



Jennifer Golden, Director of Early
Childhood Education

1010 Kanan Road
Oak Park, CA 91377
818.707.7742

www.oakparkusd.org/opns

*Dr. Jeff Davis / Superintendent
Oak Park Unified School District*

Parent Handbook

August 2022 thru May 2023

The pleasure of learning and knowing, and of understanding, is one of the most important and basic feelings that every child expects from the experiences he confronts alone, with other children or with adults. It is a crucial feeling which must be reinforced so that the pleasure survives even when reality may prove that learning, knowing and understanding involve difficulty and effort'

~ Loris Malaguzzi,

Creator of the Reggio Emilia Framework



Oak Park Neighborhood School Philosophy:

Oak Park Neighborhood School (OPNS) is a preschool created through a partnership between Oak Park Unified School District and Neighborhoods for Learning, First 5 Ventura County. Our purpose is to ensure that every child, ages 0-5 years, and their families, are prepared to succeed in school: physically, emotionally, and cognitively. This is achieved by focusing on the eight domains of the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP): Self-Regulation; Social & Emotional Development; Language & Literacy Development; English Language Development; Cognition, Including Math & Science; Physical Development-Health; History-Social Science; and Visual & Performing Arts.

OPNS recognizes that children learn best in a developmentally appropriate program. Developmental appropriateness involves both chronological age and individual development. To best enhance each child's development, OPNS provides a program in which:

1. Teachers are well trained in child development: The universal, predictable sequence of growth and change that occurs in all children ages 0-8 years.
2. Each child is valued for his/her uniqueness and individual learning style and development. Children are placed in multi-age classrooms to ensure that all ranges of development within each individual child are addressed.
3. Teachers, parents, and children partner together to guarantee that children are nurtured, honored, valued, and listened to, building strong relationships and fostering growth for all.

Our program utilizes well-established theories of child development based on the research of Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Howard Gardner, and the Reggio Emilia Approach. Children are encouraged to explore their environment, construct theories, and work individually and within groups. Children will be given freedom to construct their learning environment to facilitate ongoing growth and development. The documentation required in the Reggio Approach will enable the teachers and parents to know each child, their areas of strength and weakness, and to structure the environment in a way that will allow each child to progress to the next level of knowledge.

Admission Policies:

OPNS is designed for residents of Oak Park and our surrounding neighborhoods, and the children of those employed in Oak Park, ages 2 years, 9 months to 5 years, without discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, including immigration status, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid. Every effort will be made to provide the appropriate environment for your child. Priority is given by residency and timing of application; all Oak Park residents have first priority, then priority is given in order of application: "First come, first served". Admission will be finalized when all paperwork is completed, on file, and all fees & tuition due are paid. State law requires that all forms are on file and proper immunization completed prior to school attendance. (See Health Policy for a list of forms to be completed.) Children who are using the toilet and wearing underpants will be accepted. *NO PULL-UPS. OPNS reserves the right to refuse admission if the placement of a child impacts the goals of the program and/or the needs of the other children.*

Arrival and Departure Times:

A sign-in/sign-out sheet will be located outside each classroom as required by state law. Your full signature, in ink, indicates the transferring of responsibilities for your child to the preschool. *Your child must be signed-in/signed-out **by an adult 18 years or older.** Arrival and departure have the potential of being the least safe part of the day due to the number of people coming in and out, the excitement or apprehensiveness of the children, and the contacts between parents and teachers. **Please be sure to allow time for a leisurely exchange of responsibilities.***

Routines are very important for young children and our program has a distinct beginning and end. It is our hope that your child will be allowed to experience all our program has to offer. As children arrive, they have a few minutes to greet one another, parents and teachers have time to share information and then our morning begins. Please arrive promptly to avoid disrupting the morning. Equally important is your child's ability to stay for the entire day and leave on time. Please arrive at dismissal time to pick up your

child. **After a five (5) minute grace period, there is a five-dollar (\$5.00) per minute late charge.**

Your child may be picked up from OPNS only by those authorized by you. Please fill out the appropriate form. Anyone not known by the teacher must present picture identification with his or her name before your child will be released to this person.

Days and Hours of Operation:

Our program will be available Monday thru Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for all preschool children. We will follow the Oak Park Unified School District (OPUSD) calendar for school holidays. The first day of school is usually one- two days after OPUSD's start date and we finish prior to OPUSD's last day.

Tuition is figured on the number of days your child attends: M - F is 175 or 176 days, MWF is 106 days, and T/Th is 92 days. If your child will miss a day of school, please call the office to let us know. We do not have make up days or credit for missed days.

Extended Care:

We offer extended care (*if there is enough enrollment to cover the cost*) in the morning and afternoon for parents who need additional care for their children. Children may be dropped off as early as 7:45 a.m. and picked up as late as 3:30 p.m. Please check with the office for the cost of this service.

Supplemental Services:

Oak Park Neighborhood School Parent Advisory Board will schedule various enrichment classes. We will also work with Kolbe's Corner, Horizon Hills, and Oak Park Unified School District to provide parent education classes, speakers, and workshops.

Tuition:

Tuition is a yearly fee that may be paid in full by May 21, 2021 for a 5% discount. A payment plan is available with the first payment due on May 26th, and the remaining 9 payments due as scheduled on the enrollment contract. **A late fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00) will be assessed to tuition paid more than 5 days after the due date.** There is a yearly Atelier Fee and a *non-refundable*, yearly Registration Fee.

OPNS will not be able to provide refunds for days that were missed because of a required emergency, fire, COVID-19, or Pandemic related closure.

Health Policy:

All children entering OPNS are required to *complete and return to the school prior to the first day of school* the following forms:

1. Child's Preadmission Health History
2. Identification & Emergency Forms
3. Consent for Medical Treatment
4. Physician's Report-Day Care Center
5. California School Immunization Record
6. Notification of Parent's Rights
7. Personal Rights-Community Care Center
8. Earthquake Emergency Information
9. Field Trip Permission for Preschool
10. Copy of Enrollment Contract

For the benefit of all children, parents, and teachers, please keep your child home whenever he/she is ill. When deciding whether or not your child is well enough to attend, please consider the following questions:

- Will your child's health keep him/her from comfortably participating in activities?
- Does your child need more care than the teachers can give without affecting the health and safety of other children?
- Could other children get sick from being near your child?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then your child should not attend school. Of course, diarrhea, vomiting, and/or fever are always reasons to stay home. For any of those, *your child must be symptom free for 24 hours prior to returning to school.* State law requires that contagious illnesses like chicken pox, measles, strep, pink eye, lice, pinworms, etc. be reported to the school. When a child develops an illness at school, the parent will be called to pick up his/her child. **If your child will not be attending school, for any reason, please call the office to let us know.**

As we have seen during this past year, COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on all of our lives. OPNS was open for the entire 2020/2021 school year and followed all safety precautions. Parents were diligent in keeping their children home if anyone in the family had symptoms of COVID-19 and the classroom teachers were diligent in cleaning the classrooms, equipment, and washing their hands. We will do the same for the 2021/2022 school year. We are hoping the children and staff will not be required to wear masks, but have no way of predicting what the 2021/2022 school year will bring. If the state or school district does require masks, we will be wearing masks. If we are required to close

in person learning, we will be closing. The teachers and I will jump to virtual classes and do our best to engage all students.

Accidents are a part of life for young children. The staff works hard to provide a safe, well-supervised environment and to keep your children free from danger or injury. All minor injuries will be treated with soap and water, ice, or both and documented. Serious injury will be treated as required. The staff will act to obtain the care required for your child and every attempt will be made to notify the parent immediately. Paramedics will be called if necessary. All staff have been trained in first aid and CPR.

Medication Policy:

If a child needs medication during our program, the medication must be in the original container with the instructions for dispensing clearly labeled. A written note from the doctor and the OPUSD medication form must be on file.

Allergies and Asthma:

Parents must inform the school of any allergies your child has. Food allergies are posted in each classroom as a precaution for all staff members or substitutes who may be serving snacks. Allergies to insect bites or pollen should also be mentioned to the teacher. Medications for severe allergic reactions and inhalers for asthma can be kept at the school.

Discipline Policies:

OPNS believes that positive expectations, positive recognition, redirection, communication, and effective listening skills will help children learn self-control and self-discipline. Any child who has difficulty responding to this environment will meet with the teacher and parent to discuss additional strategies. If deemed necessary, professional help will be recommended.

OPNS does not use corporal punishment of any type. Children are not ridiculed or humiliated, and teachers will allow children, within reason, to experience the logical consequences of their actions, guiding them towards appropriate choices.

Field Trips:

Field trips are taken throughout the year as a planned part of our curriculum. Parents are asked to assist with driving. Children under the age of 8 must be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat. Children under the age of 8 who are 4' 9" or taller may be secured by a safety belt in the back seat. We will abide by the Oak Park school district field trip rules.

Snacks and Lunches:

Eating together is an important aspect of relationships. We encourage children to eat together during snack and ask that each child bring lunch. *Parents, when assigned by the classroom teacher, provide snacks.* This coincides with each child's "share and special helper day". Your child will also create a menu showing the serving size. We will provide a list of possible snacks, encouraging parents to provide protein and fruit or vegetables. Children may eat the snack at any time during the morning routine. They are required to wash their hands before and after snack and to clean up after themselves. Lunch is a time of more focused fellowship, with everyone eating at the same time. Children are encouraged to use proper manners and conversational voices. We ask that all parents send nutritious lunches with overall health in mind. Please use a thermos and/or an ice pack; we do not have the ability to warm up food or keep it cold. Sodas, candy, and high sugar foods are not allowed.

Emergency Procedures:

Fire drills are conducted regularly so that the teachers and children know exactly what to do in case of a fire. Teachers also know how to use the fire extinguishers in their classroom.

Emergency supplies to sustain the school children and staff for a three-day period are kept on hand. Please keep the Emergency Contact Information up to date with at least one out of state contact.

Appropriate Clothing:

We believe children learn best when they are fully and actively involved in all aspects of the preschool environment. This may include: Sitting on the clay; painting faces, hands, or feet; using lots of water mixed with sand, dirt, cornstarch, even paint; chalk; oil pastels; charcoal pencils; etc. All of these materials are guaranteed to produce stains. Please send your child in clothes that may get dirty or stained and allow for freedom of movement. Appropriate clothing includes jeans, shorts, T-shirts, and tennis shoes, rubber-soled shoes or close toed sandals. Second-hand or consignment stores are a great place to find school clothes. For safety, children arriving in flip-flops, high heels, or loose sandals will not be permitted to stay. *Be sure to label all of your child's clothing to ensure easy return of misplaced clothing. Also, all children will need a full change of clothing to be kept at school. Please send clothing in a labeled*

Ziploc bag. When wet clothes are sent home, please return a clean set of clothes the next day.

Separation:

Separation from home and parents can oftentimes be a long process, with two steps forward and one back. We at OPNS want to help you and your child with separation. We will visit with your child at home and you and your child will work together on your Family Book, which will be kept at school. Children who are having a difficult time separating will be encouraged to join in with other children, but also allowed to visit with mom or dad until he or she is ready to say good-bye. Parents need to remain in the background as much as possible and allow their child to come to them. Parents must tell their child good-bye before leaving OPNS. Sneaking out while the child is busy simply leads to distrust.

Home Visits:

In order to give children an opportunity to meet their teacher without the pressures of a new environment or unfamiliar children, the teacher will visit each child in his/her home before the beginning of school. The teacher will make arrangements with the parents to set up a short (no more than 20 minutes) visit.

Family Book:

New families will be given an "All About Me" Book to be completed by everyone in the family and kept at school. This will give the teachers, other children, and other families a way to better acquaint themselves with all the preschool families. These will also help your child create a link between home and school. Returning families will be given additional pages to fill out.

Parent Involvement:

We welcome parent involvement. There are many opportunities and many different ways to help. We have "behind the scenes" needs, as well as classroom needs. Please share your talents and likes with OPNS. One avenue is through the Parent Advisory Board (PAB). The PAB is made up of all parents with a child in the school. This parent member board will advise and oversee the smooth operation and general growth of the school. The PAB reviews school policies and decisions. The PAB will also seek ways to support parents as they transition to the next stage of parenthood, involve parents in extracurricular activities that come up during the year, and manage fundraising events. Parent

involvement lets your children know school is important. Service as an executive officer on the PAB is an excellent way to volunteer at OPNS. Other opportunities include:

- Room parent .
- Social Media coordinator
- Hot lunch coordinator
- Help with special projects
- School improvement days. There are times when we may need to schedule a school improvement day where special projects, such as painting a room, refinishing tables, building cabinets or storage, and/or major cleaning are completed.
- Parents can also be of great value in helping to prepare materials; writing a newsletter; organizing fundraisers; we can use parent help in the atelier; and with special projects.

Birthdays:

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays in the classroom with their friends. Parents may donate a special book, classroom puzzle, or classroom game in honor of their child's birthday. Any food items served must be in alignment with the OPUSD Wellness Policy. These are available on our website or in the preschool office. *Food items that are not in compliance will not be served and will be returned to you.*

Parent Conferences:

Teachers will schedule two (2) formal conferences with parents. The first will be an intake conference where the parents tell the teachers about their child and what their expectations are. This will be at the beginning of September. In late April, there will be another conference to let parents know their child's progress and accomplishments over the year. Parents are always welcome to discuss their child with the classroom teacher at any time during the year: The teacher will set a meeting at a mutually agreeable time. *It is inappropriate, however, to discuss your child at the classroom door or while visiting in the room. Limit your doorway concerns to classroom news, gathering belongings and hugging your child. In depth questions about your child's day are often embarrassing for your child, and unfair to the teacher who is not prepared to thoughtfully respond. Please allow your teacher to indicate an appropriate time to meet for discussion.*

Zero Trash Policy:

OPNS joins with Oak Park Unified School District in embracing this policy to aggressively reduce the amount of waste generated by lunch and snack times. We believe that we have the responsibility to teach children and model for them earth friendly habits. Therefore, the following rules will be enforced:

- Children must bring lunch in a reusable container such as a lunchbox. Please ensure that the child's name is clearly visible on the outside.
- All food in this container needs to be packaged in reusable containers. For example, sandwiches, cookies, chips, etc. will be in reusable containers. If plastic bags are used, they will be sent home. Napkins must be cloth-no paper.
- Students may not bring food to school that is prepackaged. Parents are encouraged to purchase food in larger quantities and then use reusable containers to send it to school.
- Drinks must be in reusable containers or recyclable containers. The only acceptable recyclable containers are plastic with a recycle number 1 or 2 on the bottom or aluminum cans. Juice box drink containers and envelopes are prohibited. No straws please.

We ask for parents' enthusiastic participation in this policy and hope that parents will be partners with us in teaching children earth friendly habits. If a student brings a prohibited item to school, the trash generated will be sent home with the student.

Five Protective Factors:

As early childhood professionals, parents, neighbors, and caring people, we have all seen that some families and children are able to cope with and recover from unforeseen tragedies, job loss, and/or long-term illnesses, while other families struggle. Unfortunately, when families struggle with day-to-day living, child abuse and neglect can become the norm. What is the difference between these families? What information, skills, or talent does the recovering family have? Are there techniques that all families can use to increase their ability to survive any crisis?

A national project called "Strengthening Families Through Early Care and Education" has been working to discover why and how strong families pull through a crisis. They have identified five conditions in families and communities that increase the health and well being of children and families. These

conditions help families work through a crisis and thrive. They are referred to as **The Five Protective Factors:**

1. **Parental Resilience:** The ability to constructively cope with and bounce back from all types of challenges
2. **Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development:** Accurate information about child development and what to expect for each age, along with effective parenting strategies
3. **Social & Emotional Competence of Children:** A child's ability to interact positively with others and communicate his or her emotions effectively
4. **Social Connections:** Parents have a connection with community members (friends, family, neighbors, teachers) who can provide emotional support
5. **Concrete Supports in Times of Need:** Ensuring the basic needs of a family are being met; connecting parents and children to services

Oak Park Neighborhood School is committed to helping every family participating in our program strengthen each of these protective factors in their own households and as a part of the community of Oak Park. We will provide parenting workshops and education, opportunities to build relationships with other families, resources and referrals to community and county support services, and a nurturing environment where your children will learn to interact positively with others.

www.strengtheningfamilies.net

Parent Handbook 2022-2023

I/We have read the parent handbook and understand the procedures and policies.

I/We agree to be governed by the rules of this handbook.

Parent Signature

Date

Print Name

Parent Signature

Date

Print Name

Please return this form to school *no later than* Friday, August 19, 2022