



Parent Handbook

School Year 2019 - 2020

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Welcome

Dear Parents and Guardians,

At the Nursery School we strive to provide a great learning environment for each and every child in our care. We recognize that a strong partnership with parents and clarity about expectations for how we will work together in this effort are critical. Please take time to read through this Parent Handbook and to familiarize yourself with its content. It provides important information and helpful guidance. We ask parents to know and follow the procedures and rules contained in this Handbook. We hope it will become your go-to source for information.

Nikki Scheele, Director

At Washington University Nursery School, we believe that every child is a unique individual with his or her own pattern and timetable for social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth.

We believe in learning through play; we provide fun, child-centered activities that effectively engage students. We encourage creativity in all areas with a special focus on the arts to enhance language and thinking. Above all, our goals are that children will develop a genuine pleasure in learning, that they develop confidence in their ability to learn and to accomplish challenging tasks and that they gain experience and skills in interacting with others.

Philosophy

Washington University Nursery School teachers are attentive to individual needs, serving as catalysts to spark each child's interests and desire to experiment and explore. Our school provides a safe, nurturing environment that encourages growth and independence in all developmental areas.

The philosophy of the nursery school is that children learn most effectively through play. Our approach is "hands-on," where children act upon what they are learning and feeling. We consider the process more important than the product. Teachers provide the opportunity for children to interact with their environment in ways that are meaningful to them. For each class, teachers develop a curriculum that reflects the interests and abilities of the children in the classroom. In addition, all children actively participate with specialists in science, art, music and Spanish. As trends in the field of early education change, we evaluate what is new and determine if it would be enriching for our program.

Vision Statement

Washington University Nursery School:

- Values children for their wonder and curiosity, their ideas and creativity, and their delight in play.

- Values families for their traditions and goals, their commitment to home, work, play, community, and their dreams for their children.
- Values teachers for their vision, their job in children's play and achievements, their flexibility and skill, and their commitment and compassion. We support and respect what we learn from each other.

Parent School Partnership

When joined by a common set of beliefs and purposes, a school and its parents form a powerful team with far-reaching positive effects on children and the entire school community. As a result, WUNS relies on its parents to understand and embrace the School's philosophy and values, and fully support its curriculum, teachers/staff, and administration. Working together, parents and school professionals exert a strong influence on children's development and help them to mature by modeling healthy adult working relationships based on honesty, trust, civility, and mutual respect. The teachers, staff, and administration of WUNS share our parents' commitment to their children and join them in partnership dedicated to the growth of each child. This partnership begins with timely, honest and open communication between home and school, and is premised on an assumption of goodwill and a shared interest in what is best for each individual child. Parents can best support this climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns openly and constructively to the teacher. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached, the parent should then contact the Director. Out of respect for the individual needs and privacy of each family, the Nursery School places a high value on confidentiality and expects individual families to honor the same. Efforts to lobby other parents are contrary to the spirit of the Parent School Partnership. By enrolling their child(ren) in WUNS, parents agree to support the School's vision, follow its rules and policies, and abide by its decisions. Just as parents can expect the Nursery School to share timely information and concerns with families concerning their child, so too the Nursery School expects parents to approach issues and concerns in a spirit of mutual goodwill, using proper channels, and in a manner that gives everyone the benefit of the doubt and leads to collaborative and constructive solutions. While parents may not agree with every decision, in most cases, the parents and Nursery School will find enough common ground to continue a mutually respectful and productive relationship. However, when it is clear that a constructive, positive relationship cannot be maintained, the School reserves the right to deny continued attendance or re-enrollment.

History

The Washington University Nursery School was founded in 1947 as a cooperative venture of faculty and Washington University in St. Louis. The primary purpose of the nursery school is to provide the highest quality preschool program for children 2 years and 7 months to 5 years of age. Today about 70 percent of the children are from families of Washington University in St. Louis faculty, staff and students, and the remaining are from families in the community.

Children come from a variety of countries, cultures and economic backgrounds. The school maintains the high standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, by which it is accredited. It is licensed by the State of Missouri.

The nursery school also serves as a site for research in child development. Washington University undergraduate and graduate students are employed to assist in the classrooms. The classroom teachers, as well as the nursery school's director, supervise them. The student workers' presence enables children to receive additional individual attention.

The nursery school is located on the Washington University campus. It is composed of three classrooms, which are designed to offer children a variety of choices in their play. Two additional all-purpose rooms are equipped with a library and a variety of indoor gross motor play materials. A large outdoor play area gives children the opportunity to run, bike, swing, climb, slide and play in the sand.

Staff

The staff at the nursery school respects and appreciates the talents and personalities of each child and his or her family. A teacher's individual talents are also encouraged as she or he develops his or her own personal approach in the classroom. This makes for a vibrant, growing community of children, families and teachers.

In general, teachers hold a Bachelor or Master degree in early childhood or elementary education and/or teaching. All have extensive early childhood teaching experience. (<https://nurseryschool.wustl.edu/about/staff/>)

Professional development is an ongoing process at WUNS. The school pays fees for workshops and conferences during the year. In addition, there are two teacher in-service days and monthly staff meetings. All teachers are certified in CPR and First Aid.

Curriculum

At Washington University Nursery School, we believe that children are unique individuals with their own patterns and timetables for social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. We support and encourage their development through our child-centered, process-oriented, play-based curriculum built on Constructivist theories and practices. Guided by the teachings of educational theorists including Piaget, Dewey, Vygotsky, DeVries, and others, we create a learning environment that addresses the developmental needs of the whole child by:

- Structuring classroom experiences around ideas and topics that are relevant to the students, with the understanding that knowledge is constructed through language, discussion, experimentation, and manipulation of objects that are meaningful to them.
- Offering learning experiences that appeal to multiple senses and that provide hands-on activities using materials that encourage exploration, investigation, and learning.
- Allowing each child to interact with the environment at his/her own pace, and creating opportunities for children to explore individually, with a partner, or with a larger group of peers.

- Asking open-ended questions, allowing students the time to thoughtfully form responses, listening respectfully to their answers, and gently guiding them toward the answers they seek as they develop enhanced reasoning skills.
- Respecting students' ideas, encouraging independent thinking, and empowering students to become problem solvers.
- Using the wonderful resource of our diverse, multi-cultural population to highlight the similarities and differences between individuals, families, and cultures, celebrating the unique environment that is Washington University Nursery School.

The Washington University Nursery School's open curriculum framework is presented to children in ways that are developmentally appropriate and based on our philosophy that children learn most effectively through play. Using a learning center approach, each teaching team offers experiences in art, writing, science, dramatic play, blocks, manipulatives, and literacy. Teacher planning takes into account the social, emotional, intellectual, and physical developmental needs of the child.

Classroom Information

Our classes focus on social development and learning through play. Each year's class builds on the previous year's program in curriculum experiences and activities offered. The classrooms are set up to invite exploration and foster a lifelong love of learning. Our staff is deeply committed to the young child and the importance of early childhood education.

Two's/Young Three's: Children must turn 3 by February 1 of that school year. The focus of this class is on social development and learning through play. Separating from parents, learning to take direction, and being nurtured by people outside of immediate family are important milestones for this age. The building of trust and growing peer awareness are enhanced by a safe environment that provides a foundation for learning.

Three's/Young Four's: The emphasis in this class is to encourage further socialization by reinforcing how a child's choices affect their relationships and environment. There are greater expectations for participation and appropriate play practices. This class fosters independence, creativity, cognitive growth, and motor coordination. Children are introduced to phonemic awareness, patterning, number sequencing with value recognition and following both verbal and visual directions.

Four's/Young Five's: The intent of this class is to further support the development of social awareness, emotional intelligence, and Kindergarten readiness skills. Critical thinking, science, sequencing, sorting and classification, matching, number values, phonemic awareness, problem solving, storytelling and following multi-step directions are all incorporated in our curriculum. Children develop their gross and fine motor skills while working in large and small groups. Through play and collaborative group work, children come to appreciate the value of cooperation and contribution. The children are encouraged to take risks, helping them discover how the process of learning is often more valuable than the outcome. Mastering appropriate academic skills and fostering social emotional growth are the cornerstones of this program.

Bear Tracks

The Bear Tracks program provides an extension of classroom activities for children who are enrolled in the half-day program. Children who attend Bear Tracks are ready for more than half-day classes but perhaps not full-day schedules.

Bear Tracks is offered Tuesday through Friday, 9:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., for afternoon students and Monday through Friday, 11:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., for morning students. Parents may enroll their children for participation in Bear Tracks for any or all days it is offered.

In addition to free choice, outdoor time and a snack, the daily Bear Tracks schedule includes a special activity. These activities are designed to engage a smaller, multi-age group of children in hands-on learning in a specialized content area, such as art, science, movement or literacy. Bear Trackers, for example, might take a nature hike one day, create an art project the next, or dramatize a story in any particular week.

The main goal for the Bear Tracks program is to continue the progress children are making in their regular classroom within a varied and creative curriculum. Children must be toilet-trained to enroll in Bear Tracks.

Home and School Communication

Orientation Day

This visiting day is usually the day after Labor Day and gives the child and parent(s) an opportunity to visit the classroom and meet the teachers and classmates. This visit is one hour. It will allow time for the child to enjoy free play and also gives parent(s) a brief overview of what to expect during the school year.

The next day, a child will attend school on his/her own (either Wednesday or Thursday, see orientation schedule). The class is divided in half, attending on either Wednesday or Thursday. This schedule allows the children and teachers to interact with a small group before the entire class attends on Friday.

Parent-Staff Communication

Communication is ongoing throughout the year. Newsletters, the school website and emails give you information on current themes, activities and upcoming events. Phone calls and/or emails by classroom teachers to discuss your child's adjustment, observations and/or concerns are common. If you feel you need to speak to a teacher or the director, please email or call the office. Teachers can be reached by phone or email after the school day is over.

Assessment and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Assessment is an ongoing process at WUNS. Teachers interact with children in their play, conversations and observations both in the classrooms and during outdoor play. Teachers

keep notes on each child, writing about strengths and weaknesses in all areas of their development. Assessment includes checklists, timelines and examples of the children's writings and pictures. Teaching teams meet weekly to discuss each child and plan activities in their program to enhance needed skills for children.

The school has two Parent Conferences during the school year. The fall conference is an informal, getting-to-know-the-child-and-family discussion. The spring conference includes a more detailed, written assessment. A parent-teacher conference can be scheduled at any time during the year as needed and by request of parents and/or teachers.

Discipline

The staff and director at WUNS work to maintain a very positive and nurturing environment for each child. Classroom limits are necessary to provide a sense of order and allow teachers to spend as much time as possible providing a stimulating environment for each child. Our rule of thumb is that children keep themselves safe, keep friends safe, and the toys at school safe.

The staff is trained to anticipate potentially problematic situations; they remind children of appropriate behavior and redirect or intervene when necessary. In most cases, teachers can stop or re-direct behavior before something negative occurs. If not, teachers will first consult the injured party to make sure they are emotionally and physically okay. Then, they will turn their attention to the child who might need more support in "keeping their friends safe" or, more likely, "keeping their bodies safe" with others. Reflection over what has occurred will lead to discovering other behavior options and resolving things with the peer.

Encouragement and pride in self is the basis of our discipline policy. Our aim is to have the children manage their own actions and reactions. The teachers and staff will help children learn and develop skills that they need to display appropriate behavior. This is done through:

- Positive reinforcement.
- Anticipating unhealthy social interaction.
- Re-direction: guiding a child toward appropriate, socially positive activities.
- Naming and validating child's feelings
- Expressing disappointment or disapproval in a respectful and constructive manner.
- Simple, logical and immediate consequences.

When inappropriate behavior is a continuing problem, the school will work with parents to understand the issue and make appropriate recommendations. It is our goal to make school a positive, rewarding and enjoyable experience for each child. We realize, however, that we cannot meet the needs of all children and parents. If it is determined that a child is not growing from his/her preschool experience at the Nursery School, a discussion will be held with parents at which it may be decided that this program is not appropriate for the child. The director and teachers will make recommendations of other preschool programs and relevant community services if parents so desire.

Policies and Procedures

Parking

Free parking is available adjacent to the Nursery School. These three, 30-minute spots are typically available during the school day. Parking in Zone 3 is only permitted with a Yellow Zone 3 parking pass. Parents and visitors wishing to have a longer visit should park in the Millbrook or Snow Way parking garages, located off Throop Drive and Snow Way. Visitor parking in these lots is \$2.00 for the first two hours. The Nursery School will provide validation tickets to parents that park in the garage for special school events.

Clothing

It is recommended that children be dressed in play clothes that are comfortable, washable, and suitable for activities both indoors and outdoors. Children need to have at least one extra set of clothing appropriate to the season that can be kept at school. Parents should be aware of weather conditions and dress children accordingly, as outdoor play is an integral part of the daily schedule. During the winter months our general guideline for outdoor play is that we will usually go outside when it is above 20 degrees, with wind chill taken into account. Please mark your child's name in permanent marker on all clothing so that it can be easily identified.

Snacks

The nursery school provides a healthy snack each day for the children. Fresh fruit (apples, oranges, pears, bananas, melons, etc.) are purchased each week and kept in the "children's refrigerator." There are a wide variety of crackers (soda, graham, Ritz, Goldfish, etc.) available. Snack time consists of a fruit, crackers and water. The older children learn to pour their own water.

Birthday Celebrations

We celebrate each child's birthday (or half-birthday for children with summer dates). If desired, talk with your child's teacher about bringing a special snack to share with the class.

Holidays

We are fortunate to have diverse cultures and religious beliefs in our nursery school community. Our policy is to celebrate family traditions, not the religious aspects, of holidays.

Field Trips

Teachers frequently plan short walking trips on campus. Occasionally, trips are planned off-campus to further enhance the children's experiences. Each time an off-campus trip is

planned, parents will be notified in advance and required to sign a form granting permission for the child's participation.

Medication

The nursery school encourages parents to administer medications at home and **not** at school. The nursery school staff does not routinely administer medications to the children. Also, we do not apply sunscreen or insect repellent. Medication that absolutely needs to be administered during school hours must be cleared with the director.

Allergies

If your child has a known allergic reaction, this must be documented on the child's History and Health Record kept in his/ her file in the office. Also, please report these allergies to the classroom teachers. For your child's safety, these allergies will be posted in your child's classroom. If you object to this information being posted, please contact the director. In case of severe allergies such as to bee stings or nuts, an EpiPen Injector Kit may be kept at the nursery school and used by the director and/or teachers who are trained in its administration. This is stored in the emergency backpack in the child's classroom. Each classroom has a First Aid Kit that includes the EpiPen (if required). This, along with emergency medical forms for every child, accompanies the classes on all walking or driving field trips.

Peanut and Tree Nut Policy

A growing number of children deal with food allergies and, specifically, potentially life-threatening peanut and tree nut allergies. Washington University Nursery School will be a peanut- and tree nut-free (Brazil nuts, almonds, cashews, pistachios, walnuts, pecans, and hazelnuts) preschool beginning with the 2017-2018 school year. The full explanation of the [Peanut and Tree Nut Policy](#) describes how teachers and families will support the efforts of safeguarding the health and safety of the children.

Accidents

The nursery school makes every effort to ensure the safety of all children. However, should a serious accident occur, a parent is immediately contacted. If parents and emergency contacts cannot be reached, we will take your child to the hospital designated on your enrollment form. Minor injuries will be reported to you by your child's teacher at pick-up. All injuries will also be reported in written form and given to you at pickup time. We will ask you to sign an identical form to be placed in your child's file at school.

Health Policy

The nursery school makes a great effort to provide a healthy environment for your children. We work diligently on forming healthy habits such as washing hands before eating or handling food, and after toileting. Our dishes and cups are put through a dishwasher/sanitizer to sterilize them and to prevent the spread of germs. The rooms are thoroughly

cleaned daily and checked for safety. However, despite everyone's best efforts, children and adults will get sick. It is an expected part of life. If children become ill at school, they will be cared for in the office until a parent can pick them up.

Parents are requested to keep their child home in the event of the diseases or symptoms noted below. The child will be allowed to return to school when he or she has been free of these symptoms and has not required medication for a minimum of 24 hours. If a symptom persists (such as rash or cough), or if a communicable disease is confirmed (measles, chicken pox, etc.), returning to school may require a statement from the child's physician declaring that the condition is no longer contagious.

PLEASE CALL the nursery school to inform us that your child is sick, especially if he/ she has a communicable disease. Communicable diseases or conditions include:

strep throat	chicken pox	measles
mumps	impetigo	conjunctivitis
hepatitis A	diarrheal diseases	lice
scabies	pinworm	ringworm
certain other viral or bacterial infections		

Also, the following symptoms could indicate a contagious disease:

fever	lethargy
diarrhea	sore throat
vomiting	reddened, weeping eyes
skin eruptions / rash	constant sneezing / productive cough
runny nose	

If your child is exposed to or contracts a communicable disease, it is essential that you call the nursery school to tell us. In turn, we will send a letter home to inform parents that your child has been exposed to a communicable disease.

Tuition 2019 - 2020

Tuition can be paid by the year, by the semester, or by the month. Monthly payments are due on the first day of each month.

Half-day Session: \$500 per month
 \$4500 per year

Full-day Session: \$1105 per month
 \$9945 per year

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

All traffic for arrival and dismissal must proceed from the parking lot entrance west of the school, driving east and stopping at the school entrance. Drivers stay in their cars and

teachers help the children enter and exit. Teachers are outside for arrival of children at 8:50 a.m. for the morning session and 12:30 p.m. for the afternoon session. At no time should your child be allowed to exit your car without a teacher present. If you arrive late, you must escort your child to the classroom. At dismissal (11:45 a.m. and 3:15 p.m.) children assemble outside the front door on benches or, in inclement weather, inside the front door. The teachers bring children to their cars. No child can be dismissed to anyone other than persons designated (in writing) by the parents. Your child must hold hands with a teacher or parent when in front of the school in the drop-off/pick-up area.

Emergency Procedures

We have effective, campus-supported policies at the Nursery School to keep your children safe. Below you will find our Emergency Procedures. We have a safety drill each month, and all staff is informed of procedures, locations of first aid kits and emergency medications, and emergency meeting locations.

In case of FIRE

- Short bell rings alert you to a fire or drill.
- Close doors and evacuate in a calm manner through the nearest exit, as designated on our evacuation map.
- Stay in the designated outdoor area until cleared to reenter.

In case of SEVERE WEATHER

- One long continuous bell ring alerts you to severe weather, i.e. tornado threat.
- Take shelter under tables or in a hallway or bathroom.
- Assume tornado position when threat is imminent.
- Stay in the designated area until cleared to reenter classrooms.

In case of LOCKDOWN

- If the WU Emergency Alert System is activated and announces, “Go to secure area” a whistle will be blown.
- Children will be moved out of sight to the designated safe area in the school.
- Teachers will have cell phones to get emergency information from the WU Emergency headquarters to follow accordingly.
- No one will be permitted to enter or leave the building unless evacuation is necessary.
- If possible, an emergency email/text will be sent out explaining the circumstance.
- Lockdown will continue until the school receives an “all clear” signal from WU emergency personnel.

Parent Notification Procedure:

- Parents will be notified of campus emergencies and evacuations through the **WUSTL Mobile app**, which is the fastest and easiest way for anyone — with or without a Washington University email address — to receive emergency alerts. The app is available for [iOS](#) or [Android](#). Note that it is important that you enable push notifications to receive alerts.
- The school has an emergency preparedness bag easily accessible with all contact information, allergy information, and other necessities.
- WUNS staff will attempt to send out an emergency email/text explaining the situation as much as possible, as a follow up to the all-campus emergency alert.

Inclement Weather

The nursery school, as a department within Washington University, follows the university policy for school closings as a result of inclement weather. It is university policy that faculty and staff members should report to work and leave work at their regularly scheduled times. Should weather conditions create potentially hazardous travel, the vice chancellor for human resources will evaluate the severity of the situation and, in consultation with the executive vice chancellors, determine the appropriate measures to be taken. Factors to be considered will include the safety of our faculty, staff and students as well as the services that must be provided despite the severe weather. In the event that the decision is made to dismiss employees early, the staff of the Office of Human Resources will contact the various executive vice chancellors, vice chancellors and deans, who, in turn, will be responsible for communicating this decision to faculty and staff members. A nursery school staff member would then relay that decision to the parent community via phone and/or email.

Referral Process for Children with Special Needs

It is the policy at the nursery school that after school is underway and teachers have had time to observe children in the classroom, a teacher who feels help is needed in understanding the behavior of a child in the classroom will ask the director to come and observe. After reviewing our observations, we schedule an appointment with the parents to discuss the school behavior. In the course of that meeting, we may request that a community professional evaluate the child in the classroom. This observation may result in a request for further evaluation. If needed, community facilities that better serve the child's needs may be recommended to the parents.

Confidentiality Statement

The records kept on families enrolled at the nursery school are confidential. Staff may not share information on file with others without written permission from a parent or guardian. Information received while in the performance of duties, either written or verbal, shall also be considered confidential and shall be treated the same as written information contained in the child's file.

The nursery school adheres to the Code of Ethics created by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This document provides guidelines for responsible behavior and establishes a common ground for early childhood professionals to resolve

ethical and moral issues encountered in daily practice. The foundation for the Code of Ethics is a commitment to quality early childhood practices, including providers' goals to:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique, valuable part of the human life.
- Base program practices on knowledge of child development.
- Appreciate and support the child/family bond.
- Understand children in the context of their family, culture and society.
- Respect the uniqueness and worth of children, family members and colleagues.
- Develop helpful relationships based on trust, respect and positive regard.

Special Programs

School Picnic

Families are invited to a school gathering at the beginning and end of the school year. "Popsicles at the Park" is held the week prior to school starting. This fun family event at Shaw Park allows children and parents to get acquainted with new classmates and their teachers. The last week of school families gather for a dinner/potluck at Shaw Park to celebrate the culmination of the year.

Open House

In October, WUNS holds an "open house" for current children and their families. This event allows parents and siblings to visit the child's classroom, meet the teachers and play on the playground. Children are excited to "show-off" their school to their family.

After-school Playdates

We arrange times throughout the year to have the WUNS playground open after school from 3:15-5:00 p.m. so children and their families can play. Siblings are welcome to join. All children must have a parent or caregiver present to attend.

Halloween Parade

Parents are invited to our annual Halloween parade followed by songs and snack in their child's classroom. An invitation and details will be shared with all parents.

Donuts with Dads and Muffins with Moms

Parents are invited to enjoy time to play in the classroom and a special snack with their preschoolers during these special days (fall and spring). Children will bring home invitations and details about each event.

Dine Out Nights

The Nursery School partners with local restaurants to provide social gatherings for families. On these Dine Out Nights, families and friends are encouraged to eat out at the designated restaurant. Families enjoy having a meal with fellow WUNS classmates and parents, while also supporting the Nursery School.

Night at the Magic House

In February, the Nursery School rents the early childhood section of the Magic House for Nursery School families. This special night is a huge hit with everyone. Parents can enjoy a private night at their child's favorite hands-on museum!

Annual Parent Social

In early spring, parents are invited to a "parent-only" social event. In the past it has been a trivia night, gallery night (highlighting preschooler's artwork), and/or silent auction. Monies raised help support our enrichment programs – Art, Spanish, Nature and Music, as well as specific equipment or school needs.