

CREATIVE PLAY SCHOOL

845 N. Howard Street Alexandria, VA 22304 703-751-3388
100 E. Windsor Avenue Alexandria, Virginia 22301 703-836-7090
School age program 703-836-7615

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our child care center. Creative Play Schools have been family owned and operated for more than thirty years in Alexandria. Our program philosophy is learning through play. Our program curriculum is based on the High Scope Curriculum. This curriculum is extremely effective in helping young children reach their full potential for learning. We are very proud to say that our alumnae do extremely well in school after attending our preschool program. The children are well prepared socially and academically for the challenges of elementary school. Our after school program for school age children enhances the child's academic day with homework help and enrichment activities. Our staff are highly motivated, dedicated professionals. We believe you will be very pleased with the care and education your children will receive here.

Parent involvement is a very important aspect of our program. Your participation assures a quality experience for your child. When parents and teachers work together, children benefit and thrive. We plan two parent conferences each year. This is an opportunity to find out how your child is doing in school and share information about your child at home that will help us know him/her better. We also plan parent meetings and social activities throughout the year. Our directors and staff work in partnership with parents to make each child feel comfortable in our school. Your comments and feedback are important to us. Please come and visit often and let the director know of any concerns you have at any time.

We look forward to getting to know you and your family this year.

Sincerely,

Diane Smalley
Administrator

PARENT POLICIES

Creative Play School is a private, professional child care center providing care and education to children from sixteen months through ten years of age. The philosophy of the school is learning through play. Creative activities such as art, music, and creative movement are provided daily. Science, cooking, reading and math activities are incorporated into the weekly plan. In addition, the school age program offers homework help, tutoring, piano lessons, and swimming during the summer. The center uses an integrated curriculum approach and children learn by doing or through planned play activities. This planned play is a child's work.

We believe children need a safe, clean, and supportive environment in which to grow and learn. Individuality and self expression are valued and encouraged in children and staff. Children must be given the opportunity to grow and learn at their own pace, while learning to play and behave cooperatively as part of our school family. Therefore, the school day is a balance of planned activities and free time. Our goal is for every child to enjoy learning and coming to school, as this is the groundwork for later success in school.

Children and families are always welcome at our center. Parents are invited to visit at any time. We believe that quality care is a partnership between family and school. Parents help us understand children's individual differences and are a vital part of our program. Your time and energy spent at school benefit all the children and builds self esteem and pride in your child. It is a powerful message to your child that parents and teachers are a team. If time during the day is limited, ask your child's teacher how you can help at home. Parents can collect art materials by recycling or send in food for special celebrations. While conferences are best in person, they can be held over the phone if necessary. The important thing is to communicate with your child's teacher on a regular basis.

ADMISSION

Admission is open to all children. Parents and children must come in for an interview with the director before enrollment can take place. An immunization record and a birth certificate are required before a child may attend school. A waiting list is maintained throughout the year. Siblings are given first priority on the waiting list. A deposit of one week's tuition is required to reserve a spot on the waiting list. This deposit holds a space for your child for up to two weeks when there is an opening. After that, parents wishing to guarantee placement will be required to pay tuition to hold the place.

We invite children to come in for a few hours or a morning before starting school on a full time basis. This helps to ease the child into the program and gives parents and children an orientation to the program.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Most problems are avoided by keeping the children engaged in activities that are appropriately challenging and interesting and maintaining a predictable routine. Each classroom has clearly established and consistently reinforced rules for appropriate behavior. These rules are intended to ensure the child's safety and the safety of others, as well as promote appropriate social

development and relationships with peers and adults. Such rules include taking turns, using words to express needs and wants, respecting the space and property of others, and using materials safely.

The goal of discipline is to have the children learn to be responsible for their own behavior. At no time is physical punishment, derogatory remarks, threats, punishment related to food, naps, outdoor play or the use of the bathroom allowed. Time outs are used only when a child is hurting himself/herself or others. Time out is used only to help the child regain control of himself/herself when other methods have failed. During time out, the child is seated in a designated area within the classroom and within sight and sound of staff. Time outs are limited to not more than five minutes. If a child consistently seems to require time outs to control his or her behavior, a conference with the parents, staff, family support worker, and the psychologist will be scheduled to identify more appropriate and effective interventions and develop an individualized behavior plan to support the child's inclusion and success. If these strategies are not successful and the school determines that the child should be dis-enrolled from the center generally, two weeks notice is given. This decision is made by the director. In practice, dis-enrollment is very unusual. There are extreme situations when the services of the center may be terminated immediately, such as when a child's behavior poses a risk to the well-being of other children. Uncooperative behavior by parents is also a basis for immediate termination. If termination of services becomes necessary, the director will provide the reason for and date of termination.

NUTRITION

Mealtime is a very important part of the center routine. This includes assisting a child in learning to feed himself/herself. Mealtimes are also educational opportunities and social occasions at school.

Breakfast, hot lunch, and afternoon snack, will be served daily. 2% milk is served at school to all children. (School age children will bring their own lunch.) Menus meet USDA guidelines and are posted on the bulletin board. Copies are available on request. Parents are invited to join their child for lunch in the classroom. Parents may bring food for parties when planned in advance with the teacher. Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers. The center will provide special diets for medical or religious reasons if possible. If the center is unable to provide a special diet, the director and parents will work out what foods will be provided from home. The program asks families of a child with food allergies to give consent for posting information about that child's food allergy and, if consent is given, then posts that information in the food preparation area and in the classroom as a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the program day. Food from home will be refrigerated and labeled with the child's name and date. Unused portions will be disposed of at the end of the day. Breakfast is served at 9 am, lunch at noon, and afternoon snack at 3:15 pm. Children who come to school early in the morning may need to also eat breakfast at home.

Many children have nut allergies. For this reason, foods made with nuts are not permitted at school.

HOURS OF OPERATION AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

The school is open year round Monday through Friday. The North Howard location is open from 6:45 am until 6 pm. The Windsor Avenue location is open from 7 am until 6 pm. The centers are closed on all Federal Government Holidays, the Friday after Thanksgiving, the Friday before Easter and the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. The school is also closed for three staff training days per year. Please call the school if your child will be absent from school.

During severe weather conditions, we will follow the Alexandria City public schools for school closings or late openings. If the public schools are not in session we will make our own decision. When the Alexandria schools are closed for bad weather, we will be closed. When the Alexandria schools open late, we will also open late to give everyone time to arrive safely. If the Alexandria schools close early for bad weather, we will make our own decision to close or remain open. If it is necessary to alter hours and operating procedures because of severe weather conditions, you can call the school for updated information. On these occasions, your patience and cooperation is requested.

We will follow instructions from the local police and fire department in the event of a national or community emergency or an evacuation or shelter in place order. We will follow the Alexandria public schools for these emergencies, or make our own announcement if the public schools are not in session. Check with the local media for changes in school openings or closings. If we are evacuated, we will go to the Red Cross shelter or the other Creative Play School location. Please provide us with an out of state emergency contact person in the event local phone service is interrupted. The school's complete emergency preparedness plan is available in the office for your review.

ATTENDANCE

It is important for children to attend school regularly. The program starts at 9 am. Please do not bring your child to school after 11 am without the director's permission. Late arrival is disruptive to the children and the program. If your child has a medical appointment, try to schedule it early in the morning or after 3 pm. Rest time is between 1 and 3 pm daily. Children are not required to sleep, however, many children do sleep and all of the children rest. If possible, please pick your child up before 1 pm or after 3 pm so that rest time is not disrupted. Children need a blanket for nap time and a change of clothes in a bag labeled with his/her name. The school provides a cot and a sheet which is laundered weekly.

SAFETY

In the morning, please bring your child into the classroom, sign in, help your child wash his hands, and check in with the teacher. This is an opportunity to share information about your child's night or morning with the teacher. Children may not be dropped off outside or in the hallway. At the end of the day, parents must come into the building and sign children out. If children are on the playground, parents must come onto the playground and pick children up after signing them out. Children may not leave the playground alone. Again this is an opportunity to talk to the teacher about your child's day.

Parents may not use cell phones in the school. If parents are talking on cell phones during drop off or pick up time, they are unavailable to talk to staff or their children. Once a child has been picked up by the parent or designated person, the parent is responsible for the child's safety. Children will only be released to emergency contacts listed on the registration forms unless a parent notifies the school in writing of a change. Unknown persons must come into the office and will be asked for a picture ID before a child is released. Please do not give out the security code. Visitors, other than parents, should knock on the entrance door and staff will let them in. Remember to keep your emergency phone numbers current. Annually, all the emergency information in your child's file will be updated, however, if your home or work number changes, it is important to notify us immediately.

LATE PICK UP

There is a late pick up fee of \$20.00 per quarter hour. The late fee is due when the child is picked up or the following morning when children are dropped off. If the late fee is not paid by the next morning, children will not be admitted to the program until the fee is paid. Chronic lateness is cause for termination of services. If a child is not picked up by closing, staff will call parents and emergency contacts to arrange pick up immediately. If a parent or emergency contact person can not be reached within one hour after the center's closing, the director may assign a staff person to take the child home or turn the child over to child protective services. If a child leaves the center with a staff person or Child Protective Services, a note will be posted on the door of the center notifying the parent of the name, address, and phone number where the child has been taken.

HEALTH RECORDS AND CHILDREN'S FILES

The program maintains current health records for each child. A child must have a shot record and a birth certificate to begin attending the program. Within thirty days after a child begins the program, and quarterly thereafter, a physical signed by a doctor must be on file at school showing that each child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. If a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents must provide evidence of an appointment for those services as a condition of remaining in the program.

Children's health records include: information about health insurance coverage for treatment in an emergency, results of health examinations with immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results, and any follow-up for abnormal results. Children's files also include emergency contact information, which is kept up to date during the year, names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child, instructions for any special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness, and supporting evidence from a licensed health professional or religious leader if a child is not immunized or under-immunized. A child will be excluded if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program.

Each child's file will also include a registration form, signed parent permission forms, emergency information, and parent information form. Children with IEP's must have a copy of the plan on file in the office. These records, along with other family information, are kept confidential, in a locked cabinet in the office. The content of the file is confidential but is available to program

staff only with written permission from parents. In addition, regulatory authorities have access to children's files on request.

SICK CHILDREN

Children who are ill or running a temperature over 101 degrees F may not attend school. If a child becomes ill at school, the parent will be called and the child must be picked up within one hour. If a child's condition is suspected to be contagious, then the child is made comfortable in an area of the classroom where new individuals will not be exposed and he is supervised by the regular classroom staff. Children sent home sick may not return to school the next day as they must be fever free or free from symptoms of diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours. If a child has a fever, vomiting or diarrhea during the previous day or evening at home, he/she should not come to school the next morning. Lice, scabies, impetigo, ringworm, and conjunctivitis must be properly treated by a physician and determined noncontagious before a child returns to school. A doctor's note is required before a child returns to school.

In the event of a serious accident or life threatening emergency, staff will call 911 for an ambulance or transport a child by car to Alexandria hospital. If a child requires emergency medical treatment, sustains a serious injury, or is lost while in care, the parent will be contacted immediately.

If your child is cranky or less active than usual, cries more than usual, feels general discomfort or loss of appetite, he/she may be coming down with an illness. Please alert us to these conditions. Your child's well being is important to us.

Parents are required by the state of Virginia to inform the center within 24 hours, or the next business day after his/her child, or any member of the immediate household, has developed a reportable communicable disease as defined by the State Board of Health. Life threatening diseases must be reported immediately. If children at school have been exposed to a communicable disease, the parent shall be notified within 24 hours or the next business day of the center's having been informed. If the disease is life threatening, parents will be notified immediately.

MEDICATION

The school does not administer medication unless it is for a life threatening condition such as severe allergy to bee stings or asthma. In the event your child needs an Epi pen or inhaler, written permission from the doctor and parent is required. The first dose of medication must be administered by the parent at home to ensure there are no serious adverse reactions to the drug. Medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage amount, and when it is to be given. Expired medication will be returned to the parent and will not be given to a child.

The center will apply diaper cream with signed permission from the parent. These products must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name. The staff will keep a record that includes the child's name, date of use, frequency of application and any adverse reactions.

The center will apply insect repellants at school once a day with written permission from parents. Products must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name. The staff will keep a record that includes the child's name, date of use, frequency of application and any adverse reactions. Manufacturer's instructions shall be followed.

Please apply sun screen to your child in the morning before your child comes to school. If you want the center to reapply the sun screen in the afternoon, the center must have a signed permission form from the parent. The sun screen must be in the original container labeled with the child's name and must contain UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher. Children nine years of age and older may administer their own sun screen while supervised.

FEES

All fees are due in advance on the first of the month. A \$1.00 late fee is charged for every day payment is late. There is a \$25.00 fee for returned checks. A child may be terminated when tuition is two weeks in arrears. No reduction in fees will be made for absence, vacation, illness or school closings. Two weeks notice is required to the director in writing if a child is being withdrawn. If proper notice is not given, parents are responsible for the tuition for the two week notice period. There is an annual registration fee of \$50.00.

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Parents are provided information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's development and learning on a quarterly basis, with written reports two times a year. Twice a year parent conferences will be scheduled by the teachers. Parents may request conferences more often if they desire. Conferences are important opportunities for parents and teachers to share information about a child's growth and development. If parents are unable to come to the school for a conference, it may be possible to arrange a phone conference with the teacher. If a translator is needed, please notify the director and we will make every effort to assist you. You are welcome to bring along your own translator if you choose.

Daily reports are sent home to parents of toddlers and two year olds and weekly reports are sent home for preschool age children. These reports are intended to inform parents of daily activities in the classroom, children's developmental milestones, shared care giving issues, and other information that affects the well-being and development of children.

The program uses a variety of assessment tools such as observation, checklists, and individually administered tests to support children's learning, guide curriculum planning, and monitor progress. In addition to parents, classroom teachers and school administrators will have access to children's screening and assessment results for the purposes of program planning and staff training. If a concern arises about a child's progress, the director, teacher, and family support worker will work with parents to plan how to best meet the child's needs.

In the event difficulties or differences arise between families and program staff, the Family Support Worker, Director, and Administrator are available to assist. Our goal is to work in partnership with parents to do the best for children.

TRANSITIONS TO OTHER CLASSES OR PROGRAMS

Toddlers and twos are encouraged to remain with their teachers for nine months or longer. Transitions to another class may occur throughout the year if space exists in the other class. When parents and teachers think children are ready to move to another group, and space exists in that group, a transition period of one or two weeks will be arranged. During this transition time, children will visit in the new classroom for an hour or two each day. At the end of the transition time, children will be moved into their new group.

When children are leaving the program for kindergarten, a parent workshop will be scheduled to talk about how to assist children in this transition. A field trip will be arranged where children will ride on the school bus and visit the neighborhood elementary school for a tour and lunch.

When children are on field trips, a staff member will have a cell phone to call for help if necessary. The staff will take children's emergency information cards with parent phone numbers and first aid supplies on the field trip. In the event the school bus breaks down, the staff will arrange for alternate transportation back to Creative Play School by contacting the director.

OUTDOOR PLAY

The daily schedule and lesson plans are posted for each classroom to inform parents of their child's activities during the day. All children play outdoors daily when weather, air quality or environmental safety conditions do not pose a health risk. When outdoor play is not possible because of conditions, the program provides similar large muscle activities inside.

CENTER STAFF

Virginia law requires all staff working with children to report any incidents or appearances of child abuse or neglect to child protective services. All staff must have reference checks and criminal record checks. Teaching staff are required to have degrees in early childhood education or a related field or a C.D.A., which is a vocational technical certificate. Assistants must have a high school degree and attend regular training on child development topics leading to a C.D.A. In addition, our center trains staff on site throughout the year and during two annual staff development days.

The center has a full time director who supervises all teachers and assistant teachers. The center administrator, Diane Smalley, supervises the director. Please contact the director or Diane Smalley if there is a concern about the program or a staff member. Ms. Smalley can be reached at the main office: 703-751-3388. We are happy to hear your comments or feedback at any time.

