

Parent Guide 2015-2016

Prématernelle Pomme D'Api

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Introduction

Welcome to Pomme d’Api! We are happy that you have chosen Pomme d’Api for your child’s preschool experience. This guide will provide you with a summary of Pomme d’Api’s policies, procedures, and philosophies.

Pomme d’Api is a parent-run preschool, and all families must be involved in running the school. Parent participation helps to keep our tuition fees low and our equipment well-maintained, and helps to create a great sense of community among parents, teachers, and students. This guide includes an explanation of how parent participation works at Pomme d’Api.

Please read all of the information in this guide carefully. It is important that you understand and agree to the policies and requirements that affect your child’s enrollment at Pomme d’Api.

If you have any questions, please contact the school at (604) 800-1197 or email the Registrar at registrar.pommedapi@gmail.com.

History of Prématernelle Pomme d’Api

In 1983, a group of parents decided to establish a preschool where children could be introduced to the French language naturally through creative play. They formed the East Side French Preschool Society, and began by offering immersion programs only.

In 1994, the East Side French Preschool added a francophone program designed for children of French-speaking parents, and legally changed its name to Pomme d’Api. Pomme d’Api refers to a type of red apple, and is used as a metaphor referring to children having cheeks as red as this apple.

Our philosophy

Pomme d’Api is committed to offering our students a quality early childhood educational experience where French is an integral part of the program.

We provide a safe and nurturing environment where children can develop healthy self-esteem. All children are accepted and respected, and their family heritage is valued. We encourage parents and children to share special cultural occasions with the teachers and other students.

We believe that children learn spontaneously while engaged in free play and fun structured activities, and we provide opportunities for the children to develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively.

Pomme d’Api has the following goals:

- to make our children’s first experience of “school” as enjoyable as possible
- to provide a stimulating and friendly environment in which they can explore
- to introduce them to the French language as naturally as possible
- to use a wide variety of activities, equipment, and materials
- to explore topical themes with songs, games, puppet plays, creative activities, outings, and invited guests

As a parent-run school, our secondary goal is to draw from the talents of the parents to administer the school and organize events that directly benefit the children both in the classroom and during extra-curricular activities.

Our focus is to enable our children to get the best possible experience while they are enrolled, and to ensure that Pomme d'Api continues after we have moved on.

Basic method for teaching French

Step one - establishing trust

At the beginning of the school year, we concentrate on welcoming the children as individuals and establishing a solid foundation of trust and friendship. French is introduced very gradually, with the exception of the Francophone program where French is spoken from the beginning.

Step two - increasing the use of French

Once the children feel comfortable in the preschool setting, we increase the use of French and decrease the use of English, with the ultimate goal of English being used only when dealing with matters of safety or discipline. The language is kept simple yet challenging, and is adapted according to the maturity of the children.

The teachers do not point out language mistakes, because correcting the children would discourage many of them and hinder their spontaneity. Instead, the teachers rephrase the children's statements in a supportive and positive manner. For example:

Child: *Yesterday I seed a dog in the park.*

Teacher: *Oh, you saw a dog in the park yesterday!*

Children need both structure and flexibility in order to develop a positive attitude towards the French language and culture. Therefore, we provide structure, but it remains flexible based on the children's needs, language levels, and learning styles.

Programs, Entrance Eligibility and Registration

In this section, you will find the school schedule and fees, program descriptions, eligibility requirements, and a description of the registration process.

Class schedule and fees

Our class schedule is shown below. Immersion classes are held in the mornings and francophone classes in the afternoons.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning (9:15 – 11:45)	Three-day immersion	Two-day immersion	Three-day immersion	Two-day immersion	Three-day immersion
Afternoon (1:00 – 3:30)	Three-day and four-day franco-phone	NO CLASSES (teacher prep time)	Three-day and four-day franco-phone	Four-day franco-phone	Three-day and four-day franco-phone

The table below shows the class schedule and monthly fee for each of our four programs.

Program	Schedule	Monthly fee
Two-day immersion	Tuesday, Thursday 9:15-11:45 am	\$170
Three-day immersion	Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:15-11:45 am	\$225
Three-day francophone	Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:00-3:30 pm	\$225
Four-day francophone ¹	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 1:00-3:30 pm	\$290

¹ For 4-year-olds only. Overlaps with the three-day francophone class, with an extra class on Thursdays.

Program descriptions

Pomme d'Api offers four different programs – two immersion programs and two francophone programs. The two immersion programs are completely separate from each other, but the two francophone programs overlap each other and are generally treated as a single class with the older students coming for an extra day each week.

Two-day immersion program

The two-day immersion program is aimed at children entering their first year of preschool. Most of the children will be 32-48 months of age, and activities and

language are geared to that developmental level. French is introduced, but English is used as necessary.

Children should be 3 years old on December 31 of the school year in which they are registered. If they are 4 years old by December 31, they must register in the three-day immersion program.

Three-day immersion program

The three-day immersion program is aimed at children progressing from the two-day immersion program, as well as new students who are at least 4 years old by December 31 of the year they start the program. The use of French in the classroom increases throughout the year.

Three-day francophone program

The three-day francophone program is aimed at children aged 3-4 from francophone families. This program is conducted exclusively in French.

Children should be 3 years old on December 31 of the school year in which they are registered. If they are 4 years old by December 31, they must register in the four-day francophone program.

Four-day francophone program

The four-day francophone program is aimed at children aged 4-5 from francophone families. Children should be at least 4 years old on December 31 of the school year in which they are registered.

This program overlaps with the three-day francophone program, but has one extra class each week. The additional day allows the teachers to pursue more age-appropriate activities, such as kindergarten readiness, with the older children.

Entrance eligibility

Two-day immersion program

Students in the two-day program must be at least 32 months of age, in order to comply with child care licensing regulations. This also ensures that the school is able to provide age appropriate activities, toys, and furnishings.

Students who are turning 4 years old on or before December 31 of the school year in which they are registered must register in the three-day immersion program, in order to keep them with peers of their own age and developmental level.

Three-day immersion program

Students in the three-day program must be at least 4 years old by December 31 of the year they start the program. This ensures that students in the program are at roughly the same developmental stage and allows teachers to adapt activities to an older group.

Because this is a policy rather than a licensing requirement, the teachers may occasionally use their discretion to allow a younger child to transfer from the two-day program into the three-day program if they feel the child is mature enough. This is particularly relevant to children who will turn four early in the new year.

Francophone program

Students in the francophone program must be at least 32 months of age. In addition, they must meet at least one of the following three criteria from the Conseil scolaire francophone de la C.B.:

- At least one of the parents has French as a first language
- At least one parent received his or her primary school instruction in French
- A sibling has received or is receiving his primary or secondary schooling in French

Children whose parents or siblings do not meet at least one the above criteria are not eligible for the program even if the parents have learned French as a second language and are considered bilingual. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Students in the francophone program should be exposed regularly to French within the home.

As well, the francophone classes have the following age restrictions, based on the student's age on December 31 of the school year in which he or she is registered:

- Students in the three-day francophone program must be 3 years old on December 31.
- Students who are are turning 4 on or before December 31 must register in the four-day francophone program.
- Students in the four-day francophone program must be at least 4 years old on December 31.

Registration

Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. However, priority is given in the following order:

1. Returning students
2. Siblings of current students and siblings of previous students
3. General registration

If you are informed that there is a space for your child, complete and return the registration form along with a tuition deposit of one month's tuition and a non-refundable registration fee of \$50. This will ensure that your child's space is reserved for him/her.

If there are no spaces available, you have the option to put your child's name on the wait list. Those on the waiting list are not required to submit the registration fee or tuition deposit until a space has become available.

Most students start at the preschool at the beginning of the school year in September, but students may register for the current school year up until April 1, if space is available. The Board may occasionally approve a registration beyond the deadline, determined on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the teachers.

If you have any questions regarding registration, please feel free to email us at registrar.pommedapi@gmail.com or by calling the school at (604) 800-1197.

Payment

Upon registration, you must provide the following payments. Please do not post-date these cheques:

1. A \$50 non-refundable registration fee
2. A tuition deposit in the amount of one month's tuition
If you change your mind regarding your child's attendance in September, please notify the Registrar in writing prior to August 1 to receive a refund of the tuition deposit.

You must also provide the following post-dated cheques:

- Two \$25 deposit cheques for parent meetings, post-dated May 1 and September 1 of the year your child starts his or her program (for example, May 1, 2015 and September 1, 2015 for the 2015-2016 school year).
Parent meeting cheques will be returned upon attendance at each parent meeting. Otherwise they will be cashed. Child care is provided during parent meetings.
- One \$200 deposit cheque for parent participation, post-dated July 1 of the year your child's program ends (for example, July 1, 2016 for the 2015-2016 school year).
This cheque will be destroyed if your family contributes at least 25 volunteer hours by June 30. Otherwise it will be cashed.
- Nine post-dated cheques covering tuition from September 1 to May 1 (June's tuition will be covered by the tuition deposit)

Your child cannot start the program until these cheques are received by the Registrar.

Withdrawal

There is a six-week probationary period for new students at Pomme d'Api. If you withdraw your child from Pomme d'Api during this period, your tuition deposit for the month of June will be refunded.

If you choose to withdraw your child after the probationary period is over, you must notify the Registrar in writing one month prior to withdrawal. If you give written notice at least one month in advance, your tuition deposit for the month of June will be applied to your final month. Otherwise, it will be forfeited.

NOTE: The six-week probationary period only applies to new students, not to returning students.

This means that returning students must follow the regular withdrawal procedure (give one month's written notice in order to receive a refund of the tuition deposit), even if they wish to withdraw during the first six weeks of the school year.

Gradual Entry

Gradual entry is a process meant to introduce your child to the new preschool environment in a way that makes adjustment to the new routine easier, and reduces stress for both children and parents.

Gradual entry will help you and your child to do the following:

- feel comfortable at the preschool
- begin to build a trusting relationship with the teachers
- have a positive start to the preschool experience
- feel confident about your child being left at the school without you

During gradual entry, we follow a series of steps in which parents gradually reduce the amount of time their child sees them at the preschool. There are three steps, but these do not necessarily happen over the course of three visits. Timing will vary between children, because all children adapt differently. If, after the third visit, you are not sure where your child is in the process, the teachers will help you decide how to proceed.

For some children, adapting to the new preschool environment can be very difficult. However, sometimes having parents in the classroom for long periods of time can actually make adjustment more difficult. If you are concerned about your child's adaptation, or about the gradual entry process, please speak with the teachers.

We also encourage you to read *Coping with Separation Anxiety*, a resource sheet that is included in the summer information package which is emailed to parents well before classes start.

There are three steps in our gradual entry process.

First week

You should plan to stay for the first 15 minutes of class on your child's first day of preschool (parents of returning children can gauge, with the teachers' help, whether this is necessary).

During the first week, you are encouraged to take short breaks away from the group. You may wish to take short walks in the neighborhood, or remain in your car. You will continue to do this until your child is ready for the next step. The teachers will help you to determine when your child is ready.

Next step

During this step, you will come into the preschool with your child and stay briefly, helping your child to get involved in the activities. Once your child is settled, say goodbye and explain that you are leaving and will be coming back when the class ends. This process should take no longer than 5 minutes.

If, after a few days, your child still cries when you leave, you may feel uncomfortable about leaving. However, the teachers are trained to deal with this situation, and are very good at helping the children cope. (In fact, many children stop crying as soon as their parent is no longer in sight.) Your children are in excellent hands, and your ability to leave will help the adjustment process.

Final step

During this step, you bring your child into the preschool. Once your child's coat and snack are in the cloakroom and they are wearing their indoor shoes, you sign them in, say goodbye, tell them when you will pick them up, and leave. Your child will spend a normal day at the preschool.

If, after the scheduled time of gradual entry is over, you or your child still needs extra support, you can schedule a meeting with the teachers. They will help you to take the following steps:

- establish goals
- identify strategies to meet the goals
- set a timeline
- consider the possibility that your child might not be ready for preschool at this time

If you and the teachers agree that your child is not ready for preschool, you may withdraw your child without submitting the one-month written notice, provided that it is within the six-week probationary timeframe. You will be reimbursed for your tuition deposit and have your post-dated cheques returned to you. We do require that you submit a written notice of withdrawal for our records.

Health Issues

There are a number of health issues that can affect your child and his or her classmates during their time at the preschool.

Toilet training

We require students to be toilet trained when they start at the preschool. If your child is mostly toilet trained, but prone to accidents, you may wish to have them wear pull-ups during the first few weeks.

All children should have a complete change of clothing in their cubby in case of accidents, even if they are fully toilet trained.

Clothing

Your child will need a pair of indoor shoes, to be kept in his or her cubby at the preschool. The shoes should be clearly marked with your child's name.

The teachers take the children outside throughout the year (weather permitting), so please send your child to preschool with appropriate indoor and outdoor clothing. For example, at different times of year, children may need boots, a winter coat, a winter hat, mittens, rain gear, or sunscreen.

Snack

Please provide a healthy, nutritious snack for your child. Water is always available in the class, but many children bring a water bottle as well. The teachers integrate nutrition into the curriculum so it is important that you do not send "junk food."

NOTE: There are **no nuts** allowed at Pomme d'Api. This includes peanut butter and Nutella. If your child's classmates have other severe food allergies, you may be asked not to bring certain other foods as well.

If it is your child's birthday, he or she may bring a treat for the class. Please speak to the teachers in advance.

Immunization

You must provide the preschool with a photocopy of your child's immunization record. Immunizations should be up to date.

If your child's immunizations are not up to date, you must inform the preschool in writing. This information will be forwarded to Vancouver Coastal Health. If there is an outbreak of an immunizable disease for which your child is not immunized, the Health Department will notify the preschool, and your child will not be allowed to attend classes until the city's Medical Health Officer deems it safe for the child to return.

Medication

If it is necessary for the teachers to give your child medication (prescription or non-prescription) while he or she is at preschool, you must complete the form called *Permission to Administer Medication*, which is included in the summer information package and can also be obtained from the teachers.

Sickness and communicable diseases

If your child is sick, or is contagious with a communicable disease, he or she must stay home. Please inform the teachers if your child is sick, so that they know not to expect him or her, and also so that they can notify the other parents if necessary.

In many cases we can take group action to prevent the further spread of contagious illnesses. If necessary, we will consult medical professionals for advice which we will then pass on to all parents.

Guidelines to determine if your child is well enough to attend preschool

The following guidelines will help you to assess whether your child is well enough to attend preschool. Please remember that your actions will have an impact on the rest of the group. In the best interest of all of our students and teachers, please keep your child home if he or she is ill.

Vomiting and diarrhea

If your child has been vomiting or has had diarrhea, he or she must not attend preschool for at least 24 hours after the symptoms have subsided.

Communicable diseases

If your child has a communicable disease such as chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, mumps, or conjunctivitis (pinkeye), he or she must stay home, and you must inform the preschool so that we can notify other parents that their children may have been exposed. Your child may return once the incubation and contagious period has passed.

Mucous and Coughing

If your child has a clear runny nose and light coughing, but no other symptoms, he or she may attend preschool.

If your child has cloudy or green mucous or a very bad cough, he or she should stay home to avoid infecting others, unless you have a doctor's note indicating that your child is not contagious.

Fever

If your child has a fever, he or she must not attend preschool until 24 hours after the fever is gone.

Accident and Emergency Procedures

This section talks about our procedures for accidents or other emergencies which may occur while your child is at the preschool.

Accident Procedures

On the first day of school you will be asked to fill out three Emergency Consent cards which include emergency contact information for your child. Please ensure that you leave a number where you or another designated caregiver can be reached quickly.

For accidents requiring first aid, you or your child's designated caregiver may be called to come to the preschool.

For more serious injuries, you or your child's designated caregiver may be asked to bring your child to the emergency department of Children's Hospital. If your child's emergency contact cannot be reached or cannot come to the preschool immediately, another responsible adult will accompany your child to Children's Hospital.

All deep cuts and head injuries will be taken seriously and will require examination by hospital staff.

When you collect your child after an accident, once the child is out of danger, you will be given an official description of the accident, as witnessed by another adult. The teachers will also file an accident report in accordance with Vancouver Health Department regulations.

General Emergency Procedures

This is a summary of Pomme d'Api's Emergency Plan. Please refer to Pomme d'Api's Policy Manual for more details.

Phone/text tree

At the beginning of the school year, your class representative will ask you for the phone number where you are mostly likely to be reached. If possible, you should be able to receive texts at this number. If you cannot receive texts, please notify your class rep when you give him or her the phone number.

The class rep will create a contact list so that he or she can text all of the parents in the class at once. (If there are any parents in the class who cannot receive texts, the class rep will have a note of that, along with those parents' phone numbers.)

The President will also have this contact information, with a contact list for each class.

If there is an emergency, the class rep (or the President, if necessary) will follow this notification procedure:

1. Send a group text to all of the parents in the class with information about the emergency, requesting a return text to confirm the message was received.
2. Phone any parents who cannot receive texts, with the same information that was included in the text.

3. Keep track of responses to the text. After a reasonable amount of time, any parent who has not responded to the group text will be phoned.

This phone/text tree notification procedure will also be used in non-emergency situations that require communication on short notice (such as school closures due to bad weather).

Evacuation

If there is an emergency such as a fire or earthquake where the school must be evacuated, students and teachers will move to a muster point in the empty lot at the back of the church (on Gladstone just north of 44th, across the alley from the back door of the preschool).

In the event of an evacuation, parents will be contacted to come get their children. The teachers will stay with the children until they are released to a parent or other designated adult.

In the case of a prolonged emergency or if parents cannot be contacted, children may be moved to a different location. In this case, a posted message will be left on the back door of the preschool (a grey fire door facing the empty lot behind the church) with the location and contact information for each child. If possible, parents will also be phoned, texted, or emailed with the information.

Emergency Kit and Emergency Comfort Kits

The preschool has an emergency kit with supplies for two teachers and 20 children for a three day period.

The preschool also stores a “personal comfort kit” for each child. At the beginning of the school year, you will be asked to bring in a large ziplock bag labelled with your child’s name and filled with items that you feel would comfort your child in case they have to wait to be reunited with you in an emergency. For example, your kit could include:

- a short “letter of comfort” from you
- pictures (of your family, a pet, your child’s room, etc.)
- a notepad or drawing paper
- small markers or pencil crayons
- a small stuffy, toy, playing cards, or a game
- a flashlight with batteries (flashlights are also included in the school’s emergency kit)

The kit will also contain a copy of the emergency contact card you will be asked to fill out at the beginning of the school year.

The kits should not contain:

- food
- medication
- crayons (which can melt in the storage bin)
- items which would not fit in the ziplock bag

Parent Participation

Pomme d'Api is a parent-run preschool. As such, families are required to participate in three ways:

1. At least one parent from each family must attend general parent meetings.
2. All families must participate in fundraising activities.
3. At least one parent from each family must volunteer their time for the operation and administration of the preschool.

The school was set up this way to ensure the best experience for our children; to facilitate communication between parents, teachers, and the executive Board; and to maintain a low fee structure.

Parent meetings

The school holds two general parent meetings each year: the spring meeting for new and returning parents in May and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September. At least one parent from each family is required to attend each of these meetings.

These meetings are an opportunity for parents to clarify issues with the Board and the teachers, and for the Board and the teachers to inform parents of the latest news and consult them on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, or issues the school may be facing. At the AGM, the Board for the upcoming school year is also elected.

The dates of the meetings are posted well in advance, and child care is available during the meetings. If nobody from your family can attend due to extraordinary circumstances, please contact one of the Board members.

Fundraising activities

Although there is a volunteer committee in charge of fundraising, all families are also expected to participate during our annual fundraisers. Our major fundraiser usually happens at the Christmas concert, with a gift basket draw.

Volunteering

Parents are required to volunteer their time throughout the year. Pomme d'Api's success depends on the support and cooperation of all parents.

We do not belong to the Council of Parent Participation Preschools, and do not require "duty" parents to help in the classroom. However, we do require parents to hold a designated volunteer position, either on the elected Board or in a non-elected volunteer position.

Please be sure that you have filled out a Parent Participation Contract, available at the spring parent meeting or from the Parent Participation Director. This will ensure that you are placed in a position that matches your skills and interests.

The volunteer Board members are officially elected at the AGM in September. All other positions will be filled early in the school year.

Other, less predictable, volunteer opportunities will come up over the course of the year, and will be announced in a monthly email called “Devoirs.” Occasionally a very urgent volunteer need will arise, in which case the Parent Participation Director will send out a special email to all parents.

Volunteer hours

Every family must contribute an average of 3 to 4 volunteer hours per month, or 30 to 40 hours over the course of the school year.

Each month, you will be asked to submit your volunteer hours to your class representative, who will tally them and report them to the Parent Participation Director. It is not expected that every family will contribute 3 to 4 hours every month, but rather that by the end of the year their total volunteer contribution will be between 30 and 40 hours. We understand that some volunteer positions require significant effort and hours in concentrated periods of time (for example, Christmas Concert volunteers, or the Open House committee).

Non-Participation policy

When you register your child at Pomme d’Api, you must include a deposit cheque of \$200, dated for June 1 of the following year. This cheque will be destroyed if your family contributes at least 25 volunteer hours by June 30. If you do not meet this minimum requirement by June 30, the cheque will be cashed.

Any family who has contributed less than 15 hours of volunteer time by December 31 will receive an email notification during the first week of preschool in January. This notification will:

- ask the family to report any outstanding volunteer hours that may have occurred but not been reported to the class representative
- remind the family of the volunteer policy and requirements
- ask the family to make efforts to volunteer in the coming months (acknowledging that if they are on the Open House committee their hours will likely increase naturally in the coming months)

Any family who has contributed less than 20 hours of volunteer time by April 1 will receive a warning that their deposit will be lost if they do not reach 25 hours by the end of the school year.

The Board will review the list of families with outstanding volunteer requirements at the June Board meeting, and cheques will be cashed the first business day following July 1 for those families that did not meet the requirement.

If at any point you need help finding volunteer work, please contact the Parent Participation Director.

Non-elected volunteer positions

Everybody who is not on the elected Board will be assigned to one or more non-elected volunteer positions at the beginning of the school year. These are Pomme d’Api’s non-elected volunteer positions for 2015-2016:

- class representative

- classroom cleaners
- documents and web content committee
- field trip committee
- fundraising committee
- grant writing committee
- health and safety committee
- maintenance committee
- office printer coordinator
- open house coordinator
- open house committee
- parent participation assistant
- party representatives
- photocopying representatives
- photographer
- playground and sidewalk maintenance committee
- President's assistant
- publicity and advertising committee
- purchaser
- recycling
- Registrar's assistant
- Scholastic coordinator
- teacher's assistant
- technology committee
- translator
- Treasurer's assistant

For more details about these positions, please see the Volunteer Guide on the Pomme d'Api website.

The Executive Board

Pomme d'Api is governed by the constitution of the Pomme d'Api Society which is presided over by the Executive Board. Board positions are filled by election, and are held by parent volunteers whose children are enrolled at Pomme d'Api.

Structure

The Executive Board consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and several Directors as determined by the Society's members at the start of each year.

Board members are voted in at the AGM in September. If two people vie for one position, one may be elected at the AGM, or a compromise may be reached in which two people share a single Board position.

The Board should ideally include both new and returning parents, to help with continuity and the transfer of past experience.

Responsibilities

The Board has the following responsibilities:

- the administration of the preschool

- the policies of the preschool
- the finances of the preschool (with the help of a hired accountant)
- the staffing of the preschool
- organization of the AGM and spring parent meeting

NOTE: The teachers report to the Board. However, any concerns regarding teachers must be raised with the President or Vice President in a confidential meeting, not a Board meeting.

The Board is legally responsible for the preschool, and must file all legal and related documents.

Meetings

The Board meets monthly to discuss all issues that concern the preschool. Parents who would like to address the Board can do so by advising the Secretary that they would like an item to be added to the agenda, and stating the nature of their concern.

Non-Board members who address the Board may be asked to leave the meeting after their address is finished if the Board has sensitive issues to discuss.

Board meetings are summarized in the minutes and are distributed to all parents, teachers, and the accountant. Any discussions that are sensitive in nature will not be detailed in the minutes; however, it will be noted that the Board did discuss sensitive issues, without giving further detail.

Executive Board Positions

These are Pomme d’Api’s executive Board positions for 2015-2016:

- President
- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Parent Participation Director
- Director of Fundraising
- Registrar
- Director of Publicity
- Maintenance Director
- Francophone Liaison
- Technology Director

For more details about these positions, please see **Appendix A: Current Executive Board Positions** at the end of this guide.

General Information

This section contains general information about the operations and policies of the preschool.

Absences

If your child will be absent from preschool, please send a text to our **text-only absentee line** at (778) 939-3095 with a message in the following format:

Child's name
Class
Parent name

This will let the teachers know not to expect your child. This phone number is a **text-only** absentee line. Please do not add any extra information. You will not receive a confirmation text, but your text program should tell you when your text has been received.

If you aren't able to send texts, or need to give the teachers more information (such as informing them of a contagious illness) you may also call the school at (604) 800-1197 to speak to one of the teachers or leave a voicemail.

If you know in advance that your child will be missing one or more classes, please inform the teachers in advance.

NOTE: Keeping the teachers informed of when your child will be absent will help to maintain accurate records of attendance in case of emergency.

No refunds or pro-rated fees will be given for missed classes or for temporary long-term absences, such as extended vacations. This includes families who extend summer vacations into September.

Dual enrollment

Because Pomme d'Api offers only part-time programs, some parents may choose to enroll their children in additional programs.

We do not restrict dual enrollment, but we strongly advise that you do not start both programs at the same time. It can be very stressful for children to start preschools and daycares, and it is important that you monitor how your child is adjusting to both programs. This situation will not work for all children, and if you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to discuss them with the teaching staff.

If it becomes obvious that a child is not adapting after a reasonable amount of time, parents and teachers may choose to withdraw the child from one program until he or she is better prepared for an additional preschool experience.

If you do choose to have your child in an additional program, we remind you that all child care programs differ in philosophies, teaching methodologies, and staff personalities. As Pomme d'Api is one of the few preschools offering French Immersion and a Francophone program, the delivery of its programs will differ from that of other programs not specializing in language acquisition.

Celebrations and special days

Pomme d'Api holds an annual Christmas concert and party in mid-December (usually on the evening of the last day of classes before the Christmas break) in the church next to the school. Each class will perform a selection of songs.

For students who are moving on to Kindergarten, a graduation ceremony is held during class time on the last day of classes in June. Families are welcome to attend. The two-day immersion class will have an end-of-year party instead, also with families invited.

In addition, there are a number of fun days that are held during classes, such as a Halloween party, a pajama day, and various cultural celebrations. You will be informed of these in advance if there is anything special your child should bring or wear.

You are welcome to bring a treat for the class on your child's birthday, but please speak to the teachers ahead of time so that they are prepared.

If you have a cultural celebration that you would like to share with your child's class, please speak with the teachers to make arrangements. They are always happy to incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum.

Communication

Most communication between parents and the school is done by email. This is why you are asked to provide the school with an email address that you check at least once per week.

Some communication also happens via notices left in the students' cubbies in the cloakroom. You, or the person who picks up your child, should regularly check your child's cubby for any notices. The cubbies also often contain art projects which have been on display but have been taken down and are ready to go home with the students.

In emergencies or situations that require communication on short notice (such as school closures due to bad weather), we will contact you using the phone/text tree notification procedure discussed in the General Emergency Procedures section.

Discipline

We believe that discipline must be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Our policy is to promote cooperation, support autonomy, and encourage the development of each child's unique self-expression.

We recognize that limits must be set and reinforced, and our goal is to shape behavior in a positive and educational manner. We help children learn to share, we encourage them to express their feelings, and we use diversion when necessary.

Where there is concern about a child's behavior, the teachers will follow a process that includes meeting with the child's parent or guardian for problem solving and, if required, consulting with external resources. Please refer to Pomme d'Api's Policy Manual for specific details on this process.

Drop-offs and Pick-ups

Pomme d'Api has a number of policies and procedures regarding drop-offs and pick-ups, including our request that parents allow extra time for the two day immersion class drop-off and pick-up, our gates-closed policy, our sign-in/sign-out procedure, our Safe Release procedure, and our policy about late pick-ups.

Gates-closed policy

Please close both gates behind you as you enter and exit the church yard and the school yard on your way in and out of the preschool. These gates must be kept closed and latched at all times so that the children are safe while playing in the school yard, both during class time and before and after school.

Sign-in/sign-out procedure

When you drop your child off at the preschool, you must sign him or her in by entering your child's name, the time, and your signature on the day's sign-in/sign-out sheet. The sign-in/sign-out sheet is kept on a table near the front door.

When you pick your child up, you must sign him or her out, by filling out the pick-up time and your signature on the sign-in/sign-out sheet. If the children are outside in the school yard at the time of pick-up, the teachers will have the sign-in/sign-out sheet outside as well.

NOTE: It is very important to sign your child in and out every day, so that the teachers know which children are under their care at all times. This is particularly important in case of an emergency situation.

Late drop-off policy

A "class in session" sign will be placed on the outside door 20 minutes after the start of each class. Students who arrive after the sign has been placed on the door will not be admitted to class that day. There will be no tuition refund for classes missed due to lateness.

The teachers may use their discretion on when to put out the sign on days when there is an unusual circumstance such as very bad weather.

Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis in extreme circumstances.

This policy may seem harsh, but when a child is very late, the entire class is disrupted for several reasons:

- the child has less play time and still wants to play when it's clean up time, so the transition is harder on them
- the teachers have to keep interrupting what they're doing to answer the door, leaving only one teacher to supervise and interact with the children
- there is an increased risk that the classroom door will be left unlocked if a parent leaves without informing the teachers
- some children who are unsettled get more anxious when the teachers leave them to answer the door:

- they get anxious about being left by the teachers (after their parents have already left them).
- they develop an unfulfilled hope that it might be their parents buzzing at the door and coming back for them.

Safe Release procedure

The teachers will follow Pomme d'Api's Safe Release procedure when releasing your child after class is over. This procedure details who may pick your child up, and under what circumstances teachers may refuse to release your child.

Authorized pick-up

The teachers will not release your child to someone you have not authorized. This is the procedure you must follow to authorize somebody to pick up your child:

1. During the first week of class, parents must fill out a form listing the names of all persons who are permitted to pick up their child.
2. If somebody not already on the authorized list will be picking up your child, you must notify the school and teachers in writing.
3. In a rare emergency situation, written notice can be made at the last minute via email.
Note: Notice cannot be given by phone. The school must have a written record.
4. If the person picking up the child is not known to the teachers, information about the person must be provided, including the following: name, phone number, and physical description. This person will be required to show photo ID.
Note: This includes people who are on the authorized list but that the teachers have not yet met.

Unauthorized pick-up

If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up a child, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The child will remain under the supervision of the teacher at the preschool.
2. The teacher will speak to the individual and explain the policy that no child will be released without written authorization from the parent or guardian.
3. The parent or guardian will be contacted.
4. If difficulties arise, all reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the safety of the child and of the other children. If necessary the police will be called for assistance.

Alleged impaired pickup

The teachers at Pomme d'Api will not release a child to an authorized person who is unable to adequately care for the child. The teachers will offer to call a relative or friend to pick up the person and child.

If the person is driving a vehicle, the teacher will explain that driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol is against the law and that the teacher is obligated to

ensure the safety of the child. If this person chooses to get in the car (with or without the child) the teacher will immediately notify police and provide a description of the car and direction/location headed. If the teacher believes that the child is in need of protection, the Ministry of Children and Family Development will be notified.

Custody and related court orders

If a custody or court order exists, a copy of the order must be placed in the child's file at Pomme d'Api preschool. The guardian is responsible for providing accurate and up-to-date information concerning the legal guardianship of the child.

Without a custody or court order on file, the teachers cannot deny access to the non-enrolling parent.

Late pick-ups

It is your responsibility to pick up your child on time at the end of each class. In an emergency, you must make arrangements to have somebody else pick up your child.

NOTE: The teachers are authorized to release your child only to those people you have designated in writing (this can include email: see the Authorized pick-up section for more details).

If you know that there will be a change in pick-up routine, please tell the teachers ahead of time. In an emergency, please phone the school at (604) 800-1197 to inform the teachers of the change in pick-up plans.

If a parent or other designated adult has not arrived to pick up a child 15 minutes after the scheduled class ending time, the teachers will attempt to contact the child's parent(s). If a parent cannot be reached, the teachers will then attempt to contact the child's emergency contacts.

At the discretion of the teachers:

- The first time this situation occurs there will be no penalty.
- If this situation occurs a second time, a written warning will be issued.
- If this situation occurs a third time, the parent will be charged \$1 per minute late (the clock starts about 10 minutes after the end of class, when the teachers go back inside with any children who have not yet been picked up).

If no resolution can be reached, the parent will be asked to withdraw their child from the preschool. This penalty may seem harsh, but late pick-ups infringe upon the teacher's time, affect the child's self-esteem, and violate licensing regulations if the child is left for too long after his or her class ends.

Field trips

Each class at Pomme d'Api will have several field trips over the course of the year. For most field trips, parents must transport their own children and remain present throughout the field trip.

Occasionally there may be a field trip where some parent volunteers are required, but not all parents need to stay with their children (for example, a walk to a nearby park or fire hall).

In all cases, information about the field trip, including permission slips and fees, will be handed out in advance. Each student must have a signed permission slip to attend a field trip, even if his or her parent or guardian is present.

Holidays and school closure

The preschool is closed on all statutory holidays. In addition, there is a two-week Christmas Break and a one-week Spring Break. Our Christmas Break coincides with the Vancouver School Board's Winter Break. Our Spring Break coincides with the second week of the Vancouver School Board's two-week Spring Break. The Secretary will send out a list of school closure dates for the current year shortly after the preschool opens in September.

Pomme d'Api will be closed on:

- Thanksgiving
- Remembrance Day
- Christmas (two-week vacation)
- Family Day
- Spring Break (one-week vacation)
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Victoria Day

Teacher-student ratio

Pomme d'Api is licensed to have up to 20 children per class, and we have two teachers for each class. Therefore, with full enrollment, the teacher:student ratio is 1:10.

What to do if you have a concern or a complaint

We encourage parents to raise their concerns and take a problem-solving approach to resolving conflicts. In addition, we respect the confidentiality of all parents.

If you have a concern about your child's progress, please make an appointment with the teachers. While it is tempting to engage the teachers in conversation during drop-off and pick-up, our children need their attention at this time!

Teachers will set aside time for parent-teacher conferences whenever requested. Please do not attempt to discuss your concerns with the teachers while class is in session.

If you have a complaint about any aspect of the preschool, including the administration or the teachers, please contact the President or Vice President. We have established procedures for dealing with complaints and grievances, and will attempt to resolve conflicts objectively, quickly, and confidentially. For more information on these procedures, please refer to Pomme d'Api's Policy Manual.

Who can attend events at Pomme d'Api?

Pomme d'Api's insurance policy covers enrolled students and their immediate families. This means that we cannot allow unrelated children to attend events at the school.

Siblings of registered students are welcome to attend in-classroom events such as class potlucks. Children who are not registered students or siblings of registered students cannot attend in-classroom events.

The only exception is our annual Open House, which is held outside of regular classroom hours and is open to the public.

Children who are not registered students or siblings of registered students may attend field trips under some circumstances, because they are not held on school property and the children remain under the supervision of the adult they arrived with.

If you would like to bring a child who is not a student or sibling of a student along on a field trip, please speak to the teachers and the field trip rep ahead of time.

Conclusion

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this guide, please do not hesitate to contact a current member of the Board or the teachers. If you are not sure who to talk to, please call the school at (604) 800-1197 and leave a message.

Let us all contribute to making this experience an enriching one for our children!

Appendix A: Current Executive Board Positions

Below is a list of current Board positions for 2015-2016. This can change from year to year as the needs of the preschool evolve over time, although the Board must always have a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

President

Special requirements:

- French/English bilingual (not absolutely necessary, but preferred)

Duties:

- oversee all activities of the school and its committees
- chair the monthly Board meetings
- chair all parent meetings
- hire employees (together with the Board)
- support health and safety volunteers and photocopiers

Vice President

Special requirements:

- French/English bilingual (not absolutely necessary, but preferred)

Duties:

- be responsible for the school's insurance policy
- be responsible for all maintenance of the school
- be responsible for the physical space of the school
- act as a liaison between the Board and the teachers
- act as a liaison between the Board and the school's landlord (the adjoining church)
- oversee all personnel matters

Treasurer

Special requirements: None

Duties:

- oversee and monitor tuition, government filings, banking activities, and activities associated with regular expenses
- manage the school's relationship with our accountant
- lead budget preparation
- coordinate grant applications
- report regularly to the Board on financial matters

Secretary

Special requirements:

- must be consistently available at drop-off or pick-up at least one day per week

Duties:

- take minutes at monthly Board meetings
- get minutes translated (by the school translators)
- send both French and English versions of the minutes to the Technology co-ordinator to be put in Dropbox
- receive monthly calendars of events from teachers, ensure that they are translated, and distribute them to all parents via email
- email parents with any school announcements including days off, closures, or cancelled classes
- pass on any urgent messages from the teachers to the appropriate Board member or parent volunteer

Parent Participation Director

Special requirements:

- must have access to Microsoft Word and Excel

Duties:

- ensure that all parents participate and all tasks are completed
- assign parents to volunteer roles at the start of the school year
- establish and liaise with working committees
- reshuffle volunteer roles when families leave or join the school
- keep parent volunteer spreadsheet up to date
- write monthly “Devoirs” newsletter
- assist with finding volunteers for events throughout the year
- find volunteers for unexpected, urgent tasks when necessary
- prepare parent participation contracts
- track parent volunteer hours (with the help of an assistant)

Director of Fundraising

Special requirements: None

Duties:

- develop and enact measures to help fund school activities
- organize fundraising events throughout the year (including a major fundraiser in December), with the help of the Fundraising committee

Registrar

Special requirements: None

Duties:

- maintain a database of current students and future students
- inform teachers, class reps, Secretary, Parent Participation Director, and web-master of new and departing students
- inform technology committee of new and departing students so they can update mailing lists.
- respond to registration and enrollment inquiries from potential registrants and current families
- maintain a list of alumni families interested in early registration for a younger sibling
- collect tuition and fees
- report enrollment numbers on an ongoing basis to the Board and the Ministry

Director of Publicity

Special requirements: None

Duties:

- maintain and improve Pomme d'Api's profile in the community through advertising
- oversee the annual Open House

Maintenance Director

Special requirements: None

Duties:

- coordinate and delegate indoor and outdoor maintenance tasks and projects, including:
 - repairing school equipment and furnishings as necessary
 - planning and executing other building and maintenance projects
 - coordinating sidewalk and playground maintenance

Francophone Liaison

Special requirements:

- must be fluent in French
- pre-existing engagement with the local francophone community is an asset

Duties:

- communicate with external francophone community resources and parents
- assist with French translation when needed

Technology Director

Special requirements:

- must have computer skills
- must be able to work from home and occasionally on-site

Duties:

- coordinate and delegate all technology-related volunteer activity at the preschool, including:
 - maintaining and updating the website (back end and front end)
 - assisting photographers with sharing digital photos with their classes
 - managing the school's various email lists
 - providing technical support to the teachers
 - upgrading, fixing, or purchasing items such as computers, printers, networking devices and phone systems
 - providing technical assistance and advice to other parents for preschool-related activities