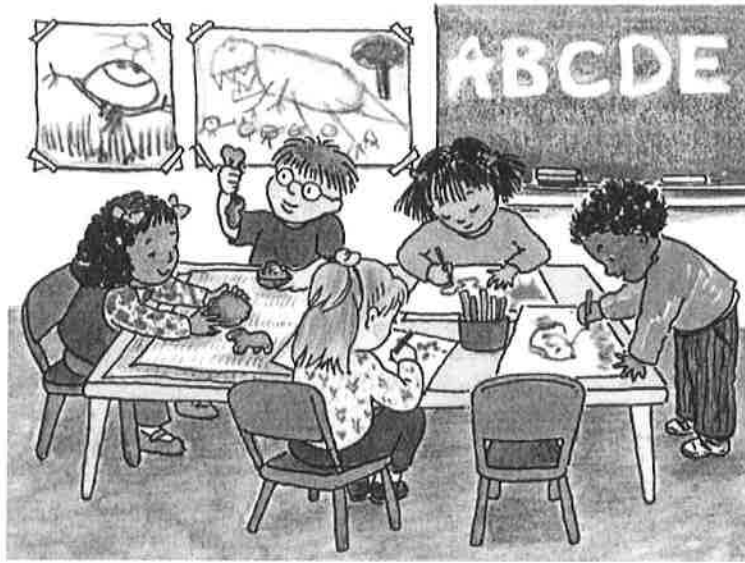


# Preschool Parent Handbook

2020-2021



The Norridge Park District's Early Care & Preschool Academy

Located in Leigh School

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The Norridge Park District's  
Early Care & Pre-School Academy  
"Committed to Quality Care"

PRE-SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

WELCOME

The Norridge Park District sincerely welcomes you and your child to our academy. Thank you for entrusting the care and education of your child to us. This handbook is a guide through our program and policies. Please take time to review the contents. If you have any questions call or stop into the academy office. The office is open 6:30am - 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number is: (708) 453 2141.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

The purpose of this Handbook is to describe the *Pre-School* program for children aged 3 through 5 offered by Norridge Park District's Early Care & Pre-School Academy (the "Academy").

Please note: A variety of other programs for ages 2 through 12 are also available to children and their families. If you would like information on the *Early Care* or recreational *School Age Care* Programs offered by the Academy please contact the office during office hours.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Pre School Care Program's Mission is to meet the developmental needs of enrolled children and the societal needs of their parents by providing top quality care in a nurturing and educational environment, while taking time for fun.

PHILOSOPHY

The Academy's Philosophy rests on its commitment to aid and assist in each child's individual growth and development through developmentally appropriate practices, including play. It is through play that a child can master abstract concepts and acquire cognitive, social-emotional, language, cultural awareness and motor skills in a non-threatening environment. At the Academy we believe each child is unique, with his/her own individual strengths and the environment created at the Academy offers each child the opportunity to develop his or her own individual differences and skills. We recognize and accept the family as the child's primary caregiver and teacher, and seek a partnership with each child's family as we help lay a foundation for his/her future.

ADMINISTRATION

The Academy is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services ("DCFS"). The Norridge Park District's Board of Park Commissioners sets policies for the Pre School Program in accordance with DCFS licensing standards and the Pre School Program's Mission and Philosophy. The Academy's administrative staff, composed of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Programs Coordinator enforce these policies and creates procedural guidelines for staff, children and families.

### HOURS OF OPERATION

The Academy operates between the hours of 6:30am until 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. The Academy's office operates between the hours of 8:00am until 5:45 pm, at which time enrollment questions, registrations and payments are taken.

### BUILDING SECURITY

We are very careful about providing a safe building for children and staff. The locked entrance to the academy is equipped with a security camera. To enter the building, please ring the doorbell on the wall outside of our entrance; you will be asked to identify yourself, your child and the program your child attends. Do not be offended if we do not recognize you through the camera. Please do not open the door for others or allow them to follow you into the building. Everyone entering the academy must be properly identified. Thank you for your cooperation.

### STAFF CREDENTIALS

All Academy staff meets or exceeds the licensing requirements set by DCFS. Full time staff is composed of Master, Bachelor and Associate's degreed teachers who specialize in Early Childhood Education and/or Elementary Education. Early Childhood Teachers have either: a minimum of 60 credit hours from an accredited college or university with six semester hours in courses related directly to child care and/or child development from birth to age six; or 1 year experience with 30 semester hours and 6 credit hours in child care or child development; or carries DCFS approved credentials such as a CDA (Child Development and Associate Credential). School Age Workers (Teachers) require a high school diploma, must be at least 19 years of age and have either: 30 semester hours of credit from an accredited college or university with six semester hours related to school age child care, child development, elementary education, physical education, recreation, camping, or other related fields; or has 1560 clock hours of experience and six semester hours related to areas noted above; or has 3120 clock hours of relevant experience. All Early Childhood Assistants, School Age Assistants, and WSSRA Volunteers must have a high school diploma or GED. School Age Assistants and Volunteers must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child in the program group. Many of our assistants are enrolled in college or have experience in, or related to, childcare and development. All lead and support staff are certified in First Aid and CPR and participate in regular training to update and enhance their skills.

### ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT POLICY

The Academy accepts any eligible child whose needs can be met in its setting with or without reasonable accommodation. In all cases children must be able to participate and substantially benefit from the program without risk to themselves and/or others.

Listed below are the steps taken for every child upon enrollment:

- If the situation warrants, the child is placed upon a waiting list until a slot is available.
- Once a slot becomes available the parent may register the child.
- All the necessary forms must be filled out and turned in at least 24 hours prior to the start date.
- Placement is assigned.
- The child enters the program on a trial basis.

- Parents are kept aware of the child's adjustment during this trial period.
- The child is accepted into the program after an initial transition period, not to exceed 28 days.

*Please note:* Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the Academy, or whose conduct is detrimental to himself/herself or the group, shall be discharged from the facility. At that time appropriate referrals to other agencies or facilities will be made to the parents.

#### *Non-Discrimination Policy*

No parent or child shall be unlawfully discriminated against with respect to the child's admission to, or participation in, Academy programs.

#### *Statement of Confidentiality*

All children's files are kept strictly confidential. Information will not be released to any person, organization or agency without the signed, written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian unless otherwise required by law, or permitted by law in connection with any legal proceeding.

Every employee/volunteer of the Norridge Park District's Early Care and Preschool Academy must sign a Confidentiality Statement. This statement notes that every staff person must maintain in confidence all information relating to a child and/or family or situation relating to a child and/or family. Specifically this means that: we will not discuss any information pertaining to a child and/or family member with anyone other than the appropriate individuals (i.e. staff, supervisor, program director, or director); we will not discuss any information pertaining to a child and/or family in public, or in areas where discussion may be overheard by unauthorized persons; we will not discuss or post any information including pictures of children on any social media or e-mail outlets and we will immediately report all incidents, accidents, or injuries no matter how minor to the program director or supervisor if they affect the safety of any child, staff, or volunteer. Parents seeking outside resources or agencies to evaluate, service, or support their child within our program will sign a Release of Information statement before staff will share any information about the child. All personal information in a child's enrollment file is kept in the office with access limited to the office staff and/or the teaching staff in an as needed basis; all emergency information, observations, checklists, portfolios, and report forms for individual children are kept in a secure location in the classroom with access limited to the teaching staff. Parents/guardians may have access to their individual child's enrollment information and/or classroom assessments at any time. Information regarding a child's special dietary needs, allergies and/or health concerns will be discreetly posted for the classroom staff's knowledge only.

#### **REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PRE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

- The Pre School Program accepts children ages 3 through 5. All children must be completely potty trained! Pull-ups and/or diapers are not allowed in the pre-school program.

- To be eligible for preschool, your child must be at least three years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>. A valid birth certificate is required at the time of registration.
- At the time of registration a non refundable registration fee of \$30 and September's full tuition is due.
- All paperwork will be issued at the time of registration. **By the last business day of the third week of August** all the enrollment paperwork is due; for children registering mid-year, paperwork is due 24 hours before the child starts. All forms are reviewed and/or updated quarterly as needed; in September all forms are updated to keep information current. All forms are placed in your child's permanent file in a secure location in the administrative office. The content of the file is confidential, but is immediately available to administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records, the child's parents or legal guardian and regulatory authorities (DCFS) on request. Enrollment forms include:
  - Parents/Guardian Information Sheet
  - Authorized Pick-Up List Consent Form
  - Personal History, Health, Nutrition, Toileting Habits, Social /Emotional Relationships
  - Consent for Walking Trips, Bus Transportation, Photos in Classroom
  - Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
  - Late Pick-Up Policy
  - Tuition Policy
  - Guidance and Discipline Behavior Policy
  - Park District Waiver, Release of all Claims and Hold Harmless Agreement
  - Statement of Understanding / Acknowledgement of Parent Handbook
  - Child and Adult Care Food Program Annual Enrollment Form
  - ***Physical Exam Form: An Illinois Certificate of Child Health Examination, no older than 6 months, with TB and Lead Test, and up to date immunizations is required. Parents must review and complete the Health History portion of the form and sign the statement giving permission for health information to be share with appropriate personnel for health and educational purposes only. The physical exam form must be updated every two years. The office staff will notify parents when the new exam form is due.***
- Parents are responsible for payment whether or not their child is in attendance.
- If the paperwork and tuition are not handed in by the required date, your child will not be permitted to begin preschool at the Academy.
- Before the Preschool Program begins there are refunds given depending on the timing of your request. (See Page 8 for full refund policy.)
- 20% discount is given to every additional familial child enrolled in the same program.

***Please note: Parents of children with disabilities, requiring reasonable accommodations in order to participate successfully in a program, or children with special medical needs are requested to notify the Academy at least 28 days prior to their child's enrollment in the preschool program.***

### *Family Orientation*

The first day of the preschool program is Family Orientation Day. The parent(s) and children attend together during the child's scheduled class time. The children and parents will meet the staff, explore the classroom and receive information regarding the curriculum, policies, and procedures. Families will also have an opportunity to meet each other and get acquainted. Families joining the program after September will receive the orientation materials and are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with the teachers. We have staff on hand who can assist with Polish, , Greek and Spanish translations. Please ask in the office for assistance.

### CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

It is the policy of the Academy not to unlawfully discriminate against otherwise qualified children on the basis of physical or mental disability. The Academy will make reasonable accommodations to permit qualified children with disabilities to participate in the Academy's programs.

### *Notice/assessment of disability*

The Academy recognizes that meeting the needs of a child with disabilities requires an interactive process to assess the child's needs in terms of the nature and appropriateness of the program, to determine any reasonable accommodations that may be necessary in order for the child to be able to participate successfully in the program, and to communicate and attempt to resolve any issues that arise with respect to the child's participation following enrollment, and welcomes constructive dialogue. This process generally will include Academy staff, the child's parents, staff of West Suburban Special Recreation Association (the agency that serves as the Academy's primary resource on children with special needs and inclusion assistance), and medical and/or clinical professionals providing services to the child, and if and as appropriate professionals from the child's school. For this reason, parents must notify the Academy whenever possible at least 28 days prior to their child's enrollment if their child has a disability which may require an accommodation for the child to participate fully and successfully in the program. Parents should at this time advise the Academy's administrative staff of the disability and any accommodation the parents believe, or the child's medical provider or other consulting professional has advised, may be necessary to meet the child's needs with respect to the program.

Please note: The Academy reserves the right to defer a child's start date in the program if sufficient notice of disability is not provided to allow the Academy to responsibly assess the child's needs as related to the program, and any accommodations which may be required to facilitate the child's successful participation in the program.

### *Procedure*

The Park District belongs to the West Suburban Special Recreation Association (WSSRA) and relies on this organization's resources to help Academy staff provide the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities consistent with the fundamental

nature of the Before and After School Care program. The following procedure is followed by the Academy to achieve this goal:

1. WSSRA will be contacted for input and observation of the disabled child prior to enrollment in the program.
2. A parent/Academy conference will be scheduled and the following points will be covered:
  - a. The parent's experience with the child as it relates to the disability.
  - b. Whether the child has been medically evaluated to determine whether or not there is a disabling condition and if so, its extent.
  - c. The parent's suggestions for possible reasonable accommodations to permit the child to successfully participate in the program.
  - d. Staff's suggestions for possible reasonable accommodations to permit the child to successfully participate in the program.
3. If the child has not been previously medically evaluated, the child's parents will be requested to obtain a written medical opinion as to the child's disabling condition and the medical provider's suggested reasonable accommodations necessary to allow for the child's successful participation in the program in view of the fundamental nature of the program and the services provided by the Academy.
4. The parent's refusal or failure to provide the written medical opinion within a reasonable period of time, and to authorize appropriate Academy staff to speak with the medical provider for necessary clarifications and/or additional information, as such staff deems necessary in order to responsibly evaluate the accommodations that may be needed, may require denying the child enrollment and the parent will be so advised.
5. After receipt of the medical opinion, staff recommendations and WSSRA assessment, there will be a follow-up staffing between appropriate Academy staff, and if deemed necessary or advisable by Academy Administrative staff, WSSRA staff, and the child's parents to evaluate any reasonable accommodations and whether the child's needs can be met without fundamentally altering the nature of the program offered by the Academy.
6. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the child cannot successfully participate in the program, with or without a reasonable accommodation, the parents will be advised and appropriate referrals made.

***Please note:*** If the Academy staff determines that an enrolled child may have a disability, whether or not previously identified, which is interfering with the child's successful participation in the program, the child's parents will be notified in writing and a conference scheduled. At the parent-staff conference the parents will be requested to engage in the interactive process, as set out above, to determine if there is a disability which is interfering with the child's successful participation in the program and, if so, whether the Academy can meet the child's needs with or without a reasonable accommodation.

***Specialized Consultants:***

- The academy works closely and cooperatively with West Suburban Special Recreation Association to prepare and provide appropriate, reasonable accommodations for children with special needs. The Inclusion Coordinator from WSSRA completes observations, participates in multi-disciplinary staffings,



provides resources and strategies for classroom staff, and if indicated approves the hiring of inclusion partners. The inclusion partners hired to work within our program meet all of the employee requirements set by DCFS and the Norridge Park District. The partners are trained to assist with an individual within the classroom setting; the partner is not hired or intended as a private instructor, tutor, caregiver, or respite worker.

- At times a specialized therapist provided by Early Intervention, LASEC (Leyden Area Special education Cooperative), or District 80 (Norridge residents) may provide services while a child is present at the academy. Parents must sign a Release of Information Form and provide all information regarding the dates and times of therapy sessions. Therapists must check into the academy office and show appropriate identification. The academy will provide space for the therapist to work with the child. The teaching staff may share information or consult with the therapist about strategies and resources in working with the child.
- In the spring the Academy works with an outside contractor to provide Vision and Hearing Screenings for the children. Parents will receive dates and times, permission forms, and fee information prior to the screenings.

#### CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS

Many children have special medical needs such as asthma, diabetes, or seizure disorders. To assist the Academy in its efforts to meet your child's special needs, whenever possible parents must notify the Academy at least 28 days prior to their child's enrollment if their child has specific medical needs. Parents should at this time advise the Academy's administrative staff of the child's medical needs and any special training or devices necessary to meet the child's needs. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the child cannot successfully participate in the program without altering the fundamental nature of the program, the parents will be advised and appropriate referrals made.

**Please note:** The Academy reserves the right to defer a child's start date in the program if sufficient notice of special medical need is not provided to allow the Academy to adequately prepare for the safe care of the child.

#### CHILDREN WITH ALLERGIES

Food or environmental allergies must be documented by your child's health care professional. A Medical Exception Statement for Food Substitution form signed by your child's physician must be on file before alternative foods or beverages can be brought in for meal service for your child. Reasonable accommodations will be made to maintain areas used by children who have allergies to dust mites or to components of furnishings or supplies according to the recommendation of health professionals. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the child cannot successfully participate in the program without altering the fundamental nature of the program, the parents will be advised and appropriate referrals will be made.

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE:** The Academy is a **PEANUT SAFE ZONE**; peanuts and peanut products are not served or allowed into the program. It should be recognized that this will reduce but not totally eliminate the risk of accidental exposure.

## TUITION/FEES/CHARGES

### *Tuition Payments*

- A \$30 nonrefundable registration fee and one month's tuition is required at the time of registration.
- Parents are responsible for payment on a monthly basis. The fees are based on full program tuition and broken up into monthly payments.
- Payments can be made in cash, check or money order, Visa, Discover or MasterCard.
- Parents may pay in person monthly or participate in the Tuition Express automatic payment program. Contact office for Tuition Express application.
- Parents who pay in person must pay in the office. Teachers are not responsible for turning in your child's tuition payments. The Academy will not take responsibility for lost tuition.
- **All tuition payments are due on the last service day of the month, one month in advance.**
- Payments can be made in advance, however if a payment is late, **an additional charge of \$10.00 per child** will be assessed every week payment is not made. This includes parents on subsidy.
- Credit is not given for absences, illness or holidays.
- Refunds requested by July 31 will be full September tuition minus \$5 service charge. Refunds requested from August 1 to 31 will be half of the September tuition minus \$5 service charge. Refunds for September will not be processed after August 31. Throughout the school year refunds on tuition are not given (except for the 5 business day's grace period before the preschool program begins in September.)

***IMPORTANT: In the extreme instance that payment has not been received over a one month period and prior arrangements have not been made, service will be denied. Accrued late fees for non-payment or late pick-ups will automatically be deducted from your child's next tuition payment.***

### *NSF (Not Sufficient Funds) Charges*

The NSF fee is \$25.00 and will be applied to:

- All NSF checks;
- Declined credit cards or insufficient funds in checking or savings accounts attached to the Tuition Express automatic payment account.

Recovered monies are taken in cash or credit card, in person, payment only.

***Please note:*** If the Academy receives three NSF checks or Tuition Express NSF/credit card declinations in a 12 month period from an individual/family, that family will be put on a CASH OR CREDIT CARD in person only payment plan.

### *Additional Child Discount*

Additional child discounts are given to families with more than one child enrolled in the same program. This discount will be applied to the child/children with the lesser tuition fee or the older child/children at the rate of 20%.

### *Subsidized Care Clients (ACTION FOR CHILDREN)*

The Academy accepts subsidy payments from the state. To determine eligibility the parent is instructed to call Action for Children and inquire about the program and obtain the proper paperwork. It is the state's determination whether or not a family is approved for subsidy (by income qualifications). If approved, the Academy requires the client to pay the difference between what the state pays and what the District charges for tuition. This will be significantly different than the determined "parent co-payment" issued by the state. The amount owed will differ from month to month based on the amount of service days in a given month. The Academy distributes the monthly charges at least one week prior to the beginning of a new month. Any questions can be forwarded to the office. Subsidy clients are also responsible for keeping a security deposit on file equal to one week's full tuition, based on the child's schedule, at the regular rate (not the subsidy rate). The security deposit goes toward the child's last week of care. All clients, including subsidy clients, are subject to late fees for past due tuition. For rate information, please visit the office.

### *Residency Status*

In order to be considered a resident of Norridge, the enrolling family must provide a minimum of two forms of identification. The first form must be a valid Illinois driver's license with an in-district address (see the Academy office for address listings). The other form must be a current utility bill, credit card bill, lease agreement, mortgage payment, etc. At the time of enrollment if the family cannot provide all necessary forms of identification, non-resident rates will be applied. If a family subsequently provides the proper documentation, resident rates will be applied at that time. No back dated credit will be given in these circumstances.

### *Residency Update*

From time to time, at least annually, the Academy will require each family to resubmit their proof of residency and fill out a new enrollment form for each of their children attending the Academy. If it is determined by this update, or from information obtained from any other source, that a family who originally qualified for resident rates is no longer resident, non-resident rates will be charged back dating to the beginning of the child's most recent enrollment.

### *Observed Holidays*

The Norridge Park District observes the following holidays: **Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day & the Friday after, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July & Teacher Institute Day (third Friday in August)**. The Academy is closed on these days. Full tuition is due for all holidays, the teacher's institute day and any early dismissals.

*Please note:* The preschool program follows the District 80 holiday schedule and is closed for all observed holidays, breaks and any emergency closings due to inclement weather. The Preschool Program is closed for classes in the fall and spring for Parent/Teacher conferences. Please refer to your program calendar for exact dates.

## EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

It is Academy policy to offer classes at all scheduled times under normal circumstances. However, some things are beyond our control, such as power outages, lack of heat, lack of water, and/or severe weather conditions. In case of an emergency that necessitates the closing of the Academy during hours of operation, parents will be contacted to come pick-up their child immediately. In case an evacuation needs to occur, children will be transported to the Park District Recreation Building, 4631 N. Overhill Ave., and Norridge, where parents will be contacted to come and pick up their child immediately. Staff will remain until the last child goes home.

**Please note:** If, in the event of an emergency, the Academy does not open, tuition will not be charged. If the Academy has to close once it has opened for business (due to circumstances beyond our control) full tuition will be assessed.

### *E-Mail Blasts*

In the event of inclement weather conditions or other emergency, there will be an e-mail blast sent out to the e-mail that is on file for your child's account.

### *Emergency Closing Center*

The Academy also participates in the EMERGENCY CLOSING CENTER. Listen to WGN Radio 720-AM, WBBM Radio 780-AM or watch CBS Ch 2, NBC, Ch 5, ABC Ch 7, FOX32, WGN-TV, or CLTV cable for closing information.

You can also check our status on [www.emergencyclosings.com](http://www.emergencyclosings.com)

## KEEPING YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION CURRENT

It is extremely important that your child's enrollment information be kept up-to-date. If any of the following information should change, at any time, please notify the Academy's office personnel as soon as possible?

- Your Place of Employment
- Any of Your Phone Numbers at Home or of Emergency Contacts
- Your Address
- Names, Addresses, Phone Numbers of Authorized Persons who pick up your child
- Any Changes in Your Child's Enrollment Schedule
- Any Changes in Marital Status, Custodial Agreements or Order of Protection
- Residency Status

## CUSTODIAL AGREEMENTS

The Academy endeavors to respect the rights of all parents to participate in the growth and development of their child or children. It is Academy policy that all staff remains neutral in cases of divorce or separation of enrolled children's parents. In the instance of a family divorce or separation, the Academy requires that the custodial parent maintain with the Academy at all times, a copy of the most current custodial agreement and/or court order. The Academy will attempt to adhere to, and fully cooperate with, the procedures set forth in such agreement and/or court order so as to maintain a stress free environment for all children and to lessen the burden on staff.

**Please note:** The Academy reserves the right to suspend, refuse or discontinue service to any child in instances where the custodial agreements and/or court orders presented

regarding such child are ambiguous or conflicting, directions given by parents regarding custody are frequently changing, undue burden is placed on staff or where a parent or parents engage in conduct when present at the Academy which the administrative staff of the Academy determine is detrimental to the program or to other children in the program.

### **DAILY ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES**

All children arrive and depart the Academy through the designated Academy entrance. Please ring the bell and identify yourself by name. All children must be accompanied to the Academy by an adult, escorted to his or her teacher and signed in. In order to make the arrival and departure transition a smooth experience, we recommend the following procedures:

#### ***Initial Adjustment Period***

It is important for all parents to realize that some children have little, if any, difficulty adapting to new situations, while others take longer periods of time. Much of the grief and anxiety expressed at first is a good way for children to get their feelings out in the open. We find that the child's concern ends soon after he or she enters the classroom and is engaged in the day's activities. Often a readjustment period may occur after a long weekend, vacation or absence. Your continued, positive reinforcement will alleviate any difficult transition from recurring. If your child has had an upsetting experience such as the death of a loved one or pet, please let us know. Our goal is to help your child work out any feelings they may have, through play, art, books or sympathetic discussion. Keep in mind your child's overall growth and development is important to us.

#### ***Illness***

A daily pre-admission screening is conducted by Academy staff to determine if a child has any obvious symptoms of illness. Please see the section headed "Illness and Exclusion" for additional information on this policy.

#### ***Daily Sign-In & Sign-Out***

It is required that all children be signed and signed out on a daily basis whether a parent escorts his/her child to the Academy entrance or utilizes the caravan service.

#### ***Drop Off***

Children may be dropped off using the caravan service, or they may be escorted to the Academy entrance where the preschool staff will be gathering the children.

\*Please note: Due to building security parents and children who arrive early may not wait inside the entrance for the teachers.

#### ***Caravan Service***

Due to limited parking near the school building we have a drive up / drop-off - pick-up procedure for the preschool program. Specific information and directions will be distributed and discussed during the September Family Orientation. Families joining

the program later will receive the drive up information when registering. We must insist that families using the drive up service adhere to all specified procedures.

#### *Park & Escort*

Norridge residents may park on Giddings or Leland and walk their child to the Academy entrance. The half block South of Lawrence Avenue running parallel to the school parking lot may be used for parking every day except Wednesday. The school parking lot is also available for your parking convenience. However, do not double-park in the school's parking lot. Many of Leigh's teaching staff leaves the building during the day for district business. *Park & Escort participants must wait outside until the teacher arrives to gather or dismiss the group. Due to building security parents may not wait inside for teachers to arrive.*

*Please Note:* The Academy does not take responsibility for any child left at the front door and/or is unescorted to the program. *All children must be signed in and out daily.*

#### **DROP OFF/PICK UP COURTESIES**

Please realize the staff does their best to get the children in and out of the vehicles as quickly as possible within the limits of safety. If you have any questions or items to discuss with the staff, ***PLEASE DO NOT CONDUCT BUSINESS IN THE PICK-UP/DROP-OFF LANE.*** Rather, please park your car and pick your child up at the school entrance. This alleviates excess time being spent at the vehicles and allows for more time spent in class. THANK YOU!

#### *Emergencies*

The Academy understands that emergencies occur. However, it is essential that the Academy be immediately informed if you are unable to pick up your child on time. A phone call will help alleviate any anxiety your child may have, and our staff may be able to assist by calling someone from your pick-up list to come and get your child for you.

*Please note:* It is extremely important that emergency contact information for your child be kept up to date.

#### *Absences*

In response to heightened alerts concerning missing children and the introduction of the Amber Alert System, the Academy has incorporated a strict policy for parents to follow when their child will be absent from the program. If a child does not arrive at the Academy when scheduled, the Academy will make attempts to contact that child's parent inquiring as to his/her whereabouts.

***IMPORTANT:*** *The Academy re-emphasizes its longstanding request to parents to notify the Academy if their child will be absent from a scheduled program. If a parent habitually fails to notify the Academy that their child will be absent from a scheduled program, as required by these policies, the Academy reserves the right to suspend or expel the child from the program.*

#### *"No-Show" Procedure*

If a parent, or other authorized person, does not arrive to pick up a child at the scheduled time and the Academy has not been informed of an emergency necessitating such no-show the following procedure will be followed:

- After ten minutes have passed, staff will begin to telephone all contacts on record for the child, beginning with the parents, then the three emergency contacts listed on the enrollment form, and lastly all persons on the child's authorized pick-up list;
- If none of these persons can be contacted within 45 minutes of the scheduled pick-up time, police assistance will be sought.

***Please note:*** The Academy reserves the right to suspend, refuse or discontinue service to any family with **three or more** late pick-ups within a one-month period.

**IMPORTANT:** *The Academy reemphasizes the importance of having up-to-date emergency contact numbers on file for your child.*

#### *Neglect report*

If a parent, or other authorized person, is over 45 minutes late for the scheduled pick-up of their child and has failed to make telephone contact with the Academy informing staff of the delay, the child will be considered to be in a state of neglect and the proper authorities will be called. A neglect report will be made at the police station and forwarded to DCFS.

#### **OUT OF THE ORDINARY PICK-UP**

The Academy staff will not release a child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized by the parent or parents to receive the child. If someone other than those authorized must pick up your child for any reason, the Academy must be notified of such an occurrence **in writing** (a written note of consent faxed to the Academy will suffice), followed by a telephone call **from** an Academy staff member **to** the parent at a telephone number on file at the Academy. The Academy will not accept notification of any changes in pick up or emergency contact information over the phone. **The note must include the following information: The adult's full name, the adult's address as it appears on his/her photo ID, and a signed permission from the child's parent authorizing the parent's consent to allow this person to pick up their child.**

***Please note:*** A parent or other authorized person must be contactable at a telephone number *previously provided to the Academy* to confirm any out of the ordinary pick-up. The Academy will NOT release a child without speaking directly to a parent or other authorized person.

#### *Proper identification required*

Persons not known to the staff will be required to provide a current, valid, photo ID (driver's license, photo ID card issued by Illinois Secretary of State or other photo identification to establish identity) at the time of pick up. A child will not be released to any person not listed on the consent form, or any person without the proper identification.

***Please note:*** No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to pick up children.

### *Parents/Guardians "Under the Influence"*

The Academy subscribes to a stringent drug and alcohol policy. If a parent or guardian is suspected or shows any signs of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, the staff will discuss with that parent an alternative pick-up person for the child. As advocates for the children under our care, we want to ensure their safety at all times. It is our hope that the parent will be cooperative, but in the event he or she is not, we will call the Norridge Police Department for assistance.

### *Park District Employees*

Employees of Norridge Park District are prohibited from picking-up children from the Academy other than their own. No Norridge Park District employee will be permitted to be placed on a parent's authorization list.

### **PARKING**

Street and lot parking are available to parents. Please refrain from parking on Giddings, as it is designated resident parking only. Please adhere to all local parking signs and ordinances. Please understand that the asphalt strip parallel to the front door and Courtland Avenue is an official fire lane and is not to be used for parking. Anyone not adhering to the parking procedures is subject to warnings and parking tickets.

***Please note:*** Do not leave your car running with purses, children or valuables unattended.

### **EDUCATION & CURRICULUM**

It is the intent and purpose of the Academy's Pre-School Program to provide education through developmentally appropriate practice, which includes play. Play is a child's most important work. The Academy houses self-contained classrooms that are large, colorful and well equipped. All furniture, equipment and materials in the classrooms are carefully chosen to support our philosophy that children learn through play and developmentally appropriate practices.

### *Children are Unique*

At the Academy we believe that each child is unique. Every child has his or her own individual strengths that can be further developed through play. By experiencing the world through play, children are better equipped to master abstract concepts concretely. We believe children like to be successful and are happiest when they have mastered a skill or solved a problem on their own. The environment created at the Academy offers each child the opportunity to develop individual differences, solve problems and master skills. Much of what we do at the Academy is designed to educate the "whole" child.

### *Preschool Screening*

All three and four year old children will be screened by the teaching staff as a means of obtaining information that may be helpful or necessary in planning an educational program for the child. Parents are asked to participate in the screening process by signing a screening permission form and by completing a rating form on their child. The teaching staff will share results of the screening during the fall parent-teacher conference.



Vision/Hearing Screen: DCFS requires that the academy offer vision and hearing screening for all preschool children. We contract with a private company to screen the children for a small fee. Full information including dates, permission forms and fees will be distributed to parents in the spring.

### *Curricular Guidelines*

The Academy's Pre-School Program utilizes a play-based, developmentally appropriate, thematic unit model of curriculum, The Creative Curriculum for Preschool. The curriculum is organized around six basic developmental categories: Social/Emotional, Motor, Cognitive, Language & Early Literacy, Multicultural Awareness and Health/Nutrition/Safety. Children's skills are assessed according to the Illinois State Board of Education's Early Learning and Development Standards and a formal assessment program. All educational goals and objectives are progressive and follow developmental milestones based on preschoolers 3, 4, and 5 years of age. At Parent/Teacher Conferences the teacher will go over the child's progress based on her observations, assessments, work samples, the child's portfolio, in addition to the stated goals and objectives of the curriculum.

### *Mixed Age Grouping*

The term, "mixed age grouping" is used to emphasize the goal of pursuing teaching and curriculum practices that maximize the benefits of interaction and cooperation among children of various ages. In this context, it is children ages three through five years. A mixed age group is intended to optimize the educative potential of the group. Teachers encourage children to turn to each other for help with all aspects of classroom activity, including the mastery and application of basic early literacy and numeric skills. However, in mixed age grouping, teachers use small temporary sub-groupings of children who need the same kinds of instruction to help them acquire basic skills. Mixed age grouping provides older children with the opportunity to be helpful, patient, and tolerant of younger peers' competencies. Exposure to older children as nurturers provides younger children with models of behavior they can emulate when they become the older members of the group. Research indicates that academic achievement in mixed age groupings is the same as, or better than, the academic achievement of children in same age classes.

### *Transitioning to Kindergarten*

Helping children make a successful transition to the next age level or program is a great benefit to children and their next teacher. To support the transition process the teaching staff will:

- Read books and create stories about children who go to a new class
- Role play situations the children are likely to encounter in the next class
- Assist parents in transitioning to kindergarten programs by providing information about local elementary schools and registration dates
- Cooperate with School District 80 staff as they administer kindergarten pre-screening tests within our program schedule for the children who are in district. Information and permission forms are distributed in March.

### *Lesson Plans*

Lesson plans are written on a weekly basis and reviewed by the Academy's administrative staff. Within each classroom, age appropriate activities revolve around themes that encourage imagination and the child's natural love for learning. Pre-reading and math skills are continuously reinforced throughout the play-based curriculum. Social and emotional development is emphasized through hands-on experiences where children have opportunities to strengthen their skills by sharing with others, participating in a group living environment, and eating family-style snacks.

### *Computer Learning & Healthy Habits*

In addition to the regularly planned educational experiences, computer and tablet skills are introduced to children in the 3, 4 and 5 year-old classrooms. The children's daily routine also incorporates "healthy habits" which includes proper hand-washing and nutrition education, in all classrooms. While children are in preschool they receive a nutritional snack. A snack menu is distributed monthly.

### **DAILY ROUTINE**

A general daily schedule is posted in every classroom as a resource for parents. The schedule allows for large and small group interaction, as well as active and passive learning experiences. Time is set aside for snack and toileting. The schedule is designed to be flexible yet structured enough to serve as a predictable daily routine for children.

### **OUTDOOR PLAY**

The Academy has an outdoor playground that the children utilize. In addition, teachers may choose to take a walk around the neighborhood for outdoor exercise. If a child is well enough to be in care, he or she is well enough to go outside. The children stay indoors when it is raining, if there is a wind chill factor below zero degrees, and/or if it is an Ozone Alert day. From time to time, teachers will send home a reminder indicating what clothing is needed for outdoor play.

### **ATTIRE**

Children should be dressed according to the season. Whatever the weather, children should be dressed in durable, comfortable play clothes so that they can move freely and not worry about ruining their attire. Remember children will be participating in messy play activities involving paint, playdoh, sand and water. Therefore, children should wear clothes that they are allowed to get dirty. Gym shoes are highly recommended for all age groups. Dress shoes, sandals (including jelly shoes and flip-flops) and the like, are not recommended for safety reasons. Children are asked not to wear long dangling earrings, necklaces or other jewelry that could get caught during play or injure the child or another child in the program. Boots are not recommended during the winter due to time constraints and because the majority of the children are dropped by caravan. All clothing should be labeled with the child's name so misplaced items can be returned to their rightful owners.

***Please note:*** It is recommended that the child's name not be displayed on the exterior of the child's clothes or belongings.

### **WHAT TO SEND FROM HOME**

We ask that home toys remain at home. On occasion the classrooms might have "Show & Tell", when home toys are allowed; other than on this occasion home toys are not recommended by the Academy. At the beginning of enrollment and/or the start of the new program year, each child is given an art supply list of required items. Parents are given ample time to turn-in the items. Please see your child's teacher for a current art supply list if you have not received one. From time to time teachers ask parents to bring in treats from home for a theme-related celebration. Please be aware that any food items brought in need to be store or bakery bought and sealed within the original package. Homemade treats are not allowed and cannot be accepted.

**The following items are needed on a permanent basis for continued enrollment:**

1. Backpack for school projects, letters sent home and extra clothes.
2. An extra set of clothes including socks, underwear, shirt and pants kept in the child's backpack.

**VALUABLES**

We insist that guns, harmful toys, large amounts of money, valuable jewelry, expensive clothing and shoes or any other items of value, never be brought to the Academy. Trading Cards (Pokemon, Baseball) of any kind are not allowed. These items should be left at home. Books and children's C.D.s are easily shared and are most welcome.

***Please note:*** Children may bring in age appropriate games for the computer which must be rated E for everyone. No teen or adult rated games are allowed. Also, movie DVDs or videotapes must be rated G to be shown.

**LOST & FOUND**

Lost items are turned into the Academy's main office. If your child misplaces something, stop by the Academy office to check the lost and found. The Norridge Park District's Pool also has a lost & found and many misplaced children's items may be found there during the summer months. Any unclaimed items are cleaned out monthly and given to charity.

***Please note:*** The Academy will not accept responsibility for any child's item that is lost, broken, misplaced, stolen or loaned to other children and/or staff.

**SANITATION AND PEST MANAGEMENT**

***Building and Classrooms***

The cleanliness of the classrooms is maintained by the teaching staff and a contracted cleaning service. Staff is responsible for daily cleaning and sanitation of equipment and furnishings used by the children. On a monthly basis, more often during cold and flu season, the staff cleans and sanitizes all toys and manipulatives in the classrooms. The contracted cleaning company comes in after hours to provide daily trash removal; sweeping, vacuuming, mopping and buffing of all floors; dusting; polishing; and cleaning and sanitizing of all restrooms. Deep cleaning of all classrooms, hallways, and restrooms is complete on a regularly scheduled basis.

*Environmental Hazards* Norridge School District 80 follows all public health requirements regarding environmental hazards within the building. In the event of an "OZONE" alert the children are kept indoors in the climate controlled classrooms. To reduce indoor air pollution the academy follows the guidelines listed:

- Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the child care premises or near children
- Idling vehicles are discouraged near the premises
- We prevent mold and mildew by reducing excess moisture by cleaning up spills immediately and managing leaks
- We avoid the use artificial air fresheners that contain multiple chemicals
- We are phasing in biodegradable, least toxic cleaning products (Green Products)
- We use Integrated Pest Management (see below)
- We use non-toxic art supplies

### *Food Service Sanitation*

The food service program is maintained by a Nutritionist certified in Food Service Sanitation in the State of Illinois. Snack is share family style in the children's classroom following all USDA guidelines. Snack is prepared by the Nutritionist and served by the teaching staff. The classroom staff cleans and sanitizes all tables before food service; the children are directed to wash their hands before sitting down at the tables. With their washed and gloved hands the teachers serve the food. Good manners and conversation are modeled during meal time. After snack time all serving containers, dishes and utensils are returned to the kitchen where the Nutritionist washes, rinses, sanitizes each piece.

### *Integrated Pest Management*

It is the policy of the academy to implement and practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to control pests in the building and minimize the exposure of children and staff to pesticides. The IPM program includes: regular monitoring to identify pest problems; preventative actions to reduce future pest problems; preference for the use of non-chemical control methods to address pest problems when necessary, and the use of least hazardous chemical controls after non-chemical control methods have been applied. Orkin Pest Control Company is contracted by the academy; it complies with IPM by refraining from routine pesticide spraying, providing detailed service reports with each monthly visit, and recommending pest prevention. If pesticide application is deemed necessary, parents and staff will be notified in writing two business and no more than thirty days prior to the pesticide application (antimicrobial agents and insecticide & rodenticide baits are exempt from notification.)

### ILLNESS & EXCLUSION

The Academy seeks a partnership with parents in the effort to keep all children healthy and free from contagious disease. Health practices at the Academy are designed to minimize illness and include specific procedures regarding sanitation, hand washing and the exclusion of sick children. These procedures have been designed according to the DCFS licensing standards and in conjunction with the Cook County Health Department. Children do become ill, often at unpredictable and inconvenient times. Working parents often feel stressed when children are ill. If we work together we can

minimize illnesses and stress levels. While none of us like to think about children becoming ill, now is the time to make arrangements for sick child care, knowing that illnesses will develop until your child's immunity system is built up. All information about a child's health and/or medical condition is kept strictly confidential.

### *Illness Policy*

All children attending a program at the Academy must be in good health. If symptoms of illness are present at home, you should not bring your child to the Academy. Please notify the Academy when your child is ill so we can be alert to similar symptoms in other children. The Academy is required to report certain illnesses to the health department. Every day upon arrival, all children will be screened by their teacher for any obvious signs of illness. If symptoms of illness are present, the childcare staff will determine whether they are able to care for the child safely, based on the apparent degree of illness. If your child appears symptom free upon arrival, but symptoms develop later on during the day, staff will determine whether or not childcare can continue. Any child who is suspected of being ill or becomes ill, shall be immediately isolated from the group in the Academy's main office and will need to be removed from the facility by a parent as soon as possible, optimally within one hour. In the event a parent cannot pick up his/her child in the suggested time frame, staff will call those listed on the enrollment form authorized to assume this responsibility for you.

### *Exclusion Guidelines*

Mildly ill children, who can participate in all activities normally, do not need to be routinely excluded. This could include a child with a cold. However, in order to prevent the spread of disease, children will be excluded from care until the symptoms or conditions listed below are resolved or until evaluation by a physician determines that the child can return to the Academy.

- Fever, including low grade, a change in behavior (irritable, restless or listless), and/or symptoms of an illness. **A fever is considered a temperature over 99 degrees.**
- Loose stools (diarrhea) with two or more episodes.
- Vomiting with two or more episodes within the previous 24-hour period.
- Evidence of severe illness such as lethargy, unusual sleepiness, prolonged crying, obvious discomfort, difficulty breathing, uncontrollable coughing, wheezing, and/or poor appetite.
- Mouth sores or ulcers.
- Head Lice
- Any illness, which prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.

***Please note:*** Children sent home with a fever are required to stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours.

### *Illnesses that require a doctor's note in order for the child to return to care*

Any child suffering from any of the following conditions will not be permitted to return to the Academy without a doctor's note authorizing their return:

- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) with discharge.
- Rash (sometimes) associated with other signs of illness, fever or change in behavior.
- A specific contagious disease such as whooping cough, strep throat, scabies, chicken pox, mumps, measles, ringworm, impetigo, scarlet fever, etc.
- A child who has received stitches.
- A child who has broken a bone.
- A child who underwent surgery of any sort or who has injured his/her teeth.

Many illnesses/injuries require exclusion for 24 hours after treatment has begun unless a physician authorizes an earlier return. Other illnesses/injuries may require a longer time frame of exclusion, such as chicken pox. Major illnesses/injuries and specific contagious diseases need a doctor's note, releasing the child in order to return to the Academy.

**Please note:** The Academy will not accept a child back into the program who was sent home with a suspected serious illness/injury without a doctor's release.

#### ***Written Notification***

The Academy notifies all families in writing of any illness that may be present in their child's classroom, specifying the date of illness, symptoms to watch for and the incubation period.

#### ***Emergency Medical Attention***

The Academy's emergency medical procedure is extremely conservative in order to protect as many children as possible. If your child becomes acutely ill or sustains a major injury while in our care and requires medical attention the Academy staff will call for paramedic help to transport the child to the local hospital. A designated staff member will accompany the child. Parents will be notified to proceed to the hospital's emergency room by the Academy's office personnel. An accident/incident report will be completed and placed in the child's file. The child's teacher will make a follow-up phone call to the child's home the same evening of the occurrence.

**Please note:** At the time of registration all parents must sign a consent form authorizing the Academy to administer emergency medical treatment. Your signature on the enrollment form gives the hospital permission to care for your child.

#### ***Accident reports***

Every time a child gets hurt, however slight the injury, an accident report is prepared by the teacher. If the injury is serious (injury to head, wound that is bleeding, a bite, or a deep cut requiring stitches) the parents will be notified immediately. All accident reports must be signed by the child's parent and become part of the child's permanent record.

**Please note:** If a parent refuses to sign an accident report, his/her child will not be allowed back into the program until the report is signed.

#### **MEDICATION**

The Academy only administers medication for life maintenance purposes, such as insulin for a diabetic, an "epi-pen" for a specific allergic reaction, or an inhaler for an asthmatic.

- A written note confirming such a condition is required from your licensed health care provider; details including proper dispensing of the medication, schedule, directions for administering the medication, and possible side effects should be noted. A standing order may guide the use of over-the-counter medications detailing the specific instructions for individual dosing of the medication. See office for form.
- A release form must be signed by the parents and kept on file in the Academy's office.
- Depending upon the child's medical condition and type of medication, parents may be required to participate in a meeting to train the teaching staff on the proper administration of the medication.
- Medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's first and last name, name of the clinician, expiration date, and manufacturer's instructions and/or prescription medications must be labeled with the full pharmacy label detailing the name and strength of the medication as well as directions on administering and storing.
- Medications that are vital to a child's health, such as an asthma inhaler, diabetes medication, or epi-pen for severe allergic reactions are kept in the classroom secured in the first aid bag or in a locked cabinet. All other medication is kept in the Academy office and stored under lock and key.
- Staff will keep a medication log detailing date and times that the medication was administered.

***Please note:*** No other forms of medication will be administered by the Academy staff. This includes all over the counter medication as well as prescription antibiotics. Please consult with your physician regarding alternative medications, such as 12-hour antibiotics or suspension liquids that do not have to be taken while your child is in our care.

### **FIRST AID**

For minor cuts, bumps, bruises, scrapes, etc., the staff administers first aid and completes an accident report form. Keep in mind the Academy's first aid procedures are very basic. Soap, water, Band-Aids and ice packs are the only forms of treatment allowed. All Academy staff is certified in First Aid and CPR.

### ***Topical Products***

Any topical product, such as diaper ointment, sunscreen and insect repellent, must be approved by the parent in writing prior to use on a child.

### **INSURANCE**

The Academy meets all published DCFS requirements for insurance coverage. All children enrolled at the Academy are covered under public liability insurance. It is expected that costs for medical treatment will be covered under the parent's health insurance.

### **FOOD & NUTRITION**

All children enrolled in the Pre-School Program receive a mid-morning or afternoon snack, depending upon class time. All food is provided by the Academy. All parents

receive monthly menus listing all foods served. Every meal and snack is prepared according to USDA requirements. From time to time teachers may ask parents to bring in treats from home for a theme-related celebration. Please be aware that any food items brought in need to be store or bakery bought ad sealed within the original package. Homemade treats are not allowed and cannot be accepted. The Academy operates "family style" meals, which includes children in every aspect of the meal, including set-up, serving, when appropriate and clean up to the best of their ability.

### *Meal substitutions*

All food is provided by the Academy. The only exception to this rule is if a physician has signed off on a health condition, indicating the child cannot eat the food provided by the Academy and must bring his/her own food from home. Any food brought from home for an individual child must be clearly labeled with that child's name and cannot be shared with other children. This policy is strictly enforced by the Academy. The physician's note is required at the beginning of every enrollment period and it must indicate a legitimate health reason as to why the child needs home food. The note will be held on file for the season and must be renewed every season.

**Important:** *Please inform your child's teacher if your child suffers from a food allergy.*

### **Birthday Celebrations**

In consideration of our preschool participants with food allergies or sensitivities and to support the fight against childhood obesity, we ask that all in-class birthday celebrations be non-edible. We will celebrate your child's special day with a birthday crown, poster, and/or a special card and the group will sing the "Happy Birthday" song. Optional non-edible birthday celebration suggestions: donate and educational game or toy to the classroom; or give out age appropriate stickers, pencils or erasers. Please note any cakes, cookies or candies will not be accepted for distribution in the classroom and will be returned to the parent.

### **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of the Academy to be in compliance with Public Act 100-0105 which prohibits expelling young children (ages 0-5) from their program because of a child's behavior. Our goal is to meet the needs of the child within our existing program and resources. The staff at the Academy work hard to prevent behavioral problems by arranging the classroom environment o children are able to work in small groups and have a large choice of activities. Each classroom is divided into a minimum of seven separate activity centers. These activity centers give children the freedom to choose and the ability to experience success through self-direction. Staff are trained to direct behavior along appropriate channels. Children are encouraged to use their words and not actions to solve problems. Academy staff act as role models and employ ample praise for appropriate behavior. *Please note:* All parents and every staff member sign a



statement of understanding in regard to the Academy's Guidance and Discipline Policy, included in your child's enrollment package, so that clear understanding exists between both parties.

#### *Discipline policy posted in each classroom*

The following steps are taken regarding discipline:

First: Verbal reminder of the rules.

Second: Redirection to another activity.

Third: Taking a break and stepping away for a few moments.

Last: Incident Report that must be signed by parent at pick up time.

#### *Minor Incidents*

When a minor incident, including an isolated instance of the use of mildly inappropriate language not directed at another child or staff person, occurs within the classroom the teacher will follow the discipline policy above. Verbal cues and positive reinforcement will be used as appropriate. If the child needs to take a break and step away from an activity, he/she will not be left alone. He/she will always be kept in full view of the teacher.

#### *Major Incidents*

Teachers will notify the Academy administrative staff of any incident involving aggressive and/or violent behavior by a child, such as an act of cruelty, intimidation, bullying, biting, kicking, punching, hitting, using obscenities and verbal threats of physical harm, lewd conduct, intentional destruction of property, or behavior that puts the child himself/herself at risk of physical harm. The child's parents will be notified by Academy administrative staff of incidents with an immediate phone call and an incident report will be prepared for the parent's signature at the time of pick up.

#### *Dismissal procedure*

As noted earlier the Academy is in compliance with Public Act 100-0105. The Academy will document incidents that occur, communicate with parents, plan for addressing issues including resources and help in transitioning their child to another program. During this time the Director of Parks and Recreation will be kept informed. It is the support of the Director of Parks and the District's Board of Park Commissioners that the Academy will continue its efforts to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of the children in the program and to keep every child in care safe and free from harm.

Except in instances of conduct by a child determined by Academy administrative staff to be of sufficient severity to warrant immediate dismissal, the following guidelines will be followed in implementing the dismissal procedure:

1. The parents will be kept informed of their child's problematic behavior through incident reports and/or parent contacts.
2. In order to determine a workable solution to the problem the Academy's administrative staff will call for a multidisciplinary staffing. Input shall be obtained from all persons including parents and staff who have worked or are currently working with the child in a significant capacity. If the parent chooses not to attend the staffing, he/she will be notified of the meeting's outcome. A summary of the staffing and any recommendations made will be filed in the child's cumulative enrollment folder.
3. If the child continues to exhibit the behavior which led to the staffing described above, the child will be escorted to the Academy office. The parents will be notified and asked to pick up the child. A staffing will again be scheduled between the staff, administration and child's parents. Expectations and rules will be reiterated at the staffing with notice that if the child exhibits the problematic behavior again the child will be put on suspension from the program for a minimum of two days to a maximum of two weeks. The severity of the child's actions will determine the amount of time the child serves suspension.
4. Upon return from suspension, if the child again exhibits the problematic behavior the child will be escorted to the office and the parents will be notified immediately. An incident report will be written which requires the parent's signature. The child will be immediately suspended for a period of no less than two days to the maximum of two weeks. Parents will be notified at that time of the final step in the process if the child exhibits another incident of the problematic behavior i.e. dismissal.
5. Upon the return of the child, if another incident occurs, the Academy will terminate the child's enrollment in the program. Parents will be required to sign the dismissal report.
6. If it is determined that it is in the best interest of the child to terminate enrollment, the child's and parents' needs will be considered by planning with the parents to meet the child's needs when he or she leaves the facility, including referrals to other agencies or facilities.
7. The date of the child's last day will be given to the parents with as much advance notice as possible under the circumstances.
8. If the problematic behavior exhibited by the child involves repeated major incidents, or a single major incident determined by Academy administrative staff to be of sufficient severity to warrant immediate dismissal, the child may be dismissed immediately. In such an event, reasons for the dismissal will be presented clearly, in written form and approved by the Academy Superintendent and forwarded to the Executive Director of the District. The child's parents will be asked to sign the written dismissal report and will be provided with a copy. The written dismissal report will also be placed in the child's cumulative enrollment folder.

### *Incident reports*

An incident report is written for all major disciplinary incidents, as described above, as well as any out of the ordinary occurrence in the child's day (such as the need to change clothing, losing a tooth, etc.). The staff member who prepared the incident report then brings the situation to the attention of the Academy's administrative staff. When deemed necessary, the child's parent is notified with a phone call to explain why an incident report had to be written. It is the District's policy that the child's parent must sign the report at the time of pick up, acknowledging the fact that he/she has read the report and has been made aware of the situation. Signed incident reports become part of the child's permanent record.

***Please note:*** If any parent refuses to sign an incident report, his/her child will not be allowed back into the program until the report is signed.

#### *Guidance policy*

It is the Academy's philosophy and policy that corporal punishment of children in the program is unacceptable. The Academy does not condone the use of abusive or profane language or threats of physical punishment directed at an enrolled child.

#### **RE-ENROLLMENT POLICY**

Re-enrollment of a child, who has been dismissed from the program, may be possible, based on an individualized assessment. If a parent wishes to re-enroll his or her child after the child has been terminated from the program a **written** letter of intent must be sent to the Academy's Superintendent, which includes an explanation of why the parent believes the child should be permitted to re-enroll. At that time a review committee (consisting of the Academy's administrative staff, the Academy's established committee person from the District's Board of Park Commissioners, the Director of Parks & Recreation and, in the case of a child with a disability the persons described as participants in the interactive process discussed in the section captioned "Children with Disabilities" on page 3 will be convened to research and discuss the matter in depth. The review committee will determine whether to re-enroll the child. Each case will be considered on an individualized basis. Factors that may be considered include whether there has been a verifiable significant positive change in the child's inappropriate behavior since leaving the program, such as a demonstration of such improved behavior by the child's behavior in an other program and setting similar to the Academy program, or by the opinion of a professional with appropriate expertise, whether the child's parents have been and will be cooperative in acknowledging their child's inappropriate behavior and assisting in correcting it, and such other factors as are determined reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. At the time of re-enrollment (if permitted) any special requirements will be outlined to the parent regarding the child's transition back into, and continuation in, the program.

#### *Violence policy/Tobacco/Firearms*

In the event any parent(s) threaten(s), is violent or harmful to their child, to another child, or a staff member, or other parent at the Academy or to property at the Academy, such an occurrence is grounds for immediate termination of services from the Academy. The Academy adheres to a strict, zero tolerance policy concerning any type or situation of violence involving parents. Firearms are strictly forbidden (Law Enforcement

Personnel exempt) on the premises. Smoking and the use of tobacco products within 15 feet of the building is forbidden by Illinois law.

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The center views parents as partners in the health, education, growth and development of their children. The center aims to be supportive of a parent's role and wishes to supplement the participation of every child in the program in a most positive, productive and professional way. The center emphasizes an environment that is exciting and fun for all children. When the positive aspects of meeting new friends and experiencing new activities are presented to children, we find the transition from home to school to be successful. We afford all parents the opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have with the center's director and/or related staff.

#### *Open Door Policy*

The Academy subscribes to an "open door" policy in which parents are encouraged to visit their children at any time of the day. Parents are invited to stay with their child on his or her first day to ease the transition from home to school. Since every child is different and transitions may become harder as time goes on, the door is always open to stay until you and your child feels comfortable. Whether your child has a hard or not so hard transition, you are always welcome to visit the center.

#### *Difficulties, Differences*

We afford all parents the opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have with the academy's director and/or related staff. While it is not always possible for the teaching staff to discuss a concern during class or pick-up/drop-off times they will be happy to schedule an appointment for a meeting or phone conference. We do take parents' concerns seriously. Staff and administration will work together to make a plan to address your concerns. We will keep you informed of solutions and progress. We want to work in partnership with you to provide the best educational experience for your child and we *are* interested in your questions, concerns, and perspective.

#### *Parent Volunteers*

If you are interested in volunteering in your child's classroom, please do not hesitate to speak with your child's teacher on ways you can help! You may read a book, share a special hobby or craft, teach a few words in another language, play a musical instrument, share information about your job, and/or help our with an activity or event in the classroom. Everyone is welcome to participate.

#### *Parent/Teacher Conferences*

Twice a year all parents have the opportunity to meet with their child's teachers formally. The parent/teacher conference allots parents a scheduled time to sit down and discuss in depth their child's educational experiences at the center. As early childhood educators, the Academy takes these conferences very seriously and insists that all parents take advantage of them and keep their appointments. Preschool classes do not meet to allow time for the conferences.

#### *Informal Conferences*

Teachers are also available for informal conversations regarding your child's well being at various times throughout the day. If need be, a phone call or short visit can occur. However, if you have a concern regarding your child, we recommend scheduling a specific meeting between you and your child's teacher.

#### *Parent Communication*

Every month the Academy e-mail blasts "Kid-Bits", a newsletter highlighting the events and activities provided to children the month before. In addition to the newsletter, all parents receive monthly menus via e-mail for all meals served at the Academy. From time to time notes and flyers go home, in an effort to keep all parents up-to-date and informed of Academy doings. All correspondence from the office that is not e-mailed is placed in the child's back pack or tote bag; please check it after each class.

#### *Website*

The Norridge Park District website includes information about all park district programs, events and resources. Information about the academy including forms, handbooks, and parent resources can be found at: [www.norridgepk.com](http://www.norridgepk.com)

#### *Parent Input/Program Evaluation*

Parent input regarding the program is a valuable resource. Every program year a parent/family survey will be distributed. Results of the survey will be published in the Kid-Bits newsletter. A planning meeting to review the survey; share concerns, questions, thoughts and ideas; and to set goals will be scheduled annually. Parents, administrators, staff, and community members will be invited to participate. Parents are also encouraged to contact staff or academy administrators at any time to express concerns or share ideas. A suggestion box located in the hallway near the office is also available for parent use.

#### *Fundraising*

Twice a year the center fundraises in an effort to cut down on operating costs that are passed on to families. We encourage 100% participation of all families in order to make our efforts a success. All proceeds from the events go towards the children's classrooms. The annual fundraisers are scheduled in the fall and spring. The top selling student receives a week's free tuition (see the office for details). The top selling classroom receives an ice cream party.

#### FIELD TRIPS

The Preschool Program plans two Parent/Child Field trips during the school year. A hired school bus company provides transportation for the trips; all busses are seat-belt equipped. The trips are organized and supervised by the teaching staff; they carry emergency first-aid bags, cell phones for communication and a list of emergency phone numbers on all trips. Preschool classes are suspended on field trip days.

#### CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT POLICY

All Academy personnel, regardless of position, are mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse and/or neglect; in accordance with Illinois state law. The Academy is required to have a written policy indicating compliance with the law. A child is considered neglected if he or she is not provided with adequate food, clothing, medical attention or protection. If any of these conditions are suspected, the Academy is required to file a report with DCFS. It is not the place of staff to determine if a child is or is not being abused and/or neglected, but rather only to report the suspected abuse and/or neglect to the proper authorities. Failure to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect can result in criminal charges being brought up against the Academy and any involved staff members. If any staff member observes signs of suspected abuse and/or neglect, the staff person must indicate this in a written observation and immediately report the findings to the Academy's administrative staff. A staff member will seek to inform the parent/guardian of the situation and try to secure cooperation when a report must be filed to DCFS. The parent or guardian's explanation of the child's situation will be recorded along with the staff member's observation. The observation will be immediately reported to DCFS with or without parent involvement. If a parent or family refuses to talk with the staff about the child's situation, or a child does not attend school after inquiries have been made, an additional report to DCFS will be made.

***IMPORTANT: If a parent shares with the staff his/her concern that he/she may be abusing their child, the staff will work to help the parent receive the appropriate services and will support the family in reporting the situation to DCFS.***

#### **STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**

At the time of enrollment you must sign a statement of understanding indicating your intent to read and adhere to all policies in the parent handbook, and any subsequent amendments. From time to time policies are reviewed, added or changed. If so, an addendum is issued to all families to attach to their existing handbook.

A.

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Absences                  | 12  |
| Accident Reports          | 20  |
| Administration            | 1   |
| Admissions/Enrollment     | 2-4 |
| Additional Child Discount | 8   |
| Arrivals and Departures   | 11  |
| Attire                    | 16  |

B.

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Birthday Celebrations | 22 |
| Building Security     | 2  |

C.

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Caravan Service            | 11  |
| Children with Disabilities | 5-7 |
| Children W/Medical Needs   | 7   |
| Children W/Allergies       | 7   |
| Computer Learning          | 16  |
| Confidentiality            | 3   |
| Conferences                | 26  |
| Consultants                | 6-7 |
| Curriculum                 | 14  |

D.

|                               |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Daily Arrivals & Departures   | 11    |
| Daily Routine                 | 16    |
| Difficulties/Differences      | 26    |
| Disabilities                  | 5     |
| Drop Off & Pick Up            | 11-13 |
| Discipline & Dismissal Policy | 22-24 |

E.

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Education & Curriculum      | 14-15 |
| Emergencies At Pick-up Time | 13    |
| Emergency Closings          | 9-10  |
| Emergency Medical Treatment | 20    |
| Exclusion Guidelines        | 19    |

F.

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Family Orientation | 5     |
| Field Trips        | 27    |
| First Aid          | 21    |
| Food & Nutrition   | 21-22 |
| Fundraising        | 27    |

G.

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Guidance Policy | 25 |
|-----------------|----|

H.

|                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| Holidays           | 9  |
| Hotline            | 10 |
| Hours of Operation | 2  |

I.

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Illness                   | 11    |
| Illness & Exclusion       | 18-21 |
| Incident Reports          | 24    |
| Initial Adjustment Period | 11    |
| Insurance                 | 21    |

|                                 |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| <u>L</u>                        |           |
| Lesson Plans                    | 15        |
| Lost & Found                    | 17        |
| <u>M</u>                        |           |
| Meal Substitution               | 21-22     |
| Medication                      | 20-21     |
| Mission Statement               | 1         |
| Mixed Age Grouping              | 15        |
| <u>N</u>                        |           |
| Neglect & Abuse Report          | 13, 27-28 |
| NSF                             | 8         |
| <u>O</u>                        |           |
| Observed Holidays               | 9         |
| Open Door Policy                | 26        |
| Outdoor Play                    | 16        |
| Out of the Ordinary Pick-Up     | 13        |
| <u>P</u>                        |           |
| Parent Input/Program Evaluation | 27        |
| Parent Involvement              | 26-27     |
| Parents Under the Influence     | 13        |
| Parent/Teacher Conferences      | 26        |
| Parking                         | 14        |
| Philosophy                      | 1         |
| Preschool Screening             | 14        |
| <u>R</u>                        |           |
| Registration Requirements       | 3-4       |
| Residency Status/Update         | 9         |
| <u>S</u>                        |           |
| Sanitation & Pest Management    | 17-18     |
| Services Available              | 1         |
| Staff Credentials               | 2         |
| Statement of Understanding      | 28        |
| Subsidized Care                 | 8-9       |
| <u>T</u>                        |           |
| Transitioning to Kindergarten   | 15        |
| Tuition/Fees/Charges            | 8         |
| <u>V</u>                        |           |
| Valuables                       | 17        |
| Violence/Tobacco/Firearms       | 25        |
| Volunteering                    | 26        |
| <u>W</u>                        |           |
| Website                         | 27        |
| Welcome                         | 1         |
| What to Send from Home          | 16        |