

WILD LILAC PRESCHOOL

Honoring All Children

Family Handbook

The Iris House
1533 SE 32nd Avenue
Portland OR, 97214

The Daffodil House
1540 SE 32nd Ave
Portland OR, 97214

(503) 236-3240
www.wildlilacpreschool.com

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About Wild Lilac Preschool

Wild Lilac Preschool is a small progressive preschool with two in-home locations in Portland's vibrant Hawthorne District. Wild Lilac consists of the "Iris House," a preschool program for 3.5-5 year old children and the "Daffodil House," a preschool program for 2-3.5 year olds. Wild Lilac is a warm and loving community of preschoolers, teachers, and parents/guardians who value the importance of imagination, creativity, and play for early learners! We offer a cozy and inviting inside space to support children's imaginative play and an outside space alive with possibilities for daily adventure. In an environment rooted in respect and compassion, we strive to nourish each child's spirit, foster his or her natural sense of wonder, and provide a protective space for him or her to grow.

At Wild Lilac we honor the rhythm of the natural world in our singing, games, and stories. We notice the shifting seasons in our garden while caring for the plants, harvesting food to eat, and drawing inspiration for art projects.

In all of our activities, we aim to:

- Engage the mind to wonder and question
- Nourish the heart to be compassionate and kind
- Enliven the imagination
- Cultivate a love of learning

Our Programs

Iris House

Age: 3.5 - 5.5 year olds.

Ratio: 14-15 children per day with the facilitation and gentle guidance of 2-3 teachers.

Hours: Iris House offers a morning program (8:00 am - 1:00 pm) and a full day program (8:00 am- 4:00 pm)

Location: 1533 SE 32nd Ave, Portland OR, 97214

Phone Number: 503-236-7036

Email: wildlilac.irishouse@gmail.com

The Program: Iris House is a place where children can engage in exploration of art, music, language, and play as a coactive group while being honored for their individual interests and passions. Iris House teachers help the children maintain an environment of mutual respect and appreciation. Iris House curriculum is both emergent and constructive. Iris House celebrates the children's questions about the broadening world around them, imagination, creativity and play! Projects are process oriented, open ended and inspired by the children's interests. Iris House children enjoy monthly fieldtrips. With the help of parent volunteers, we picnic in neighborhood parks, see puppet shows and age appropriate children's theatre, harvest food on Sauvie Island and reap the benefits of living in the wild and wonderful Northwest. Iris house provides homemade, organic, and seasonal breakfast, snack, and lunch.

Daffodil House

Age: 2 - 3 year olds.

Ratio: 10-12 children per day with the facilitation and gentle guidance of 2-3 teachers.

Hours: Daffodil House offers a morning program (8:30 am- 12:30pm) and a limited full day program (8:30 am - 4:00pm)

Location: 1540 SE 32nd Ave, Portland OR, 97214

Phone Number: 503-235-0383

Email: wildlilac.daffodilhouse@gmail.com

The Program: Daffodil House is a place where children can have a safe, fun and nurturing social experience. Intended to foster confidence and a sense of security in young preschoolers, the Daffodil House is a warm, loving environment where children are guided gently, and encouraged to make meaning of their feelings and experiences. Daffodil House teachers set a tone of mutual respect and appreciation. Daffodil House curriculum honors the children developmentally with open-ended projects and emergent curriculum, engaging circle times, and lots of open play. Daffodil House provides homemade, organic, and seasonal breakfast, snack, and lunch.

Who We Are

Co-Directors Helene Hanson and Katie Statman-Weil founded Wild Lilac Preschool with the intention of creating a respectful, coactive, engaging environment for children to learn and play. It is our belief that children who learn to play coactively and cooperatively in the early education years later have the tools and confidence to excel in school. We are both inspired by the wonder and imagination of early childhood and we are deeply committed to providing children with a first time school experience that is warm, respectful and loving.

We believe in respectful, intentional and consistent guidance of children. We believe that children come into the world with their temperaments and spirit selves intact, and it is our work to lovingly nurture their inherent wisdom and joy. We are inspired by the early childhood education programs of Reggio Emilia and employ elements of the Waldorf teaching method in our program. Our curriculum is both constructive and emergent and responds to the interests, ideas and questions the children have about the broadening world around them.

Katie and Helene both grew up attending a Waldorf School. Our physical space is greatly influenced by the Waldorf aesthetic. Our guidance philosophy is rooted in the teachings of respectful parenting visionaries Magda Gerber and Aletha Solter.

We value strong communication between staff and families. Wild Lilac's staff use observation and documentation as well as regular verbal communication to relay information about each child's development to his/her family. We have three formal parent/guardian-teacher conferences throughout the year to discuss each child's progress in the preschool environment. Wild Lilac co-directors offer private and group support and guidance sessions for enrolled children's families and caregivers.

All Wild Lilac staff must meet educational and work experience requirements appropriate to their position and pass a criminal background check, including an FBI check if they have lived outside of Oregon over the two previous years. Every staff member is trained in First Aid, CPR, Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse, and must have a current Food Handler Card. Our staff receives yearly training through in-services, workshops and staff meetings. All staff must meet the Child Care Division's requirement of 15 hours per year of training in child development or related field.

Wild Lilac Preschool promotes and provides opportunities for staff growth and development as well as fostering teamwork and professionalism. We are extremely committed to offering competitive salaries and benefits. Staff benefits include paid time off and health insurance.

Our Mission

The Vision:

Wild Lilac Preschool intends to create a learning space rooted in three founding principles:

Respect:

Our classrooms are environments in which each person's unique vision, passions and pace of learning are honored. We respect the needs of each of our members while teaching each student how to be accountable for the health of the group.

Experimentation:

Our curriculum adapts and responds to the interests of individual students and the expertise of the teachers. This promises to be an environment fertile for growth, surprise and opportunity. Classrooms incorporate local experts, businesses and artists who will help us explore the importance of place, knowledge and community.

Sense of Community:

We hope that each of our students leaves Wild Lilac with a deep, lasting inner strength that remains intertwined with a respect for and participation in the community around them. We hope to bestow upon our students a sense of social responsibility and vision by cultivating their sense of self-worth and integrity.

The Curriculum:

Our curriculum is devoted to endowing students with the ability to think, not to regurgitate. Our classrooms are safe from judgment, a place where each student is encouraged to think broadly, ask questions and take risks. We inspire in our students a fresh ability to reimagine how we live together, what goals we strive to achieve and what ends we try to meet.

Our Philosophy

Play!

Play is the work of childhood. At Wild Lilac Preschool, the children play freely in the space with simple, natural toys that encourage imagination and creativity. Children engage in exploration of art, music, language, and play as a coactive group while being honored for their individual interests and passions. Our teachers help the children maintain an environment of mutual respect and appreciation by modeling respect and empowering the children to create and uphold their own agreements. Wild Lilac curriculum celebrates the children's questions about the broadening world around them.

Create!

At Wild Lilac Preschool, we value the importance of creative and open-ended sensory experiences for all children. We bring this value to our art curriculum as well as our projects. Wild Lilac children have daily opportunities to work with varied materials, and teachers celebrate the process of their exploration without imposing expectations about the art work's result. Children also have daily opportunities for craft, baking, or gardening activities. Wild Lilac children are welcome to choose their level of involvement in all of our activities. We draw inspiration from the natural world for seasonal activities.

Celebrate!

At Wild Lilac Preschool, we honor and celebrate the wonder of the earth and its seasons. Our curriculum notices the shifting of the natural world and we gather together as a community of families to celebrate the powerful rhythm of the natural world with parties, picnics and outings.

Wild Lilac celebrates diversity and is guided by the principles of anti-bias education. Wild Lilac strives to be an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming space for all families.

Our Daily Rhythm

A daily rhythm is very comforting to young children. Each day the rhythm is the same, with flexibility given to the groups needs, and the transitions are marked by songs and poems which the children quickly learn to recognize and take part in.

8:00

Children arrive at Iris House between 8:00 am – 9:00 am, they say goodbye to parents/guardians, greet friends, and settle in for the day.

8:30

Children arrive at Daffodil House between 8:30 am - 9:00 am, say goodbye to parents/guardians, greet friends, and settle in for the day.

9:00

We gather for our morning story, told in the traditional Waldorf style puppet show with wooden animals and silks.

9:10

We go to the table, thank the earth for our food, and have tea and breakfast.

9:20

The children move freely around the play space, choosing their activities. During this time we the children choose to play, create art, cook/bake, participate in a project etc.

10:20

We clean up our play space and gather together for circle time.

10:30

Our circles are celebrations of the seasons. We sing, dance and do poetry in motion. Each circle begins with the same song to greet the day:

"Good morning dear earth, good morning dear sun

Good morning dear stones, and the flowers every one

Good morning dear bees and the birds in the trees

Good morning to you and good morning to me!"

10:45

We go to the table, thank the earth for our food, and have a snack.

11:00

We get ready to go outside.

11:10

Open play outside, outside projects/activities, or a neighborhood walk.

12:00

We come inside, change clothes if needed, and wash up for lunch.

12:10

We go to the table, sing a blessing over our food, and eat lunch.

12:30

Daffodil House morning children go home.

1:00

Iris House morning children go home.

1:15

Iris House and Daffodil House full day children lay down for a rest.

3:15

We go to the table for an afternoon snack.

3:30

We have open play time, inside or out, depending on the weather while parents/guardians arrive.

4:00

Full day children go home 3:45-4:00pm

Story Time

In our stories we tell fables, true stories, and fairy tales. Our stories are often related to the seasons, the natural world, and the children's budding interests.

Circle Time

In our circle, we bring the rhythm of the natural world inside, singing songs of the season, doing finger plays, movement and poetry, and celebrating our powerful mother earth. Often, we use this time to discuss and expand on our project work.

Art

At Wild Lilac, we are intentional to distinguish between "art" and "craft". As Bev Bos discusses in her book *Don't Move the Muffin Tins*, one can distinguish "between 'art' and 'craft' by asking how much participation by an adult is needed once [the teacher] has presented materials. When the activity is true art and genuinely creative, all [the teacher] has to do is to put a name on the paper or perhaps stand by to add to the supplies" (3). We present art materials to the children without any declaration of how they should be used. When the children create art, we encourage them to explore the materials at their own pace and in their own way.

Projects and Activities

Wild Lilac's philosophy is grounded in the constructivist approach to education. Teachers observe the children to introduce projects which respond to themes arising in their play and questions they ask. Teachers document the shape that a given project takes when the children breathe their interests and energy into it by taking notes on the phases of a project, documenting the children's questions and comments, and by photographing the process. The duration of the projects and activities we do depend on the scale of the project, and also on the children's interest and inspiration. Our projects may have many parts, span many months, and transform into many different ideas. Alternatively, the activity may end with the nature walk if the children are expressing their desire to move on to another activity.

Our Weekly Rhythm

During the week we bake, create art, and work on different seasonal activities and projects that last a varying amount of days depending on the scale of the project and the children's interest level.

Community Activities

Several times a year, we gather together as a whole community for potlucks at local parks, seasonal events, and festivals. These community activities are marked on the Wild Lilac Preschool calendar.

Food at Wild Lilac Preschool

The Wild Lilac Preschool has a Seriously Organic Kitchen. We offer the children whole organic, vegetarian food to honor their growing bodies. The children help make bread, applesauce, hummus, mashed potatoes, tortillas, and more. Being involved in meal preparation encourages the children to expand their palates! We also try our very best to buy locally grown food to support local growers and reduce environmental impact. We eat seasonally to honor the relationship between the rhythm of our bodies and the rhythm of the natural world. Wild Lilac is a *nut-free* school as a precaution for severe allergies; we ask that no nuts enter the school.

We celebrate and ritualize food at Wild Lilac; each meal begins with a blessing thanking mother earth for her bounty, we sit together for all of our meals, and take care to honor our limits when we are full. Following is an example of a seasonal menu at Wild Lilac.

Wild Lilac Winter Menu:

Monday

Breakfast: oatmeal porridge, dried cranberries, tea

Snack: rice cakes, homemade hummus, water

Lunch: stone soup (each child brings an organic vegetable to contribute + lentils, quinoa, noodles and spoon of miso = stone soup), homemade bread, rice or cow milk

*Stone soup continually rotates throughout the year so that each child has a chance to participate.

Tuesday

Breakfast: homemade bread, pears, tea

Snack: roasted potatoes, kidney beans, water

Lunch: noodles, homemade tomato sauce, carrots, broccoli, parmesan cheese, rice or cow milk

Wednesday

Breakfast: homemade muffins, oranges, tea

Snack: edamame, sweet potatoes, water

Lunch: lentils, quinoa, broccoli, cauliflower, rice or cow milk

Thursday

Breakfast: homemade pancakes, apples, tea

Snack: homemade applesauce, homemade pretzels, water

Lunch: black beans, homemade tortillas, carrots, broccoli, rice or cow milk

Friday

Breakfast: oatmeal, raisins, tea

Snack: homemade banana bread, oranges

Lunch: brown rice, edamame, kale, homemade gomasio, sweet potatoes, rice or cow milk

Calendar

Families are responsible for arranging alternative childcare on Wild Lilac Preschool school holidays. Our calendar is posted on our website before the beginning of the school year and field trips are added throughout the year. Wild Lilac generally follows the Portland Public School

Calendar with the exception of a shortened summer break, the date of which can be found on the Wild Lilac Preschool website. Wild Lilac Preschool follows Portland Public School's recommendation for inclement weather closures.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

We ask that parents/guardians bring their child to school by 9:00 am so that we can all have our morning story and breakfast together. We do ask that parents/guardians pick their children up on time. At Daffodil House morning children go home at 12:30 pm and full day children go home at 4:00pm. At Iris House morning children go home at 1:00 pm or 4:00 pm. Children will only be released to the individuals specified on their "Information and Authorization" sheet, signed and dated by their parent/guardian. If a staff member does not recognize the individual who is picking up a child, a staff member must view a photo identification card before releasing the child. If the individual does not have a photo identification card, the child cannot be released from Wild Lilac Preschool's care.

Resting/Napping Practices

Children who stay with us for the full day read stories and rest in the nap room after the morning children leave. Children who do not need naps, may look at books quietly on their mats while the nappers fall asleep. After the nappers are settled, the children who are still awake have the choice to stay on their mats or return to the playroom for puzzles, drawing or other quiet activities.

Birthdays

Birthdays are honored with a special birthday story and celebration during morning playtime. Parents/guardians are invited to join us for this special ritual.

Holidays and Festivals

At Wild Lilac we celebrate holidays that honor the shifting seasons such as Harvest Time, Winter Solstice, and May Day. We do not observe religious holidays; however, we welcome families to share with us their own traditions and beliefs.

Animals

Wild Lilac Preschool has a cat, Marley, who enjoys visiting the children at both Iris House and Daffodil House. She is very, very friendly and loves children! Wild Lilac also has a bunny named Carrot who loves the children and visits both Iris House and Daffodil House! Two dogs (Moishie and Savannah) live at Iris House. Moishie is a Shih Tzu mix and Savannah is a Golden Retriever/Australian Shepherd mix. One dog (Blueberry) lives at Daffodil House. Blueberry is a Lab/Golden Retriever mix. All three dogs are loving and sweet, however, they have their own space away from all of the noise and movement of the preschool.

Diapers

Wild Lilac accepts children of any age in diapers. We do not initiate the transition between diapering and toileting at a specific age because each child arrives at this developmental milestone differently. We honor each child's individual process and we do not push toilet learning at any age. We do find children often become interested in using the toilet as they

experience their peers using the toilet and will ask them if they are interested in trying it periodically. Eventually every child will use the toilet and we will not pressure children into anything they are not ready for. For more information, please review our policy on transitioning from diapers to toilet use located in this packet.

Things to bring to school

We ask that you bring the following to school for your child:

- a crib sheet (for children who stay all day)
- a pillow (for children who stay all day)
- a blanket (for children who stay all day)
- 2 pairs of underwear
- 2 pairs of socks
- 2 pairs of pants
- 2 shirts
- diapers and wipes if your child uses them (we are happy to follow your cloth diaper regimen if you use cloth diapers at home)
- naptime pull-ups if your child uses them

In the wintertime...

- a warm hat
- gloves
- a raincoat
- rubber boots (an extra pair, which will at school for the winter)

In the summertime...

- a sun hat
- sunscreen
- a bathing suit
- water shoes or flip flops

Family Involvement

Wild Lilac works intensively to a supportive resource for whole families. We do this in the following ways:

- Daily communication with parents/guardians
- Informal meetings
- Formal meetings/parent/guardian-teacher conferences
- Training sessions
- Newsletters
- Emails

Communication is the key to a positive partnership between parents/guardians and caregivers, and we value the relationships we nurture with each child and his/her family members.

We ask that families refrain from using physical punishment on their child(ren) while in the preschool. Parents are strongly encouraged to seek assistance from teachers in developing

positive guidance practices at home. We believe that when parents and teachers use similar methods for guiding behavior, both are more successful.

Right to Access

Parents and guardians have the right to access the school anytime during the hours of operation. However, please be mindful of the fact that both programs become “homes” after school hours. Please only pick up forgotten items during Wild Lilac's operating hours.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Wild Lilac teachers will hold parent-teacher conferences three times per year, so that each child's teachers and parents/guardians can sit down together to discuss how unique and special s/he is. Conferences can also be arranged any time a parent/guardian has a question or concern to discuss.

Parent/Guardian Volunteers

Although we have no formal “volunteer” requirement, we welcome any and all involvement Wild Lilac parents/guardians want to have!

Inclement Weather

Wild Lilac preschool's main objective during bad weather is to insure the safety of our staff and children. Thank you in advance for understanding our need for safety. If the Portland Public Schools in the surrounding neighborhood close because of inclement weather Wild Lilac Preschool will close too, following Portland Public School District's recommendation.

Inclusion Policy

Wild Lilac Preschool accepts all children, families, and staff regardless of race, religion, creed, gender, sex, family composition, or ability.

Wild Lilac Preschool adheres to the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) joint position statement on Early Childhood Inclusion.

In accordance with the requirements of the titles of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Wild Lilac Preschool will not exclude any individual with a disability from the full and equal enjoyment of our services and facilities. Wild Lilac Preschool will make reasonable modifications in our policies, practices, or procedures when such modifications are necessary to afford our services and facilities to individuals with disabilities, unless the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of our services.

Emergency Procedures

Wild Lilac Preschool's emergency procedures follow the State mandated guidelines, with monthly fire drills and/or earthquake drills. These are recorded and checked regularly by the State. Fire emergency equipment, when required, is available and maintained.

Check In and Out

To ensure the safety and supervision upon arrival in the morning please walk your child all the way into the playroom and state verbally to a teacher that your child is now in care. Upon checking your child out in the afternoon, please indicate you are leaving Wild Lilac Preschool to a staff member. Your child will only be released to those individuals you have designated on your child's "Information and Authorization" form. The staff will require photo id of anyone who the staff do not recognize.

It is a State requirement that you sign your child in and out of Wild Lilac Preschool daily.

Personal Items

We request that personal toys and belongings as well as gum, candy and money be left at home. Wild Lilac Preschool is not responsible for the loss of personal items, which includes damage or loss to backpacks and clothing. Please dress your child in clothing that can get dirty and stained. We get messy at school!

Music

At Wild Lilac Preschool, we limit our group listening to what is acceptable for our whole group; music that celebrates respectful themes for children, classical music, soft instrumental jazz etc. Music with themes Wild Lilac staff deem inappropriate are not allowed.

Medication

In the event that your child must be given medicine (prescription or over-the-counter), you must fill out a Medicine Authorization Form. These forms are available from Wild Lilac Preschool's staff. Medication must come in its original container. Children may not bring medicine in backpacks, coats, etc. The State requires that medications be maintained under locked custody.

Medicine is administered only with a Signed Medicine authorization Form from a parent or guardian. All medicine is stored in a locked container out of reach from children. When a teacher administers medicine the name and dosage are checked and then logged in the child's Medicine Authorization Form. Parents/guardians may check this at anytime. The authorized person who picks up the child will be notified verbally of the medication administered.

Enrollment Procedures

Children are welcome at Wild Lilac Preschool regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, creed, sex, expressed gender and family composition. If you are interested in sending your child to The Wild Lilac Preschool, please come to an Open House and fill out an application, this will get you a spot on our waitlist. There is no waitlist fee.

Waitlist Policy

We maintain a list of families who have submitted an application. When an opening occurs, we go to the list and pull applications of children whose birthdays fall within the appropriate range for that opening. When reviewing the applications, we also consider each family's scheduling needs. After we identify the families who the enrollment spot will work for, we contact families

for openings in the order in which they have been waiting. If the timing of the opening is a good fit for the family, we begin the enrollment process. If not, and the family asks us to do so, we keep them on our list for future openings.

Currently enrolled children and siblings of currently enrolled children have priority status when it comes to enrollment openings. Before we look at the waitlist for candidates for our openings, we offer days to our current families to ensure all of our currently enrolled families are satisfied with their schedules.

We have a hard time speaking to the length of the waitlist, because our current enrollments all have different schedules. If, for example, a 4 full day enrollment spot opens, it may only work for a few waitlist families, and we would be looking to fill the spot with a child of comparable age to the child who was previously filling the spot. This is a typical scenario for us, we never have a spot open up and have stacks and stacks of applications who all want the same schedule because the needs of the waitlist families are all different and the spot that opens up is always for a specific schedule.

Tuition

Enrollment fee: The enrollment fee is \$200 and is to be submitted once a spot for your child has been established. It will hold your child's space for him/her. This fee is nonrefundable, regardless of the duration of your child's enrollment at Wild Lilac. We cannot be flexible on our enrollment fee policy. This is an annual fee.

Tuition includes an organic, vegetarian, and healthy breakfast, snack, and lunch. Tuition rates are divided into equal monthly payments and do not vary, even during months when there are closures. First and last month's tuition is due before the first day of school. Subsequent tuition is due the first of each month.

The Iris House

Enrollment Fee: \$200

Mornings (8:00 am - 1:00 pm)

1 per week	\$195 per month
2 per week	\$335 per month
3 per week	\$480 per month
4 per week	\$624 per month
5 per week	\$775 per month

Full days (8:00 am - 4:00 pm)

1 per week	\$240 per month
2 per week	\$425 per month
3 per week	\$615 per month
4 per week	\$810 per month
5 per week	\$995 per month

The Daffodil House

Enrollment Fee: \$200

Mornings (8:30 am- 12:30 pm)

1 per week	\$195 per month
2 per week	\$335 per month
3 per week	\$480 per month
4 per week	\$624 per month
5 per week	\$775 per month

Full days (8:30 am - 4:00 pm)

1 per week	\$255 per month
2 per week	\$455 per month
3 per week	\$660 per month
4 per week	\$870 per month
5 per week	\$1070 per month

Wild Lilac Preschool is registered with DHS (Department of Human Services). To find out if your family qualifies for childcare subsidy please visit:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/childcare/qualify.shtml>

Wild Lilac Preschool's Co-directors may add, change, delete or discontinue parts of the handbook, at any time, without notice. The most current handbook can be found on Wild Lilac Preschool's website: www.wildlilacpreschool.com

Working families may also qualify for an Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) subsidy. To find out if your family qualifies for an employment related subsidy please visit: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/childcare/subsidy.shtml>

Tuition Policies and Procedures

Your child's first and last month of tuition must be paid before enrollment begins.

Families are charged \$1 each minute if they are late in picking up their child after their scheduled pick-up time. The clock located at Wild Lilac Preschool determines the correct time.

Tuition is due on the first of the month, regardless of its day of the week. (For example, if the first of the month is a Saturday, tuition is due on Saturday, not the following Monday).

Families will be charged \$10 per day for each late day after the tuition is due. Wild Lilac Preschool reserves the right to expel families from the program for three or more late payments.

Tuition will not be reimbursed for closures due to inclement weather. These missed days may be used as makeup days throughout the year.

Any unpaid tuition is subject to collection.

Withdrawals and Reductions

If you must withdraw your child or reduce your child's enrollment days, Wild Lilac Preschool requires that you notify the directors, Katie Statman-Weil and Helene Hanson, via written communication (email or letter) by the first of the month in question. Then, if your child's effective withdrawal or reduction date falls on the last day of the month, no further charges will be applied. If, however, your child's effective withdrawal or reduction date falls on any day prior to the last day of the month, parents/guardians will be required to pay for the remaining missed days of that month. Please note, this final month's tuition is the "last month of tuition" paid at initial enrollment.

Dismissals

Wild Lilac Preschool reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program if it is determined that his/her specific needs cannot be met in our classroom environment. However, there are several steps taken before a dismissal occurs: 1) the teachers document the behavior, 2) the co-directors, parents/guardians, and teachers meet to discuss any behavior concerns, 3) an Individualized Behavior Plan is created and agreed to by staff and parents/guardians, 4) behavior consultants may be used to support the staff, 5) staff and parents/guardians will have frequent communication to evaluate the success of the behavior plan, and 6) when the efforts to bring about change have been exhausted, parents/guardians and the co-directors will meet to determine the next course of action.

Make Up Days

Each family reserves certain days of the week for their child to attend Wild Lilac Preschool, but

Wild Lilac Preschool's Co-directors may add, change, delete or discontinue parts of the handbook, at any time, without notice. The most current handbook can be found on Wild Lilac Preschool's website: www.wildlilacpreschool.com

families are allowed to make up any unused day within the calendar school year. However, unused days can only be used on days when Wild Lilac Preschool has been notified of another student's absence. If it is not possible to coordinate make up days within the calendar year, the tuition for the missed days is not refunded.

Wild Lilac's Health and Illness Policy

Parents/guardians are asked to keep their children home when they have one or more of the following symptoms:

- A fever in the past 24 hours
- Two diarrhea bowel movements in one day.
- Watery, mucousy, or pink eyes.
- A runny nose showing greenish nasal mucus. Greenish mucus for more than 4 days may mean a secondary infection has set in and needs to be checked by a doctor. A clear runny nose is acceptable when not accompanied by other symptoms such as fever, coughing, vomiting, or listlessness
- A cough with mucus secretions (a wet, wheezy cough which could be spreading a bacterial or viral infection on the droplets) when associated with other symptoms or when persistent.
- All rashes except diaper or heat rashes.
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours.
- Difficulty in breathing.
- Earache or drainage.
- Listlessness; inability to participate in activities of the program, within the past 24 hours.

If your child is sick please make sure s/he is better for 24 hours before returning to school. For example, if your child is sick on Tuesday and misses school, s/he should not return until Thursday. If you are in doubt about your child being well enough to come share germs with the other children and their caregivers, please keep your child at home. Thank you for understanding why we must be strict with our sick policy.

It is very important that you call if your child is ill or will be absent from the program.

Wild Lilac Preschool's Child Abuse and Neglect Policy:

Wild Lilac Preschool staff must report immediately any suspected incident of child abuse and neglect to the director or designated person-in-charge, and to Child Protective Services; or when the staff member believes that the director or designated person-in-charge would not or has failed to report the suspected incident, to the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-352-6513.

A statement is posted at Wild Lilac Preschool in clear public view stating that we report suspected child abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services.

Child abuse and neglect is any physical injury, mental or emotional injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, the sale of or the attempted sale, or negligent or maltreatment of a child by a parent, guardian or custodian responsible for the child's welfare.

Wild Lilac's Confidentiality Policy

Wild Lilac Preschool's Statement of Intent

The intention of Wild Lilac Preschool's confidentiality policy is to protect the privacy of children, families, and Wild Lilac staff.

Wild Lilac Preschool's Aim

We aim to ensure that all parents, guardians, and caregivers can share information in the confidence that it will be used to enhance the welfare and education of the children.

How Wild Lilac Respects Confidentiality

To ensure that all those using – and working in – Wild Lilac preschool can do so with confidence, we respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parent(s) or guardian(s) have access to the records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
- Wild Lilac staff will only share information about a child to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).
- If Wild Lilac staff have concerns relating to a child's personal safety, records are kept in a secure, confidential file and only shared with others on a 'need to know' basis.
- Personal information about children, families and staff is kept in a secure, confidential file.
- Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential to the directors, who are responsible for making personnel decisions.
- Parent or guardian permission is required in order for photographs of the children to be taken. Pictures of naked children may not be taken.

Wild Lilac Preschool's Biting Policy

Wild Lilac wants to ensure that every child is safe and feels safe while in our care. Our program provides an environment that encourages and promotes cooperative interaction, respect for others, and problem solving between the children. Biting is a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between thirteen months and young two year olds. Wild Lilac Preschool takes all hurtful and harmful behavior, including biting, seriously. When it happens, it can be scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents/guardians, and teachers. It is also not something to blame on children, parents/guardians, or teachers, and there are no quick and easy solutions to it. Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, feeling crowded, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to change because it does achieve results (even if they are not the intended results): the desired toy, excitement, attention. Knowing that the effect of their biting will hurt another person is not yet a part of a child of this ages' mindset; the "cause-effect" relationship as well as strong empathy is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully in order for biting not to happen. There are times, however, when teachers cannot be within immediate reach to prevent a bite.

Our policy for handling a biting incident is the following:

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- When children bite at Wild Lilac, the teachers attend to the bitten child immediately, comforting the child, helping him/her with language to express his/her feelings. If the bite breaks the skin, it is cleaned and bandaged. The biter is helped away from other children calmly, without a dramatic or emotional response (which might provide negative reinforcement for the child). The teacher will remind the child of ways to be gentle and help the child with language to express his/her feelings. The teacher will help the child return to the group when he/she is calm.
- Wild Lilac teachers focus on each child's positive behaviors and lovingly describe any gentle touching and respectful interactions they experience between children. When a child does something that hurts another child, the teachers use positive language, stating what the child can do rather than what he/she must not do ("be safe with friends" or "gentle hands" rather than "no biting") to empower the child to use his/her body in a gentle and respectful manner. After the incident is addressed, the child will receive the same love and positive attention as everyone else!
- The child who is bitten is reminded that when someone does something s/he does not like, s/he has the power to say "no" or "stop".
- An oral incident report is given to the parents/guardians of all children involved the day the incident occurs. The name of a biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more difficult.
- A written incident report is put in the biter as well as the bitten child's file. This report is signed by the child's parent or guardian.
- We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for pattern, in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.
- We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.
- We try to adapt the environment and work with parents/guardians to reduce any child stress.
- We make special efforts to protect the potentially bitten child.

We make every effort to extinguish biting behavior quickly and to provide support to families. Only after we feel we have made every effort to make the program work for the biting child do we consider asking a family to withdraw a biting child.

Incident Report Policy

When an incident occurs at Wild Lilac Preschool that leaves a visible physical mark on a child and/or teachers deem is traumatic to a child, an Incident Report Form will be filled out and the incident will be discussed with the parents/guardians of each child involved. All incidents will be discussed with the caregiver who picks the child up from school, however only parents/guardians may sign the Incident Report Form. If the caregiver who picks the child up from school is not the child's parent/guardian, the parents/guardians will also be called to discuss the incident. The parents/guardians will sign the Incident Report Form the next time they are present at school. Wild Lilac teachers honor our confidentiality policy when discussing all incidents.

Wild Lilac's Non Collection of Children/Emergency Procedure Policy **Emergency Procedure**

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If a parent/guardian/caregiver is late collecting a child a member of the staff will stay on the premises until s/he is collected. All efforts will be made to contact the parent/guardian or emergency contact number, however if we have not heard from or cannot contact a suitable member of the child's family within two hours we will have no option but to inform Social Services or local Police as we will deem the child abandoned.

Lost Child on the Premises

If a child cannot be located on the premises all staff and helpers will be asked firstly to check the local vicinity, ensuring that all external exits are still secure. Secondly the police will be contacted, closely followed by the child's parent/guardian/caregiver.

Lost Child on an outing

If a child cannot be located on an outing all staff and helpers will check the local vicinity and establish child's last known whereabouts. The nearest information service will then be informed and asked to contact the security/police, closely followed by the child's parent/guardian/caregiver.

Wild Lilac's Commitment to an Anti-bias Approach

At Wild Lilac, we uphold an activist approach to valuing diversity and promoting equity. We teach children to accept, respect, and celebrate differences in gender, family structure, race, ethnicity, culture, ability, and language. We value an anti-oppression environment and use anti-bias curriculum to enable every child to construct a confident self-identity and a comfortable interaction with diversity. It is Wild Lilac's goal to help children develop critical-thinking skills and empower them to promote social justice in their own lives and in the world.

Wild Lilac is a space where each person's unique voice is celebrated. Our program is safe from judgment, a place where each student is encouraged to think broadly, ask questions and take risks. We encourage the children to re-imagine how we live together, what goals we strive to achieve and what ends we try to meet. We want each of our students to leave Wild Lilac with a deep, lasting inner strength that remains intertwined with a respect for and participation in the community around them. We hope to bestow upon the children a sense of social responsibility and vision by cultivating their sense of self-worth and integrity.

Wild Lilac Preschool values differences among people and fights against oppressive ideas and behaviors. As a community of teachers, children, and parents/guardians Wild Lilac confronts and challenges the common oppression of minority groups and strives to promote an inclusive atmosphere.

This anti-bias perspective is reflected in and supported by all aspects of the classroom environment. For example, our ever expanding and changing library has books that focus on the experiences of a diverse range of characters and our daily conversations often explore and challenge widely held prejudices and misconceptions about other peoples. The children are encouraged to explore themes of gender and family structure in their play, and anti-bias curriculum is practiced in the classrooms with teachers and children confronting issues that arise rather than covering them up.

Creating and Maintaining a Respectful Preschool Environment

At Wild Lilac, we see the challenges that naturally arise in our dynamic preschool setting as opportunities for the group to develop and for each child to practice using his or her “social toolbox”. Teachers do not attempt to prevent problematic situations from happening, rather we observe the shape they take and offer our assistance in negotiating peaceful and respectful solutions. We strongly believe in:

- Fostering Respectful Interactions
- Honoring Natural Consequences
- Creating Agreements and Offering Choices
- Encouraging Solution Based Problem-Solving and Redirection

Respectful Interactions

We believe in modeling respect and treating children as the intelligent and capable people they are. We understand the importance of listening to children's feelings and helping them express themselves. We believe in empowering children to do for themselves what they can, and we are conscious of our involvement in their development.

For example: Rick has Velcro shoes that his teacher suspects he can put on himself. When Rick asks her to put them on, she says *"I think you might be able to put those on yourself because they are Velcro and I have seen you can fasten the Velcro on your bag."* Rick seems concerned and wants help. Instead of just doing it for him, his teacher says, *"I'll come stand right by you and watch you try. I'll talk you through it if you get confused about what to do."* Rick's teacher stands beside him and watches him, describing what she sees and when Rick gets stuck, she talks him through it, as promised.

This scenario probably takes them five minutes, versus the 25 seconds it would have taken had an adult helped, but Rick now knows he can put on his own shoes. Even if he is not yet comfortable doing it without a trusted adult nearby to supervise, he is empowered by the independence and responsibility of knowing he can do this simple act for himself. By respectfully and patiently creating interactions in which children are able to actualize their own capabilities, Wild Lilac teachers aim to foster the confidence that allows each child to become responsible for his or her own body.

Natural Consequences

Wild Lilac Teachers set the tone for a peaceful school environment by creating agreements with the children to ensure each member of our community feels safe and respected. We expect every individual, child and adult alike, to treat others respectfully and to keep each other safe. When a group agreement is broken, the child will experience the natural and logical consequence of his or her action.

For example: If Carlos intentionally dumps his glass of water onto the floor, he helps clean it up. His teacher will tell him how she feels when she pours a glass of water for him and then he dumps it out. She will not shame him or make an example of him, but she will be honest about her own feelings just as she would encourage him to share his feelings with her. In this scenario,

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Carlos' teacher has honored the natural consequence of his action (the feelings that arose out of the action) and she has created a logical consequence for him (asking Carlos to help clean up the spill).

Agreements and Choices

As mentioned, at Wild Lilac, teachers and children create agreements together that are fair and reasonable. Teachers commit to fully honoring and supporting the children in upholding each agreement made.

For example: Leon is using a truck when Zelda takes it away from him. Leon hits Zelda on the head and Zelda begins to cry. Leon begins to cry also. The children are not able to resolve their situation themselves, so a teacher intervenes. *"You both seem very upset. Can you tell me what happened?"* the teacher asks. After hearing an account of the traumatic incident from each child (or whoever is able to talk about it), the teacher will reiterate what she heard from them and add any of her own observations about what happened. She will ask Leon how it made him feel to have his toy taken from his hands. She will ask Zelda how it felt to be hit.

The teacher will ask the children how the situation could have been resolved differently. She will prompt them to think about how they would feel if there had been a conversation rather than a struggle. She will lead them in making an agreement about how they will treat each other: *"Zelda, how do you think you could handle the situation differently? Next time you really want a toy that someone else has, what can you do?"* She will then lead Leon through the same questions. The teacher will remind Zelda of ways she can ask for things she wants and brainstorm next steps if Leon ignores her or says no. The teacher will brainstorm with Leon as to how he can express his anger and frustration without scaring or hurting his friend. Now that they have talked about what happened, they will make a plan for the truck. They will make an agreement about what is a fair amount of time for each person's turn with a toy, and then the teacher will support them in upholding the agreement. If a child is not able or willing to choose from the proffered choices, the teacher must choose for him or her. This is not a punishment, but another choice: *"You can choose or I can."*

Problem-Solving, Respectful Communication and Redirection

At Wild Lilac, we do not believe in using punishments and rewards. We believe that this model of teaching and parenting responds only to specific behaviors rather than the child as a complete being. Punishment/reward systems do not take a child's feelings into account or help the child process and find a productive use for his or her emotions. When a problematic situation arises, teachers first observe to assess the children's ability to work it out together. If the children are communicating respectfully and trying to use the tools they have to reach an agreement, our role is only to point out how we noticed them problem-solve and work together. If they continue to struggle, we will remind them of the tools they have. We encourage them to talk about their feelings and to tell each other how they want to be treated. If children become violent or unwilling to negotiate an agreement, we ask them to step out of the play space with a teacher. We give children the option of helping the teacher with a little project or task, and they are always welcome to rejoin the group when they feel they are ready to be safe and to discuss the incident.

Wild Lilac does not use or condone the use of time-outs as punishment. We believe time-outs send the message that children are only welcome in the group when their behavior is desirable and will be isolated if their behavior is undesirable. This can be damaging to a child's confidence and emotional health. In fact, the National Association for the Education of Young Children includes the use of time-outs in a list of harmful disciplinary measures, along with physical punishment, criticizing, blaming, and shaming. Our approach empowers the child to work with us in exploring their feelings, solving problems, and creating agreements. We aim to send the child the message, no matter the situation, that the love and commitment of trusted adults is unconditional.

Honoring Each Other, Honoring Ourselves

It is important for parents/guardians and caregivers to honor and respect their own needs as well as the needs of the child. Adults who sacrifice their own needs to an uncomfortable degree may become resentful, sad, and angry. Children may feel their pain and act out. An adult who sets reasonable limits rooted in respect for self and child instill security and confidence in the child. At Wild Lilac, teachers honor the children's feelings and needs while also honoring their own. Teachers work hard to maintain an environment where every person, adult and child alike, has the space and support to be his or her kindest, most patient and respectful member of the community.

Recommended Reading:

Your Self Confident Baby by Magda Gerber

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Farber and Elaine Mazlish

Helping Young Children Flourish by Aletha Solter, PhD

Unconditional Parenting by Alfie Kohn

Receiving a Wild Lilac Education:

Experiencing Our Classroom:

Wild Lilac respects every child's imagination, interests and pace of learning as unique and important. We support the children in being creative and energetic, while simultaneously asking them to be loving members of our community. At Wild Lilac we believe that respect for oneself is intertwined with respect for others, so we emphasize both.

Our teachers celebrate diversity. We cherish the vitality and energy ignited by variety of spirit, and we strive to model that a truly moral and magical life is one where we feel connected with our communities and where we are endowed with voices that are loud enough to generate change and to be heard in a busy society.

Our Curriculum:

At Wild Lilac, our focus is on exploration, creation, and play, play, play! We believe that playing is the true work of early childhood, as it is through play—cooking, running, singing, gaming and inventing—that a child can build her or his imagination, confidence, language, interpersonal and problem solving skills.

Children engaging in symbolic-play with a gardening hose to be a firefighter or with dirt to make a mud-pie are experimenting with information and deepening their understanding of the world around them. Open-ended activities support children's cognitive development by asking them to question and think. As they imitate what they see they begin to understand how things work, as Vivian Paley explains in her book, *A Child's Work: the Importance of Fantasy Play*:

The mind that has been freely associating with playful imagery is primed to tackle new ideas. Fantasy play, rather than being a distraction, helps children achieve the goal of having an open mind, whether in the service of further storytelling or in formal lessons (2004:102).

The materials we use for imaginative play sometimes suggest a specific use, such as a toy wooden car, but are often open opportunities, such as baskets filled with silks and blocks which become stages, forts, boats, beds, and more.

Consistent with this thinking, the projects and activities we undertake at Wild Lilac usually emerge organically from the events and ideas that are most intimately affecting our children. For example, a visit from a child's birth-parent may prompt discussion about adoption, which may lead to adoption art projects and play. We find that children are most engaged and excited about learning when it is their initial interest that paves the way for further exploration.

Instead of asking questions with a predetermined answer like "How many days are there in a week?", which just put children in the position of being right or wrong, Wild Lilac's open-ended activities put children in the position of inquiry, of wanting to find out more about the world's possibilities. For example, while learning how food grows from a well-illustrated book will give a child the basic understanding of where our food comes from, Wild Lilac's annual event of planting seeds, watering the soil, charting how many days it takes for the sprout to emerge from the earth, transplanting the seedlings into the garden and then eating the resulting vegetables and fruits in salads and as snacks, fosters in our children a deep, intimate connection with the planet, our food, our bodies and human skills.

Our Teachers:

Every Wild Lilac teacher nurtures into existence safe, healthy class spaces devoted to creativity and learning. As Jean Piaget was famous for saying: "construction is better than instruction," so Wild Lilac teachers encourage children's search for understanding by nurturing the child's natural curiosity rather than filling him or her with facts and information.

Our teachers help our children gather the tools they need to engage happily with their peers, and then let the child experiment and personalize those tools naturally and over time in the social setting. During open-play, for example, our teachers will observe the children and intervene primarily when a child is struggling to keep an interaction safe and productive. Our teachers value the importance of letting a child learn natural consequences and discovering what ways of being are most likely to lead to his or her happiness.

Discussion of Play and Literacy:

At Wild Lilac, we strongly believe that children who are allowed and encouraged to develop their imaginative selves when they are under seven-years-old are more confident and developmentally prepared when it comes time to learn to read. Our experiences and educations

indicate that a child is most ready to begin reading when their brains are primed to process abstract symbols at seven-years-old rather than by pushing younger children to memorize letters and words. Children who are expected to sight-recognize words without being developmentally ready to read may become discouraged, frustrated and develop bad associations with reading or with school.

Imaginative play empowers children with the social tools, problem-solving abilities and confidence that are necessary for academic success later in their lives. We strongly believe that children who are spoken to intelligently, read to and exposed naturally to music and poetry are given an important head start for later literacy learning.

In a German study of one hundred public school preschool classes, one half employed only play, while the other half focused on both play and academics. The study followed the students as they entered elementary school, and found that by the time the children were ten-years-old, the play-only children had passed the others in their physical, social, emotional, and mental development (Der Spiegel, pp. 89-90).

The research of Jean Piaget, one of the most important leaders of early childhood education and child development, supports this data. He found that children between two- and seven-years-old are developing many of the foundational cognitive skills that are later used for formal academic learning. Piaget found that attempting to rush or skip these developmental stages is a threat to the child's healthy cognitive development (cited in Crain, 2005: 136). Although children have the capacity to memorize numbers, letters and poems at a young age, and while it can be part of a productive education, it ought not to be the primary goal of a young child's education.

Because of this research, rather than focusing on rote memorization, Wild Lilac guides children through imaginative exploration, playing, questioning, and experimenting in order to support each child in building a strong, confident base for later academic learning.

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Wild Lilac's Commitment to Developmentally Appropriate Practice

What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) of young children requires teachers to develop connected, trusting relationships with children and families so they can understand each child within the context of his/her family unit and meet him/her where he/she is within the wide developmental continuum. When teachers know children well, they can enable each child to reach individualized goals that are both challenging and achievable. "Meeting children where they are" requires teachers to respond both to children's age and developmental status, to be

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attuned to them as unique individuals, and to be actively aware of the social and cultural contexts in which they live. DAP ensures that learning goals and experiences are suited to children's developmental capabilities *and* are challenging enough to promote their progress and interest.

How does Developmentally Appropriate Practice impact Wild Lilac Curriculum?

At Wild Lilac Preschool, we strive to create an emergent environment where all early learners feel reached by the curriculum our teachers present to the group. Our teachers plan curriculum based on the themes they observe arising in the children's play and conversations and these themes are reflected in the curricular activities the teachers plan. Curriculum is presented in a variety of different ways, including books, gross motor activities, circle time songs and poetry, math and science projects, and a wide and often changing variety of art and building materials. While we do not expect all curriculum materials to reach each child in a way that excites and inspires him or her, our commitment to DAP ensures that our curriculum offers every child many opportunities to be engaged in learning.

How Does Developmentally Appropriate Practice Impact Wild Lilac Teaching Methods?

In Early Childhood Education, even more important than the curricular content of any preschool program, are the moment by moment actions and interactions between the teachers and the children and between the children. At Wild Lilac, we know that the interactions between teachers and children in the innumerable "teachable moments" throughout each day are the most powerful determinant of learning outcomes and development. Curriculum is very important, but what the teacher does, does not do, says and does not say is paramount. In every interaction with every child, Wild Lilac teachers are considering the cognitive, social, and emotional impacts on the child. Wild Lilac teachers support the children's play through a coactive decision-making model which uses problem solving and group agreements to promote self-regulation and impulse control; capacities critical to later learning, social competence, and school success.

Transitioning from Diapers to Toilet use:

Wild Lilac's guide to support your family in a healthy and positive transition!

The transition from using diapers to using the toilet is a phase in your preschooler's life that may have you feeling anxious and confused. At Wild Lilac, we believe that for a successful transition to toilet use, parents/guardians and teachers must all commit to an encouraging, consistent, and bribery-free approach.

What is a "successful transition"?

Our ideal outcome is for your child to be empowered by using the toilet. Using the toilet is an important way for children to be responsible for their bodies, and it is our work as parents/guardians and teachers to encourage this in a positive way. Adults often find themselves engaged in power struggles over diaper and toilet issues (eg a child does not want his diaper changed or a child is aware s/he needs to pee but does not want go to the toilet and demands for a diaper). Adults often resort to (or sometimes begin with) a reward-based approach (candy or sticker charts) that do not teach a child to feel self empowered. The key to a successful transition is for adults to approach the process as one of learning by *teaching*--not *training*--children. It is important to teach children to listen to their bodies, to talk to others clearly about their needs, to get their own clothes off (sometimes with a little help), and to feel good about learning

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something new. Learning happens when we teach in a way that does not punish and does not use rewards or treats. The goal is for the child to feel proud of what he/she has done.

Signs of Readiness Checklist:

Physical Readiness

- Child regularly stays dry for 2+ hours at a time
- Child knows the feelings that signal s/he needs to use the bathroom
- Child can pull down his or her own pants, and pull them up
- Child can get him or herself to the toilet

Mental and Language Readiness

- Child can follow simple directions
- Child can point to wet or soiled clothes and ask to be changed
- Child knows the words for using the toilet, and can tell an adult when he/she needs to go

Emotional Readiness

- Child seeks privacy when going in diaper
- Child shows interest in using the toilet
- Child shows curiosity at other people's toilet habits

Beginning Steps:

- Ask your child if he/she would like to try using the toilet often
- When your child asks for a diaper change, explain that diapering is something an adult needs to do for a child, but going to the toilet is something your child can learn to do for himself/herself.
- Make sure the bathroom is a place where your child can be independent by making stepstools available and placing the toilet paper, soap and towels in reach of your child.

Ways parents/guardians can set kids up for success:

- Dress your child in clothes that they can easily get off themselves: Pants with elastic waists are better than zippers, and overalls are really hard to get off in a hurry.
- Offer different choices--potty chair, potty seat, and toilet.
- Let your child flush the toilet himself/herself

The ups and downs of learning to use the toilet:

Often, children get nervous about the increased responsibility of using the toilet. Your child maybe enthusiastic about toilet use one week and flat out refuse it the next. This is normal and natural when children are learning to use the toilet. Respect your child's timing and let him/her take some time off from physically trying if s/he seems discouraged or uninterested while still casually offering the toilet a few times a day and talking about the cool things about toilets versus diapers in a positive and no-pressure way. Sometimes, fear is at the root of a child's refusal to use the toilet. If a child develops a bad association with the toilet because he/she worries about falling in or is frightened by the sound of the flush, just putting the feelings into words for the child can help: "You seem afraid of using the toilet. I can understand why, but I am here and I will keep you safe" or "That toilet sounds very loud, doesn't it? That sound means the dirty water is going out and clean water will fill the bowl!"

Handling Accidents and Setbacks

It is best to handle accidents in a matter-of-fact way. You might say, "All kids have accidents once in a while," and then help the child get cleaned up and redressed. Talk with your child about what went wrong (maybe your child was focusing on an activity and did not notice s/he had to go, or maybe you were in an unfamiliar place and your child was afraid to use the toilet). Brainstorm with your child about how to handle the situation in the future in a positive way. No child should feel shamed for having an accident. Whenever possible, follow your child's lead about whether s/he would like to wear diapers or underpants. Show your child you believe s/he can wear underpants again. Your confidence in your child will inspire your child's confidence in him or herself.

The adult's job in toilet learning is to set the stage for success. The timing and the rhythm of toilet learning is up to the child. Allowing the child the freedom to decide to take the lead in his/her own toilet learning can be hard for many of us, especially if we have learned that it is an adult's job to "train" a child.

When your child can use the toilet, it is important to be consistent and not to bring diapers back into the mix (with the exception of nighttime diapers if your child needs them). Your child might say s/he would like a diaper, but once you and your child know that s/he is able to use the toilet, it is time to say goodbye to them forever. Going back and forth between toilet and diapers creates inconsistency for your child which invites power struggles. This is not a punishment or deprivation rather it is a celebration of their new found independence. The same way we would not go back to feeding a three and a half year old through a bottle because s/he can eat solid food on his/her own, we do not want to regress with a child who is able to know his/her own body and use the toilet independently. This is all about encouraging your child's self empowerment!