can be very emotional for you to remain outside the classroom. Please go to the lobby or outside as your child adjusts.
- Please call the classroom, the preschool director or the preschool coordinator with any

concerns. If the teachers are busy and cannot answer the phone, feel free to leave a message and your call will be returned.

- Be available by phone during the time your child is at class. If your child has a bathroom accident we must be able to reach you.
- The teachers or Preschool Manager will be in contact with you if they feel that your child is not quite developmentally ready to make the adjustment to being in the class.

### Using the Bathroom at School

Toilet training is not required for this class. We do suggest having your child wear a pull-up if not toilet trained. Children this age may be learning to use the bathroom and may be excited to use the one in the classroom which is child sized. Please understand that if you send your child in underwear, they must independently know when they have to go, and manage pulling up/down their clothing, wiping and hand washing. We are unable to send children to the bathroom on a scheduled basis (i.e. every 10 minutes) but we will ask the children if they need to use the bathroom at least three times during the 2 hour class period.

### Drop off and Pick up Procedures

- Use the main entrance as the preschool entrance doors are locked at drop off and pick up time.
- **All drop off/pick up will take place at the classroom door.**
- The classroom door will open when class begins, and will be relocked 5 minutes later.
- Please be prompt!
- Park in the parking lot when you arrive to drop off and pick up your child. The drive in front of the community center is a fire lane and is reserved for emergency vehicles, maintenance, and deliveries – please do not park in this area or the handicapped spaces.
- Arriving early or arriving late may cause anxiety in your child as well as other children in the class. For some children, **any** adult entering the room after the door has closed can cause tears, especially at the beginning of the school year.
- Dropping off your child late interrupts the flow of the class, and necessitates that a teacher step away from her role as teacher to let you and your child in.
- Only adults age 18 or older and listed in your ePact online forms portal as an emergency contact/authorized pick up will be allowed to pick up your child.
- Individuals picking up must be prepared to show a photo ID.
- Parents using car pools should list all parents as authorized pick-ups in their child's ePact account.

### Late Pick Up Policy

Please be prompt at pick up time. Your child is expecting you and the anxiety of waiting can be distressing. Also, the teachers need this time to prepare for the next class and eat lunch, or the room may be used for another class, a staff meeting or a conference. We understand that in rare instances emergencies may cause delays. Your consideration is appreciated. A warning will be issued at the time of the first late pick up. Thereafter, you will be charged a \$10.00 late fee for every 1-15 minutes that you or your authorized pick up person is late. Repeated late pick-ups can result in dismissal from the program. Please park in the lot when dropping off or picking up. The area is directly in front of each building is a fire lane.

## What to Bring and Wear to School

- Backpack or tote bag large enough to accommodate a 9" x 12" folder
- Reusable water bottle 1/2 filled with water (no milk or juice)
- Complete set of extra clothes including socks
- Children who are not fully toilet trained may wear a pull-up and can try to use the toilet
- Parents will be called during class time to change their child should a bowel movement occur.
- Children should wear clothing that is easy to pull up and down.
- No belts, overalls or multiple layers such as tights under pants.
- Closed-toe shoes (gym shoes) – no sandals, flip flops or Crocs

## Toys/Items from Home

Children may not bring toys and other items to school.

## Learning Through Play

The goal of preschool for 2 ½ - 3 ½ year olds is to help children learn to be without a parent or caregiver in a classroom setting, transition from one activity to another, follow directions, take turns and play cooperatively. Learning for children in this age range is episodic. The ideas change quickly, and activities vary with the moment. Within any single activity, such as digging in the sand table, the child may have numerous events that are educational. The child may discover, for example, that a spoon handle makes a different mark in the sensory table sand than the bowl of the spoon. Children may also learn that a playmate cannot see an object on their side of the block tower, or that play is more enjoyable when toys are shared. All of these encounters are educational, add value to the child's knowledge base, and are an essential part of a classroom experience. Because of the experiential nature of the program, much of what the children learn in class cannot be taken home in their backpack.

Children learn through play and develop tangible skills socially, emotionally, physically and educationally. Not all children learn at the same rate and through the same process. Playing in a group environment is a very important part of learning at this time in your child's life. Certain behaviors are common among young children such as biting, pushing, and a limited ability to share and take turns. Please know that we will be working with the children to develop appropriate cooperative play, however, repeated incidents of biting mean that a child is not developmentally ready for a group setting.

## Social Skill Development

Our teachers strive to provide a happy and positive atmosphere in which children learn and grow. Sometimes children find themselves in situations that require redirection and reminders. We make every effort to keep children safe and happy, however, sometimes children need our guidance to help them with social situations. Please be aware that some children will react physically (biting, hitting, pushing, throwing objects), and verbally ("you're not my friend" "I don't like you") at this point in development, and we will correct the situation as soon as it arises. You will be informed of hitting/pushing/biting should these behaviors occur, or if there is a pattern of behavior about which we are concerned. We may ask for your suggestions and confer with you on specific ideas to help your child's social development, and may determine that your child is not developmentally ready to be in a classroom setting.

## Health Policy

**It is extremely important to work together to stop the spread of illness at school.**

- Wellness Checks – all parents will assess their child's wellness every day before dropping off at preschool.
- Teachers/staff will regularly conduct visual assessments of children for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, congestion, coughing, fatigue or other symptoms.
- Please keep your child at home if there is **any** indication of possible illness.

**Symptoms to watch for: cough, congestion, runny nose, fever, sore throat, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle pain.**

- Children experiencing any of the symptoms listed above should stay home.
- Children experiencing any of the symptoms listed above will be sent home.
- If anyone in your household is experiencing any of the above symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, Influenza, RSV etc. your child must stay home.
- Please do not send your child to preschool if he or she exhibits any signs or symptoms of being ill or if exposed to a contagious illness. If you are concerned that your child may be ill, please take him/her to the doctor before dropping off at preschool.

**The health and safety of each child in the class and their family, as well as the health and safety of the teachers and their families depends on each parent adhering to the above guidelines.**

Children exhibiting the symptoms listed above may return to school when symptom free. Depending on the illness, a note from their doctor may be required.

Children must be fever free without the use of fever reducing medication, symptom free, no sign of rash and feeling well prior to returning to school for at least 24 hours.

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease such as strep throat, RSV, pink eye, Impetigo or other rash, Influenza, Rotavirus, head lice etc.) and attended class within one class day of onset of symptoms, please inform the classroom teacher.

Children who test positive for COVID 19 must quarantine at home days 1-5 and may return if well but wearing a mask days 6-10 (current CDC guidelines).

Children may be asked to wear a mask to reduce the spread of germs from coughing, sneezing or runny nose.

Please be available by phone if your child should become ill. Sick children will be isolated from contact with their class. The longer a sick child remains at school the greater the risk of transmission to other children and staff. ***The teachers or preschool manager will make the final determination if a child should be sent home from school.***

If your child is injured or becomes ill while at preschool and requires more than first aid, the following steps will be taken:

- ☐ Contact the parent/caregiver/emergency contact.
- ☐ If possible, the child will be removed from the area and given care. All staff members are trained in CPR/first aid/AED, classrooms are equipped with first aid kits, and portable kits



- are taken to the playground and other outside areas in case immediate care is needed.
- If necessary, an injured/ill child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. A teacher will remain with the child until a parent arrives.

## **Discipline**

1-2-3 Magic model is used in our preschool classrooms and is a very useful and positive technique for preschool children. The environment in the classroom is developed so that children understand that everyone makes mistakes and acts inappropriately at times and the system is explained. Positive reinforcement is given to children engaged in appropriate and desirable behavior. Inappropriate or undesirable behavior is addressed simply in a soft voice with the first warning. If the behavior continues or is repeated, the child is prompted with a second warning. If the behavior occurs again, a consequence is given. The consequence can be different depending on the age of the child and the circumstances and may include but is not limited to redirection or a break from an activity not to exceed the child's age.

## **Code of Conduct**

Children are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior while participating in programs and activities. A positive approach to discipline for children, specifically 1-2-3 Magic will be used in the preschool classes. Children who have behaviors that impact their own safety or that of others, who have behaviors that negatively affect the experience of others, use inappropriate language or actions, or who are physically violent or threatening may be dismissed from the program. The Gurnee Park District reserves the right to dismiss a participant whose behavior, or that of their parent, is inappropriate or endangers the safety of self or others, and/or negatively impacts the experience of others.

## **Emergency Closings**

Go to your child's Class Dojo (more information on Class Dojo on page 9) to see if preschool is closed due to weather or other emergency circumstances. Information will be posted by 7:00 a.m. It is always your discretion that determines if your child will attend in bad weather.

In the event that classes are cancelled, one day will be made up either on a previously scheduled day off (excluding winter and spring break), by extending the school day, or at the end of the school year.

## **No School Dates 2023-2024 School Year**

**November 23**

**December 5**

**December 26-January 4**

**February 20**

**March 26 & March 28**

**Thanksgiving Holiday**

**3 & 4 year old class conference day\***

**Winter Break (school resumes 1/9/24)**

**No School**

**Spring Break**

\*Conferences are not held with 2 ½ year old classes

Last day of class is May 9, 2024

## Communication through Class Dojo, Home/School Folder

Teachers will be using the online platform, Class Dojo, to share messages, updates from class and photos. This is also the way emergency school cancellations are communicated. Please use the message feature to communicate with the teachers before/after class. Issues that are specific to your child's development can be discussed in person once all other parents and children have left, or by phone. Your child will be provided with a 9"x12" pocket folder. Please check your child's folder for items sent home. Please note that their backpack must be large enough to accommodate the home/school folder.

## Class List

Because of privacy concerns, we do not give out name, address, email and phone information for the students in our classes. However, if you check the appropriate box when completing your child's ePact form, you will authorize us to include your information on a list that will be distributed to all students in your child's class who have also authorized release of their information. We hope you will find this list helpful when contacting other families for play dates or mailing invitations to social events. Contacting families for solicitation of any kind is strictly prohibited.

## Playground/Large Motor Days

Once the children have settled into the classroom routine we may schedule special playground or large motor activities during the last 15-20 minutes of class. This will most likely occur in the spring portion of the school year.

## Look What I Can Do!

The focus of our preschool for 2 ½ year olds is social development. As such, much of what your child will learn in the classroom cannot be sent home, but is instead about the experience of being with peers and teachers. You will receive a Look What I Can Do progress report in December and in May, and you may schedule a "check in" meeting with the teachers at any time. The program is designed as an initial preschool experience in a program that builds as the children progress from year to year. You and your child will have much to look forward to in the three and four year old preschool years!

## Payment Policy and Procedures

Participants will pay a \$75 non-refundable registration fee at the time of registration. The first tuition payment is due on July 15. If registering after July 15, the \$75 registration fee and one tuition payment will be due at the time of registration and, once paid, are non-refundable. Subsequent payments are automatically withdrawn from the account or card you provided at the time of registration and are made on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior (i.e. October tuition is withdrawn on September 15<sup>th</sup>). Tuition is based on the **total number of days in the school year divided into nine equal installments and not on the number of school days in the month.** You will receive an email statement on the 15<sup>th</sup> when the automatic payment has processed. Once made, tuition payments are non-refundable and tuition is not pro-rated for partial month attendance.

- Our Federal Tax ID Number is 36-2712925.
- Questions concerning payments? Call Kim McCormack at (847) 599-3751.