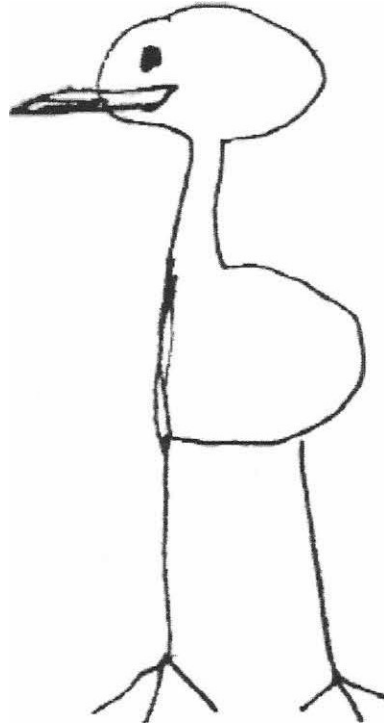


Parent Handbook



The Duck Pond Preschool

3947 Park Boulevard

Oakland, California 94602

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INTRODUCTION

The Duck Pond is a small, full-day preschool in the Glenview district of Oakland. It is licensed for twenty-five (25) children, accommodates twenty-seven families and offers a four-or five-day program.

PHILOSOPHY

At The Duck Pond, our work with children is rooted in the belief that the most important experience of early childhood is the development of a strong and positive self-concept, both as an individual and as a member of a social group. We rely on the following principles to fulfill this goal:

- We view children as capable, intelligent beings worthy of respect.
- We focus on meeting the physical and emotional needs of each child on an individual basis.
- We create an environment that fosters curiosity and the ability to grow through access to stimulating materials and learning experiences.
- We feel that play is the most valuable vehicle for learning.
- We integrate Art, Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, and Music into our daily life.
- We actively adopt a Project Approach and concepts from Reggio Emilia into our developmental approach to early childhood education.
- We conscientiously adhere to the ethics and standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- We encourage children to respect their own and others' limits, to participate in decisions that affect them and to resolve conflicts that arise amongst themselves.
- We pursue long-term relationships with each other in the belief that a strong community of teachers, parents, and children is a necessary component of early growth and development.
- We believe that each child grows at his or her own pace. We respect and support that pace, and do not push toward a prescribed end.
- We encourage honest communication between staff and parents about each family's preschool experience.



GUIDANCE

Although often considered synonymous with punishment, the word "discipline" comes from the Latin root *disciplina*, meaning instruction or training. We use this interpretation of discipline as guidance to define our approach to conflict resolution and behavior modification. We do not use any form of corporal punishment.

Our goal is to create an environment in which each child is sufficiently stimulated and engaged, thus reducing the frustration that can occur in group settings. We model respectful and nurturing behavior as another means of preventing conflict.

Small children are still very egocentric and often not yet capable of understanding the concepts of sharing or taking turns. Therefore, redirecting children to other activities when conflict occurs is often the most effective disciplinary technique. As the children develop, we increasingly involve them in conflict resolution. Negotiation and mediation are an integral part of our curriculum.

When prevention, redirection and negotiation are not sufficient to deter inappropriate behavior, we work with the children to set limits. Any consequences are non-punitive, respectful, and reasonable.

STAFFING & RATIOS

The Duck Pond is committed to excellence in early childhood education. We encourage our teachers to complete higher education courses, pursue advanced degrees, and attend early childhood education conferences, courses, and workshops throughout the year. We credit our low teacher turnover to careful selection of staff, excellent working conditions, and a commitment to respectful compensation and benefits.

The Duck Pond maintains a 9:1 and often a 6:1 child-to-adult ratio. Every teacher has current CPR and Pediatric First Aid certificates.

Owner and director Lois Cottrell has extensive experience, education, and training in early childhood development and education. For over twenty years her academic and professional focus has been on families and children. She received her Master's degree in Education from Mills College and has traveled abroad for a closer examination of the work in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The children love Lois's sense of humor and contagious enthusiasm.



THE DUCK POND COMMUNITY

Children in Community

The idea of community is central to The Duck Pond philosophy, and children are at the center of our community. The teacher's guide the children in developing a strong sense of themselves both as individuals and in relation to other children at the school. The children understand that they are members of a social group and that they have responsibilities to that group. The children are respected and are encouraged to show respect to others at school. Independence and individual opinions are encouraged, and at the same time, children see that their own needs, thoughts, and opinions are sometimes but not always the same as those of other children or those of the group as a whole. The children are encouraged to use their words to express themselves. The teachers respect, take care of and support the children and thereby become models for the children to treat others similarly, regardless of personality, age, or individual opinions.

Program

At The Duck Pond children learn primarily through play with each other. Mornings tend to be a more structured time of day, with circle time, enrichment activities, and art activities in addition to free play. In the afternoon, free play predominates. In the yards, children climb the play structure, ride bikes, dig in the sandbox, run, or play ball. Indoor play may involve art, reading, or dress-up imaginative play.

Age Groups

Ducklings (2-3 yrs.)

Our Ducklings (children must be two before September 1st to join this group) are able to grow, develop, and bond in a space designed just for toddlers. Teachers use a more hands on style with these 2-3year-olds, whether it is concerning guidance and redirection, comfort, or assistance with skills. The Ducklings' teachers take care of all their needs, including diapering, napping, and potty training. The Ducklings have a circle time in the morning, which involves board books, music, movement, and snacks instead of longer discussion which may be part of the older children's circle time.

The Raccoon and Froggie children have more developed verbal and physical skills. Teachers use observation, modeling, and discussion more with this age group to introduce concepts, lead activities, and resolve conflict. At certain times, the Raccoon and Froggie children are



grouped by age (3-4 and 4-5year-olds). This enables them to foster a bond with their peer group and the teachers to offer age-appropriate activities.

Froggies (3-4 yrs.)

The Froggies (children must be three before September 1st to join this group) are leaving toddlerhood and entering the world of preschoolers. For the first time they are joining in on daily jobs, learning the skills of mediation, taking care of personal needs, and becoming aware of the feelings of others.

Raccoons (4-5 yrs.) and Dragonflies (5-6 yrs.)

This is a pre-kindergarten group (children must be four before September 1st to join this group). This group has some planned academic activities to prepare for kindergarten. Writing journals are a daily part of this group's activities, along with math games, alphabet games, story dictation and book publishing.

Daily Jobs

The children's sense of community is enhanced by the daily assignment of jobs. The jobs rotate daily, and children can get help in completing them from a teacher or another child. Examples of jobs include collecting the mail, feeding the animals, pairing and organizing the shoes, setting out lunch, and acting as supervisor (making sure all the jobs are done), mediator (helping to resolve conflict between children by modeling the teachers' conflict resolution techniques) or caregiver (taking an ice pack or giving a hug to a child who needs it).

Enrichment

The Duck Pond enhances its program by bringing in outside teachers to share their skills as well as by taking the children out of school on field trips. All outside teachers are supervised while at The Duck Pond Field trips and enrichment classes are planned with consideration of the children's ages and interests.

Ducklings may take a field trip to the Little Farm, while Raccoons may go to the Alameda County Food Bank for a tour.

The Duck Pond's enrichment activities are supported primarily through the proceeds of



our annual fundraising auction. The following enrichment activities are currently offered at The Duck Pond.

- Yoga
- Storytelling by Mary Ellen Hill
- Music with JamaRoo
- Field trips including: Tilden Park Little Farm, Tilden Park Steam Trains, Piedmont Fire Station, Oakland Zoo, Lawrence Hall of Science, Ardenwood Historic Farm, San Francisco Symphony Children's Performance (Raccoons only), Alameda County Food Bank (Raccoons only), Lindsay Wildlife Museum, Bay Area Discovery Museum, and others.

Families in Community

Family involvement in The Duck Pond community is welcome and encouraged. Family involvement contributes to the success of a small school. More importantly, family involvement extends the school community and engenders excitement and pride in the children. Examples of organized family events at The Duck Pond are:

- Back-to-School Parent Cocktail Party
- Halloween "Spooky" Party
- Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer Parties
- Thanksgiving Friendship Feast
- Holiday Party
- Parent Tea Party
- Fundraising Auction
- Parent Breakfast
- Summer Camping Trip
- Graduation

Every two-parent family is required to participate in 20 hours of school activities, and every single-parent family is required to participate in 10 hours of school activities per year. Attending meetings and social gatherings, driving on field trips, and contributing to the maintenance of the building or other materials all count toward this requirement. Active parent committees (that also count toward annual hours) include Library, Building Maintenance, Auction Planning, Community Support, Class Parent, Camp-out Coordinator,



Tahoe-trip Coordinator and Moms/Dads group. In addition, parents are encouraged to join school activities, share their talents and traditions, or volunteer time in other ways.

Families who cannot participate, or who do not complete their hours by June 30th, will be assessed a fee of \$15 per hour missed.

State law requires all on-site volunteers to have a tuberculosis clearance from their physician and a criminal record clearance. These are relatively easy to obtain. Copies of driver's licenses and evidence of auto insurance must be on file for anyone driving on field trips.

Our Neighborhood

The Duck Pond children sometimes venture out in the neighborhood on walks to the park for a picnic lunch or to help clean up on Earth Day, or to the Glenview business district to say "Hello" to our local merchants. In these ways, the children begin to understand how a community and neighborhood work.

Social Responsibility

The Duck Pond teachers encourage children to take the caregiving they provide to each other and apply it to the neighborhood, to living things, and to our world. Circle time often includes discussion of how to show respect for and take care of animals, nature, and other people. The work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, among others, is highlighted each year in discussion and song. Each year, the Raccoons raise money and donate food for the Alameda County Food Bank.

GENERAL INFORMATION

School Hours

Our hours are Monday - Friday, 8:00AM until 4:30PM. We offer a four-, or five-day (per week) toddler program for children aged 2 - 3 years, and four-day and five-day programs for preschoolers aged 3- 5 years. We do not offer half-day care. Some families sign up for full days and choose to use only part of the day.

Attendance

Parents or caregivers are required to sign children in and out of The Duck Pond with a full legal signature and the time of day. The sign-in sheet is located by the front door. Children are not required to attend or arrive at a prescribed time. However, we do require a call if a



child will not be attending when normally scheduled or will be arriving after 9:00 AM. This courtesy helps us to plan our day and may allow another family to add extra care.

Daily Schedule

We keep our daily schedule fluid enough to respond to the children's changing needs. However, we strive to maintain familiarity, as children seek security in a predictable routine.

Parents are welcome into the classroom at drop-off or pick-up but we ask for only three parents at a time and if having symptoms of a cold to please wear a mask in the classroom.

The general schedule is as follows:

- 8:00-10:00 Arrivals, Greeting. Free play (Inside/Outside) Morning projects or enrichment and snack available • 10:00-10:30 Circle
- 10:30-11:30 Outside free time
- 11:30-11:45 Lunch set up by the Chef
- 11:45-12:30 Lunch
- 12:00-2:00 Nap time for Ducklings
- 12:30-2:00 Nap time for Froggies
- 12:30-1:30 Story time and quiet play for Raccoons
- 1:30-2:00 Rest/nap time for Raccoons
- 2:30-3:00 Snack
- 3:00-4:30 Free play (Inside/Outside)
Story time/Departure Close

Holidays & Breaks

The Duck Pond calendar of holidays and breaks is distributed at the beginning of each new school year. The Duck Pond will generally be closed on the following days, with variations depending on calendar dates and days.

- Labor Day
- Veterans' Day
- The week of Thanksgiving
- Winter Break: Two weeks, coordinated with the Oakland Unified School District calendar
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday



- Presidents' Day
- Cesar Chavez Day
- Spring Break: One week, coordinated with the Oakland Unified School District calendar
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day week
- Summer Break: one-week preceding Labor Day

One or two Staff Development Days and parent/teacher conferences, both of which require closing the school, will be scheduled and announced at the beginning of the school year in September. Additional holidays may also be announced at this time.

Health Policy

No child will be accepted into care with a contagious illness. If a child is determined to have contracted an illness during the school day, the parents will be contacted and expected to pick up the child within a reasonable amount of time. In case of emergency, we will call 911.

If your child has any of the following symptoms, we ask that you keep her/him home for 24 hours after the symptom has disappeared: diarrhea, vomiting, elevated temperature (100.4° or higher), discharge from eyes, rash, prolonged discomfort, lethargy, or any other signs of communicable disease.

It is to everyone's benefit to reduce exposure to contagious illness among the children. For this reason, PLEASE USE CAUTION in deciding whether your child is healthy enough for school. We are not licensed to provide care to sick children. We appreciate your cooperation.

Symptom/Diagnosis	When Child will be sent home/ excluded	When Child may return
Chicken Pox	When lesions are noticed or present	When all lesions are dried and crusted Typically takes 6+days
Diarrhea	After 2 occurrences at school	When diarrhea subsides for 24 hours
Diaper Rash	If sores are oozing and leak body fluid outside the diaper	When exclusions criteria is resolved
Hand, Foot and Mouth Syndrome	When lesions are noticed and present	Doctors note stating child is not contagious



Head Lice	When nits/eggs are noticed or present	After treatment
Pink Eye (conjunctivitis)	When discharge is noticed Pinkish/red swollen or irritated eyes	Doctors note stating the child is not contagious
Strep Throat	Child has positive throat culture	After 24 hours of antibiotic medicine
Vomiting	After two occurrences or if a fever is present	After 24 hours

COVID -19 Health Policy Addendum as of May 2022¹

These procedures are in place to keep our community healthy and comply with local and state guidelines. Parents must immediately notify the school Director when any of the following conditions are present:

- A member of the Student's immediate family learns that they have been exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- A member of a Student's family tests positive for COVID-19.
- A member the Student's immediate family travels out of state or to regions within California with higher than average infection rates².

Event	Action Taken by The Duck Pond
A member the Student's immediate family learns that they have been exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.	School must be informed and the family member who has been exposed must test for covid.
A member of a Student's family tests positive for COVID-19.	The student will not be allowed to return to school for 3 days, from the family member's symptom onset date, and the Student achieves a negative COVID-19 test result.
Current Duck Pond Child tests positive for COVID.	The student will not be allowed to return to school until a negative COVID-19 test result is achieved and 3-5 days have passed from the time of symptom onset.

¹ This policy document may be revised periodically as conditions or CDC directives on COVID-19 evolve.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases>



When classrooms experience three or more COVID cases simultaneously.	The entire classroom that the child or teacher was a part of (i.e. upper or lower) will be closed for 2-5 days (per CDC) for observations for signs of COVID-19 of the class members and teachers and for additional sanitation of the classroom. Children that have been vaccinated against COVID will be able to come to school with a negative COVID test.
A member of the Student's immediate family, including the Student, travels out of state or to regions within California with higher than average infection rates.	Depending on the circumstances of that travel and the risk of exposure to the student and their family, the Duck Pond may require some period of quarantine/testing prior to allowing the student back into their classroom. This period of self-quarantine may last up to 5 days depending on unique conditions of travel and exposure to risk.
A student shows symptom or becomes ill during the school day.	That student will be isolated in pre-designated area of their classroom. Parents will be notified immediately to pick-up their child.
Masks at School	Children are required to bring, and keep, a mask at school. Children will not be required to wear a mask inside unless they are coughing or have a runny nose.
Health Screening	A child's temperature will be measured only if a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness.

[End of COVID -19 Health Policy Addendum of May 2020 Section](#)

Medication

We only administer doctor-prescribed medication in its original packaging, providing the required permission form is on file. This form must be updated.

Tuition Payment

Tuition is due in full by the 25th of each month and late if paid after the 1st. Checks are payable to The Duck Pond.

The following fees will also be collected if applicable:

- Late Payment: \$10.00 per day if received after the 1st of the month.
- Returned Check Fee: \$25.00



Late Pick Up

Early arrival or late pick up will be charged at the rate of \$1.00 per minute. This fee is due at time of occurrence and paid directly to attending teacher. Repeated late pick up will result in termination of care.

Contracts

Each family will be required to sign a contract stipulating schedule, fees, and other policy agreements.

Schedule

Families are expected to adhere to their contracted schedules. Any schedule changes, including additional care hours, must be made in consultation with the director. PLEASE do not attempt to make any alternate arrangements for trades, etc. with other families. No credit is given for time not used due to illness or vacation. Additional care is available on an add-on basis and will be billed when rendered.

MISCELLANEOUS DETAILS

What to Bring?

- 1) A complete change of clothes, LABELED, including extra underwear, socks, and a sweater or sweatshirt, a hat, and rain boots.
- 2) "Home diapers," labeled, if your child is not yet potty-trained. Please bring at least 4 for each day.
- 3) Comfort item/"lovey" (small stuffed animal, blanket, etc.), if needed
- 4) Pacifier and/or bottle, if needed. (Please provide milk or formula for bottles daily or weekly as required.)
- 5) 12oz Water Bottle

Please label absolutely everything with your child's name.

Lunches, Food Safety and Restrictions

Each child brings a lunch each day, to be stored in the child's cubby (with icepack) or in our refrigerator. Lunches are heated in our microwave, if necessary. We use glassware ONLY



to heat food and transfer the food back to the child's container once heated. We serve two nutritious snacks, in the morning and in the afternoon, and provide drinks (water and/or milk) throughout the day. Water is available at all times. A snack menu is posted daily.

Be sure to let us know if your child has any special dietary needs or allergies. We will attempt to provide alternate snacks when possible. If a child has an extreme allergy to a food, such as peanut butter, then that food may be banned from The Duck Pond

In addition, the school provides a list of foods that are choking hazards. Some foods are not allowed at school at all such as chocolate. Whereas some foods are allowed if cut in half, such as grapes and hotdogs.

Each day, careful attention is paid to the contents of each child's lunch, and children are closely supervised while they are eating.

Birthdays

We love celebrating birthdays at The Duck Pond! We usually celebrate after nap (3:00PM). If you would like to provide a treat, please make sure it is a low sugar snack. Involve your child in the decision, and it is certain to be enthusiastically received. Families are welcome to join the celebration.

The Duck Pond Preschool Parent Handbook Acknowledgement



I have received and read The Duck Pond Preschool's operational policies and guidelines for parents (Parent Handbook) and affirm that an electronic copy has been provided for my reference.

Parent Name

Signature

Date

Parent Name

Signature

Date

