

Firefly Preschool



Parent/Teacher Handbook **2020-2021**

A Community Focused Play-Based
Preschool Program

609 Taylor Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368

360.379.1129

Program Director: Laura Faber

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Firefly Preschool at a Glance:

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

At Firefly Preschool we believe children gather and retain information best through a process of discovery that is directed by internal motivation. Socialization is a key component in personal and educational development that needs to be fostered in early childhood experience and education. We believe through play, and developmentally appropriate and intellectually stimulating activities children will achieve better preparedness for lifelong learning.

MISSION STATEMENT

Firefly Preschool provides the highest quality preschool learning environment through nurturing your child's inner teacher, fueling self-discovery and awareness, fostering community connectedness, and facilitating creative and social stimulation in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum at Firefly Preschool will be designed to meet the specific needs of the program participants. We will participate in several hands-on activities, including, but not limited to: life sciences, music, arts and crafts, foreign language exposure, community activities, dramatic arts, pre-reading and pre-math development, outdoor play, creative play, and socialization. In general, our day will follow a routine that compliments the actual energy level of the children. We allow children to choose activities freely during the day, provided they are respectful to their peers, the materials, and the classroom environment.

We incorporate elements of Montessori education in our program, including multi-age/multi-ability classroom settings, self-directed learning, and the process of learning through positive peer-influence while remaining independent and in control of one's choices within set limits. We also have access to Montessori materials, many of which are self-correcting, allowing the child to be his/her own teacher and all have many objectives built into the design. We firmly believe in providing a "prepared environment" to allow for freedom of choice.

We strongly believe –and evidence supports– the theory that children move through developmental stages in a set order, but not necessarily at a set pace; this is one of many reasons we believe in the richness of a multi-age program. Additionally, positive interactions between and among children of different ages provides a framework to develop compassion, leadership, responsibility, accountability, and empathy.

Firefly Preschool Policies and Procedures

Please thoroughly read the policies and procedures outlined in this parent handbook. They were designed to ensure the safety and well being of your children and the quality of our program. Keep this handbook throughout the year to use as a reference guide.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment is open to children ages 2.5 to 6 years old. Children need not be potty-trained, but must be working towards it. We do not discriminate at Firefly Preschool. We invite all children of any background or affiliation. We desire to establish harmonious and complementary relationships with families in our program, so it is essential to share an understanding of the Firefly program.

To reserve a spot in the class, an enrollment fee of \$100, the supply fee equivalent to one month's tuition, tuition agreement, and completed registration paperwork must be received by our administration. Enrollment and supply fees are non-refundable. If the class becomes full, your child's name will be put on a waiting list. The supply fee will not be collected until space becomes available. Once the enrollment procedure begins (Firefly accepts your fees and paperwork) one month's written notice is required to withdraw from the program. Currently-enrolled Fireflies who return their paperwork and fees will be given priority until May 20, 2020, at which point we will open our Fall program up to those on the waiting list.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

The following items must be completed and received by the preschool no later than June 12, 2020. Please contact the director if you are having difficulty meeting this deadline:

1. Registration form, including emergency contacts and medical information, enrollment fee of \$100 for new students, or \$50 for returning students
2. A completed immunization form or statement of non-immunization;
3. Photo release form
4. Supply fee equivalent to one month's tuition
5. Financial agreement and permission slip.

OUR DAY AT FIREFLY:

Loose Routine: Events occur according to a set order, or “routine,” but not necessarily in accordance with the clock on the wall. The routine provides structure to our day while allowing for flexibility between activities.

9:00-10:00 Arrival and Free Work/Play: Children will quietly enter Firefly each morning, hang their coats, and, if they choose, remove their shoes. Some activities will be available on the tables as guided choices. **Some children may spend a good part of this time exploring their environment and socializing with peers.**

10:30 Snack and Stories: Snack will always be available and accessible to the children on an as-needed basis, but we will sit together at this time to socialize, practice manners, and read aloud.

11:00 Circle Time: Discussion of the day’s activities, the weather, short stories or poems, fingerplays, and songs.

11:20-12:15 Outdoor Play/Walk: Group excursion to local community playgrounds. This is the heart of our Community-Based Learning component and may be extended on good weather days.

12:30 Lunchtime: We gather to eat lunch around 12:30. Though we have a set meal time, children are able to eat throughout the day according to when they are hungry.

12:50 Free Choice Work/ Play and Guided Projects: Children are able to continue their morning work and have access to art supplies, manipulatives, dress-up, etc... This is also the time that we offer guided art, science, or craft projects.

1:00-2:00 Flexible Pick Up: Because Firefly offers Flexible Drop Off Times between 9:00am and 10:00am and Flexible Pick Up Times between 1:00pm and 2:00pm, we will have a variety of educational choice activities during those periods. Group activities, field trips, and focused work times will occur between 10:00am and 1:00pm. (Although children can be dropped off and picked up at other times, we have selected windows where it will help with the flow) Children 2.5 to 4 years of age may attend for up to 4 hours each day. 5 year olds may attend more than 4 hours. Punchcard rates apply for additional hours.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

In following Montessori philosophy, and borrowing from other developmental and educational theories, we strive to establish a self-directed learning environment in which very little overt discipline is used. Our goal is to help the children maintain an inner motivation and self-discipline to participate as a member of our classroom community. Children are taught through practice and example to treat their peers, teachers, and materials with care and respect. **Many behavior instances are actually the result of being tired, hungry, or developmentally not having a better way to work through conflict yet.**

We employ redirection, encourage communication, and proactively address the energy level of the classroom as a means to provide a safe and effective learning environment for all. We also encourage the children to self-assess throughout the day. For example: a child's patience is waning and they are becoming easily agitated. We might say: I have noticed you are having a hard time with _____. Do you think you might need a bit of space? (Or), it's been awhile since you had a snack, could you be hungry or thirsty?

We are here to help children become self-aware and learn how to meet their own needs or ask for help from a peer or teacher. We also aim to develop empathy and awareness of others, foster how children positively relate to, understand and help each other. We actively encourage children to be aware of how they are feeling in their bodies and how to express those feelings.

Your child's safety is our number one priority. In cases of continual physical behavior (hitting, pushing, throwing, etc...), we will use "think time" –only if re-direction and proactivity have been unsuccessful. **Think Time is a break or rest, not a punishment.** Many of these behaviors –although undesirable– are considered "normal" within the preschool set. Preschool is the environment where children learn to *use their words* and develop healthy ways of working through small amounts of stress and conflict. We strive to use each instance as a learning experience and to build upon the concepts of self-control, self-reliance, and responsibility, including responsibility to the group. We hope to equip children with a strong sense of self, including self-respect and self-discipline. **We will always take into account developmental stages when applying guidance techniques.**

Children who are dangerous to themselves or others will be sent home where their needs can be better met for the day. If we discover over time that Firefly is not a good fit for your child we will work to help you find a better match. Prior to that, we will schedule a conference with you to overview your child's needs and our available resources. Our goal at Firefly is to create opportunities for success.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Firefly Preschool operates Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Your child may attend up to 4 hours if they are between the ages of 2.5 and 4, or for more than 4 hours if they are 5 or older. Please see our daily routine for advised drop off and pick up times. Please provide a nutritious sack lunch and snack everyday.

Enrollment options are:

2 days: \$275/month

3 days: \$400/month

4 days: \$525/month

5 days: \$600/month

Drop In Punch cards: Allow for flexibility, only pay for hours you use, prepayment required. Limited space is generally available but not guaranteed. All regular drop-in students pay a \$50 annual registration fee. Hours must be purchased in advance.

\$800/100 hours

\$360/40 hours

\$185/20 hours

\$95/10 hours

We offer occasional punch card specials. Significant discount given for more hours purchased in advance. Please inquire with the Director. For siblings, 1 hour deducted for the first child. 1/2 hour deducted for second.

Drop-ins (without a punchcard) are also welcome, space permitting. The fee for a drop-in is \$10/hr. Space is not guaranteed for drop in participants.

TUITION POLICY

Tuition is due on the 25th of the preceding month. It will be considered late after the 1st. A late fee of 10% of your bill will be added after the 1st.

If you choose to pay in full for the year (Sept 2020-June 2021) by August 15th 2020, a discount of 10% will be given. A 5% discount applies to quarterly payments. Tuition paid in advance is non-refundable except in extreme circumstances in which a prorated refund may be offered at the director's discretion, once your child's space is filled.

We offer a 10% multiple-child discount for each child after the first. The first child's tuition is not discounted.

Prorating is not offered. Tuition is the same each month regardless of the number of days in the month. Over the course of the September-June school year, some months will have more sessions than others because of holidays, school closures, and the total number of weeks in each month; these factors do not change monthly tuition. It is essential that the program operate with a consistent budget month-to-month. We require 30-days' written notice if you intend to leave the program. Unless special circumstances exist, we will bill for 1 month's tuition in the case of no notice.

We do not offer make-up days due to illness or vacation. The only make-up days will be for snow-closures. We follow Port Townsend Public Schools in determining snow closure. We observe all major holidays. Firefly reserves the right to offer mini-camps for an additional cost during regular school closures like Winter Break or Spring Break. Otherwise we follow the Port Townsend School District Break Schedule. We recommend Drop-in punch cards for those with unpredictable schedules. You only pay for what you use but space is not guaranteed.

Punchcards must be purchased in advance. Thank you for understanding the business side of our program.

The director reserves the right to exercise discretion.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

ITEMS FROM HOME We cannot be responsible for personal possessions left at school, especially if they are not labeled. Special toys and clothing should not come to school. **The exception being:** There will be "Show-and-Tell" days on which your child can bring a special object from home.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES Your supply fee will cover school supplies, but occasionally you may be asked to provide food or supplies for a party or special project. Your participation in these events is strictly voluntary but always appreciated.

SUPPLY FEE A non-refundable supply fee, equivalent to the amount of one month's tuition, is due no later than June 12th 2020. This fee will serve a dual purpose of holding your child's space in the Fall program and allowing supplies to be ordered in advance for the start of the school year. The Summer supply fee is in addition to the Fall supply fee and will be determined in April 2021.

ARRIVAL Children may be dropped off between 9:00 and 10:00. If you need alternate drop-off and pick-up, please make arrangements in advance with the staff via email at: fireflypreschoolpt@gmail.com. Please quietly enter our classroom so as not to disrupt the focus.

SIGN-IN/SIGN OUT Please sign your child in and out everyday, leaving the phone number where you can be reached, the time you arrived to class, and the name of the person picking up your child. These forms serve as an attendance record.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN If someone who is not listed on the registration form will be picking up your child you must inform the teacher in writing. Include the person's name, and phone number, and the date or dates they will be picking up your child. The teacher will ask for ID of people whom s/he has never met before, so please be prepared.

ILLNESS If your child is sick, please keep him/her at home in consideration for others. **A CHILD WHO HAD A TEMPERATURE OVER 99 DEGREES, RASH, DIFFICULTY BREATHING, VOMITING, OR DIARRHEA IN THE PAST 24 HOURS MAY NOT ATTEND PRESCHOOL.** If a child develops any of the following symptoms at school, a parent will be contacted to pick up the child: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive nasal or chest congestion, discharge from the eyes or ears, head lice, or symptoms of communicable disease such as pink eye. A sick child will be isolated from other children and made as comfortable as possible while waiting to go home. Please notify the teacher if someone in your home has a confirmed case of a communicable disease. You will be notified of exposure to diagnosed cases of communicable diseases at Preschool. **Do not medicate your child with over-the-counter products in order to send them to our program. Thank you for helping to prevent the spread of illness.**

MEDICATION If at all possible, please arrange medication schedules so that your child does not need to take medicine during school hours. If necessary, we will administer medication from its original container labeled with your child's name and dosage schedule. The medicine, and measuring spoon or other supplies for administering the drug, should be packed in a zip-lock bag and given to the teacher (not put in a mailbox or cubby). In addition, the parent must complete an "Authorization of Medication" form and give it to the teacher with the medicine.

ATTIRE AND MISCELLANEOUS

CLOTHES/SHOES Children should be dressed in washable, comfortable clothes for preschool. Even though we recommend wearing smocks for messy activities, children do get dirty and should not have to worry about keeping special outfits clean. We prefer that children wear rubber-soled shoes, as they are safer when playing outside or going for walks about town. It is helpful and empowering if children can put their own shoes on. Rubber boots are great, as are velcro-fastened shoes.

EXTRA CLOTHES Please bring an extra set of clothing for your child on the first day of school. Please put the clothes in a large zip-lock bag with your child's name on it. Include socks and shoes if you think it is necessary. These clothes will be stored in the classroom and will be given back to you at the end of the school year.

BIRTHDAYS Birthdays are very important! If you would like to send a special treat to celebrate your child's birthday at school, please discuss your plans with the teacher. Invitations to private parties may be placed in school cubbies only if all children in the class are invited.

COMMUNICATION

Please notify us if your child will be late or absent. If it is a planned absence you may email us at fireflypreschoolpt@gmail.com. For unexpected absences or lateness please call the school at (360) 379-1129. If you prefer to send a text message, please message Laura Faber, our Director, at (360) 821-1602. This is also a good number in the event you need to contact us while we are at the park.

There are many times throughout the school year when we need to communicate with parents by phone, email, or letter. It is essential that we have correct addresses and phone numbers. Notify the teacher in writing to update your child's records for changes of address, phone number, email, emergency contact information, and any other relevant and important contact information.

CONFERENCES In the event that there is a problem or concern about your child, please try to discuss the issue with the teacher first by phoning after class time, emailing, or by sending a note. If you desire a parent-teacher conference, please make arrangements with the teacher. **PLEASE do not try to have a conference with the teachers at drop-off or pick-up time; their attention must stay focused on the children to ensure everyone's safe arrival and departure. If you would like to talk to the teacher, ask to be phoned later in the day or send an email. Thank you!** We strive to keep parents in the loop by informing you of your child's daily activities and experiences.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT Parents are encouraged to participate in Firefly Preschool. If you would be willing to share a hobby, play an instrument, talk about your job, bring in an animal, or anything you think might enrich the learning experience, please discuss it with the teacher, we would love to have you with us. We will also need chaperones and possible drivers for field trips, refreshments for parties, and help with other special events. If there is any other way you would like to help, please let the teachers know.

Tuition Agreement/Intent to Attend 2020/2021

Enrollment at Firefly is based on the September-June School Year. Once the enrollment process begins, 30 days written notice is required to withdraw from the program. In the case of no notice one full month's tuition will be required at the time of separation. Once the school year begins your child's place is reserved solely for your child. Prorating is not offered as we are not able to fill spaces short-term if you will be taking a vacation or in the case of illness. Severe instances will be given special consideration. In general, Firefly will follow the Port Townsend School District Schedule, with a few exceptions noted on the calendar. Some months will have more sessions than others. Tuition is the same for all 10 months.

An enrollment fee of \$100 is required in order to reserve your child's space. If you have previously paid an enrollment fee to Firefly **and have had continuous enrollment since Fall 2019**, your enrollment fee is \$50.

* The Summer program, July-August is separate from our regular school year and the enrollment/supply fees are separate from Fall fees, so if you began in July 2020 and paid the Summer enrollment and supply fee an additional \$75 enrollment fee is due for the Fall.

A non-refundable supply fee, equivalent to one month's tuition is due by June 12th. This fee applies to all new and continuing students.

Monthly Tuition is due by the 25th of the preceding month. Tuition is considered late after the 1st and a 10% late fee will be applied to your bill. If you are having financial difficulties notify the director immediately so that a mutually-agreeable solution can be reached.

My child, _____, will attend (please specify days of the week) _____
_____. Thirty days written notice is required to withdraw from the program once the enrollment process begins. My monthly financial responsibility is _____, based on the current tuition schedule.

I have included the \$100/\$50 non-refundable enrollment fee* and the non-refundable supply fee, equivalent to one month's tuition. By signing below, I acknowledge and accept full financial responsibility for the participation of my child in the Firefly Program and agree to give thirty days written notice in the case of withdrawal or I am responsible for paying one month's tuition.

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date Rec.: _____

General Walking and Bus Ride Permission Slip

I give my child, _____, permission to participate in walks on various dates from Firefly Preschool located at 609 Taylor St, Port Townsend, WA 98368. I understand my child will always be with an adult staff member and that my child may visit local businesses. My child may also participate in walks including but not limited to Pope Marine Park, The Rec Center Gym and Playground, Port Townsend Library, and Chetzemoka Park. My child may participate on field trips on Jefferson County Transit busses. The destination will be announced and posted at the school prior to departure.

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Photo Release Form

I understand that my child may be photographed while participating in activities at Firefly Preschool and that those photos may be posted on our website and/or Facebook, printed in school literature, or in the local newspaper.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Withdrawal Notification

I agree to give 30 business days notice prior to withdrawing my child from the program once the enrollment process begins. I agree to pay one month's tuition if I fail to give notice. Extreme circumstances will be given special consideration. This policy also applies to changing or reducing days. Summer programming is separate than the September through June School year. Different fees and policies may apply to provide flexibility during July and August.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

FIREFLY ENROLLMENT FORM:

CHILD'S NAME: _____ CHILD'S BIRTHDATE: _____

CHILD'S ADDRESS: _____

PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' NAMES AND ADDRESS(ES): _____

EMAIL ADDRESSES: _____

PARENTS' PHONE NUMBERS (in order of most reachable):

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME, PHONE, ADDRESS:

1)

2)

*Are these people authorized to pick up your child in case of emergency?

CHILD'S ALLERGIES, FOOD SENSITIVITIES, AND/OR RESTRICTIONS:

CHILD'S PHYSICIAN AND CHILD'S DENTIST (name, address and phone):

Physician: _____

Dentist: _____

INSURANCE PROVIDER: _____

MEDICAL RELEASE:

I understand that in the case of serious injury or emergency 911 will be called and my child, _____, will be transported to the local emergency department via emergency transport. If I cannot be contacted I authorize appropriate treatment measures be administered in my absence. I have listed my contact numbers in order of most reachable above.

Parent Name: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

GETTING TO KNOW YOU:

Please include information about spouses, partners, or caregivers as well!

ANYTHING WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD IN ORDER TO SERVE HIM/HER BEST?

Does your child have siblings? Names? Ages?

Does your child have pets?

How do you handle discipline at home? We strive for consistency within reason, so please be specific

Do you want to participate in our classroom as a volunteer?