



## **Parent Handbook**

*Welcome to Geist Orchard Cooperative Preschool!*

Geist Orchard Cooperative Preschool is a very special place. Why? Because YOU ARE THERE! Once upon a time there was a small group of parents with young children. Each parent had the feeling that their child was now ready for more experiences outside the home but that they were too young to send off by themselves. Physically and mentally they were growing and would benefit from child-sized playground equipment, big blocks, paints, clay, and puzzles as well as new playmates. However, most of their homes and budgets were too small to provide all of these opportunities.

These parents realized that if each of them shared their child, a bit of their time, and a good measure of enthusiasm, they could provide what they wished for their children. So, they banded together and elected officers. They provided a place to meet, secured equipment, hired a teacher to give their program continuity, and then volunteered to spend two mornings or so a month as a helper in the classroom. These parents wanted to be a part of their child's early adventures into the world, and so do you!

Geist Orchard is delighted that St. George Orthodox Church has agreed to house our preschool in their St. Thekla house. We moved to this location in August 2016. They are thrilled to be our home! Our children will be taught to show respect for the church and the property at all times.

This booklet will provide you with some of the basic information you need to quickly become comfortable with your role in our school. At the heart of our program, you will find the "*cooperative spirit*." Everyone contributes to the success of the preschool.

- Know what it means to be a member. Read the policies, bylaws, and handbooks
- Learn about your particular role/job at the school
- Stay informed (read emails, check the website, join "GOCP Families" on Facebook!)
- Try to do things with enthusiasm – it's contagious!
- Ask questions when in doubt—go to the source for the straight scoop
- Attend parent meetings and education opportunities
- Chat with your teacher
- Enjoy going to preschool with your child!

### **What to Wear**

Children and participating parents should wear comfortable, washable play clothes. Children will come home with finger paint, playdough, and other substances on their clothes. Comfortable, safe shoes, enclosing the entire foot, are best for use on our climbing equipment. Our children will be going outdoors each day, weather

permitting, so please dress your child appropriately for outdoor play. Boots should be large enough to slip on easily, and all outerwear should be labeled. In cold weather, make sure your child has a hat, scarf and mittens.

### **Do Parents Stay?**

Some parents may need to stay for the first few days of school. If you feel your child will need you to stay, please do not bring other children with you to school. Talk with your teacher about ways to make the transition successful. Children each adjust in their own way and at their own rate. Let your child linger near you until something interesting takes him or her into the group. Do not be disturbed if, during the first days of school, your child:

- Is shy in the group
- Stands around or wants to cling to you
- Hits a child in play
- Refuses to take turns
- Cries

Remember that watching is a form of participating. Do not try to entertain your child. Let your child stand and watch if that is what feels comfortable for him or her. If you feel that your child is ready to stay without you, tell him or her you are leaving and will return.

Almost all children will be comfortable in the classroom within a few weeks; they will soon eagerly look forward to their days at school!

### **Health Guidelines**

The following guidelines are provided to assist parents in making decisions about sending children to preschool when ill. This also applies to participating parents. Any child with the following symptoms should not attend class:

- Any temperature above normal (temperature must be normal for 24 hours prior to the start of class)
- Diarrhea or vomiting the night before class
- Drainage from the nose that is yellow or greenish in color
- Rash of unknown origin
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis), chicken pox, strep throat, or any other communicable disease or infection
- Consider keeping your child at home if he/she has any of the following symptoms in the 24 hours prior to the start of class: earache, severe headache, nausea, vomiting, sore throat

Teachers may ask you to come pick up your child if he or she is showing visible signs of illness. Please update your child's health record throughout the year.

### **Arrivals and Departures**

Please park in the lot across from GOCP (the St. Thekla home). The classroom door will be closed to all except participating parents and their children until the time class is to begin. After this, the teacher will be ready to greet each child as he or she arrives. Please help your child stow his or her belongings in the appropriate cubby or closet. Encourage your child to do as much for him/herself as possible. Check the bulletin board for notices from your teacher. Your child should also bring a labeled backpack to carry home all artwork. An adult must accompany your child to and from the classroom.

### **When You Are a Participating Parent**

Arrive at school at least 15 minutes before your class is to begin. Participating parents meet with the teacher to discuss the plans for the day and prepare the room for the day's activities. You are required to bring the snack on participation days, except for Twigs enrichment days when students bring their lunches. Other children in the family do not come on participating days. You may exchange babysitting with other parents in your class. ***It is your responsibility to exchange with someone whenever you cannot participate on your scheduled day.*** Notify the teacher and class representative of any schedule changes. Also, let your class rep know if you are unable to substitute as a participating parent on short notice.

### **Snack**

A participating parent is responsible for supplying snack. Only nutritious snacks will be served (fruit and vegetables only) and should be prepped and cut at school. Sometimes the teacher plans a classroom cooking experience and may request the participating parents bring specific ingredients instead of a regular snack. The Health Department requires that we bring in snacks that are store bought and unopened. Unfortunately, we cannot serve homemade snacks. Check with teachers and be respectful of any food allergies. *We are a nut-free school.*

Here are some snack ideas:

- raisins
- raw sweet potato fries
- broccoli
- cauliflower
- raw sweet peas
- cucumber
- tangerines/clementines
- celery sticks
- dried mango
- banana chips
- dried papaya
- apple chips
- radishes
- apricots
- prunes
- plums
- watermelon
- cantaloupe
- honey dew melon
- peaches
- pears
- pineapple
- cherry tomatoes
- bell pepper strips

### **Drinks**

You may send a water bottle with your child each day. If a child does not bring his or her own water bottle, we use disposable or reusable cups with water only.

### **“The Value of Play”**

The preschool is carefully planned to provide a variety of learning centers and interest areas that are equipped with age-appropriate educational “play” materials and equipment. For children, play is both their work and their pleasure. It is an integral part of a child's development. These activities are provided in the preschool program to help develop physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills in young children.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

In the classroom, a simple celebration of each child's birthday is most appropriate. If your child's birthday is during the summer months, arrangements can be made to celebrate his/her birthday during the school year.

The parent usually participates that day. A special snack to share with the group will make the day special for your child. Birthday invitations may be passed out if the entire class is going to be invited.

### **Field Trips**

We feel that the greatest learning in preschool takes place right in the classroom. We will enrich our classroom program with the special skills of our parents and community resources. We hope you will share your talents with us! We will take some field trips during the school year. You will know well in advance the dates for any trips.

### **Parent/Teacher Conference**

Teacher conferences with parents are planned once or twice during the school year. Talk to the teacher whenever you have a question or concern. They can understand your child more fully if you bring to her attention any special needs.

### **Snow Days**

When classes for the Hamilton Southeastern Schools are canceled due to inclement weather, our preschool will be closed, but 2-hour delays at Hamilton Southeastern Schools will not always be followed by GOCP. We will post our own school closings on our website and Facebook page.

### **Classroom Participation Training (CPT)**

Attendance at six hours of professionally led orientation is required of each new participating member. These sessions are held in the fall at our preschool. Our parents are from diverse backgrounds. An orientation program gives us a basic foundation from which to build in working together on behalf of our children. During CPT, time will be spent observing the classes, followed by a discussion on such topics as:

- What makes a good preschool program
- Parent/child relationships
- Individual and age-level differences
- Our role as participating parents in the classroom

The co-op, wishing to make orientation as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, provides refreshments for you. Child-care will be worked out as needed.

### **Parent Education**

The purpose of the Parent Education Program is to help parents grow in their understanding of their children in the preschool setting, as well as in the home, and to feel more confident as parents and individuals. Education is a continuing process. Accordingly, programs are planned to provide enriching and informative activities. It is required that you attend at least 3 hours' worth of these meetings. You may be asked to help bring refreshments for one of these meetings. Occasionally, we may hold events in the evening or on a weekend for the entire family to attend in place of an "educational" meeting.

### **Tuition**

Tuition is due on the first of the month. We accept PayPal (check "Friends and Family" option) and checks. Make checks payable to GOCP. Place checks and cash in the tuition box. It will be considered late on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month and a late fee will be assessed.

**Board of Directors**

The Board positions of President, First Vice President (Membership), Second Vice President (CPT/Parent Education), Secretary, Treasurer, and Fundraising Chair are elected by our membership in the spring for the next school year. Additional Board positions are Class Representatives and Publicity. Job descriptions for these positions as well as all other jobs are available and should be read so that you understand your responsibilities. The Board meets monthly and all members of our school are invited and encouraged to attend.

**Who to Call**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Who to Call</b>
If you cannot volunteer as a working parent on your assigned day	Call another parent in your class to exchange dates
If you have questions regarding classroom routine or discipline, or you need to make a change in your child's emergency information	Teacher
Parent education/CPT class	Parent Education Chair
If you have a question about your preschool job	Jobs Coordinator
When your child is sick and will not be attending school	Teacher
Questions regarding tuition	Treasurer
Questions regarding working parent schedules or general co-op questions	Class Representative
Change of address or phone	VP of Membership
Questions about fundraising events	Fundraising Chair
Any other questions	President

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