

Bloom Parent Handbook 2016

Included in this handbook are references to various articles and works supporting the practices and beliefs held at Bloom Children's Center. We expect families entering our program to have read and understood all of the contents of the handbook and to have considered such referenced works. All of the books referenced in the handbook are available to be checked out from our parent/teacher library.

Learning through Play

Play is the answer to the question, 'How does anything new ever come about?'

- Jean Piaget

Bloom Children's Center is developed around the philosophy that children learn through play experience. Research (as well as our own experience) has shown that play is what is most developmentally appropriate and crucial for success in learning at the preschool age.

Children's play- their inborn disposition for learning, curiosity, imagination, and fantasy- is being silenced in the high-tech, commercialized world we have created

- David Elkind, Ph.D., *The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally*
(recommended reading for our parents)

Our school community serves as a safe and secure environment for children to develop a sense of belonging. We desire that children will enter our space with curiosity and confidence, enabling them to act creatively and independently in play experiences. We strive to maintain an environment conducive to uninhibited play.

In accordance with what research has shown to be most beneficial for children, we consciously choose to avoid direct academic instruction and prioritize play and exploration.

Please see articles "The Death of Preschool", "Play- Evolutionary, Universal & Essential", "Play- 'Are There Tree Forts In the Yard?'" , and "Play's the Thing"

Confidence

Children develop a sense of confidence through their experiences and belief in themselves, not through what we tell them. Therefore, we use terminology such as "Well, what-do-you know?" or "I remember when you couldn't do that," rather than saying "Good job" when they accomplish a developmental milestone. This allows children to find satisfaction in their own accomplishments, rather than seeking praise from others.

We provide children with opportunities to take risks. A healthy freedom to take risks is essential to the process of learning. In order to develop self-confidence, children need to experience risk intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. We cultivate a safe environment that enables children to develop the ability to take risks.

Please see poem, "Risk".

Our Environment

We at Bloom are committed to providing children an environment that is rich in diverse experiences, encouraging them to develop in the following areas:

- Motor Development: Opportunities are provided to develop both gross and fine motor skills, indoors and out
- Social/Emotional Development: We provide a safe and secure environment where participation and learning can happen at each child's unique social developmental level.
- Cognitive/Language development: We demonstrate to the children well developed and purposeful language skills in both verbal communication and literacy. We work continually with the children on their development of language and use of communication to us and with each other.
- Sensory Development: We present multi-sensory activities that enhance awareness and naturally enrich the children's understanding of materials.

The play experiences presented in each of the above areas support children in all of their ways of learning. Many preschools offer an environment inviting children to "come on in and let me do it for you." We, however, strive to create an environment that invites children to, "come on in and give it a try."

Please see articles "Learning Styles", "Invitations We Send", and "The Rules"

Literacy and writing

Our belief in supporting children's learning through play extends into issues of literacy and early writing skills.

Author and international literacy consultant Mem Fox says in her book, *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*, that one of the secrets of reading is

...our general knowledge: all the stuff in our heads, gathered from birth to present moment. The more we know about life, the universe, and everything, the easier it is to read.

We believe that the skills of reading and writing will naturally emerge in children at their own pace (typically by approximately age 7), when provided with an environment rich in literary experiences and various gross and fine motor experiences. This emergence of literacy is an amazing thing to watch as it naturally develops.

We ask that all of our parents read the book mentioned above by Mem Fox.

Empathy, “I’m Sorry”, and Sharing

We do not ask children to say they are sorry, and we ask that you do the same. If you tell your child to apologize to someone, you are essentially encouraging them to speak something untrue to someone else (aka. to lie). The fact of the matter is, they very well may NOT be sorry, and you telling them to say that they are will not make them sorry. In other words, you can make your child say, “I’m sorry” but you can not make them mean it. It is not developmentally normal for the egocentric child to worry about another child’s feelings, and so we do not attempt to force feelings or remorse on them.

Equally challenging at this stage of development is the idea of sharing. When you force your child to share, you are forcing something to be taken from them. While adults desire to encourage giving and instill generosity in children, forced sharing essentially teaches the opposite. Forced sharing tends to communicate to the child “the world can take what it wants from you when it wants it.”

Consequently, children who are forced to share at home cause problems at school because they feel a sense of entitlement to objects other children are playing with. They expect others to be forced to “share” with them. Please do not force or ask your child to share.

We all desire for our children to develop into empathetic, caring, and generous people. As caregivers, the best way for us to encourage the emergence of these traits is simply by modeling these behaviors ourselves.

As an alternative to forced sharing, we guide our children through problem solving with others in a child-directed system of 'turn-taking'. We ask that all parents please read Heather Shumaker's *It's OK Not to Share* for guidance in this and other practices used in our program.

Please also read article "What Children Can and Can Not Do"

Death and Dying

Preschool children are fascinated with death and are developing an understanding of its permanence. We owe it to our children to be honest and straightforward. We will talk about death and read stories about death at school. Any of our discussions about death are simple, direct and practical. Bev Bos (one of our favorite educators) says in her article *Coping With Difficult Times*,

One of the most important things I have learned from having experienced difficult times is that songs, books, and stories, that will help people cope with death must be in their lives BEFORE they experience grief and loss.

We believe that part of our role is to create an atmosphere that serves as a safe place to prepare for difficult times. Should (and eventually when) such difficult circumstances arise, our children will be well-equipped.

Please see article "Coping With Difficult Times"

Discipline

We do not tolerate harmful or hurtful behaviors.

We help the children in our program identify and adhere to clear boundaries set by the other children and adults in our program. We do not apply retributive consequences in response to children's behaviors. We believe that any and all behaviors and conflicts must be approached as

problems with the potential to be solved. Our role as adults is support the children in finding a solution to each problem that will be mutually beneficial for all those involved.

Please understand that while at school, your child will hit and be hit. They will bite and be bit. We do everything possible to avoid such things, but because of the developmental stage of preschoolers, these things are inevitable. Children will likely bring home words and behaviors that are undesirable. They will bring such behaviors to school as well, especially when they have had an exciting reaction from an adult. Preschoolers are simply trying to make sense out of something they have heard, seen or experienced. They are developing their inner voice and on a path of exploration in learning to do so.

We have amazing families in our program, but none of our families are capable of escaping the sometimes embarrassing things that our children hear and learn from media and our society.

We work diligently to diffuse such situations. We use phrases such as, "He's not poopy-head, he's Johnny" rather than "That's not nice" or "we don't say that." Correcting children in the latter way can honestly create more fascination as to why, and make the behavior more exciting. We keep the conversation simple, direct, and unemotional and then move on. Remember, words are only as powerful as we allow them to be. We choose not to give words power, but to support children in finding ways to effectively communicate with others.

Keep in mind, children love having fun. Play is important. Words are often something they use to play with and have fun. Be careful not to overreact to word-play, mistaking it for unkind communication.

In regards to *any* undesirable behaviors, we work very hard to empower victims of such behaviors to act for themselves by saying things such as, "I don't want your hands on me" when hit or "I don't want that pointed in my face" when being shot at with an imaginary gun. We desire to raise children who know that they have the power to stand up for themselves rather than children who wait for someone else to intervene on their behalf. This is a part of the children developing their inner voice.

Please see us as a partner and resource available to you in regard to any behavioral or disciplinary challenges you are facing with your child. We are happy to meet with you to collaborate on solving any behavioral challenges you are facing with your child.

Please see article, "Effective Responses"

Art

We provide a wide variety of art and science activities in our program. We place no models of desired art in front of the children, so as to avoid setting a standard for them that is unattainable. All of our art activities are open-ended and presented with the importance of process in mind. Thus, the "products" that come home with your children may be few and far between. Please refrain from praising your child for a specific piece of art, as it is simply a daily occurrence for them to explore the art activities we've made available. When you tell your preschooler "it is beautiful" or "I love it", you are telling them that creating art in *that* specific form is what will please you. If you do so, you will likely end up with ten of that same art piece, rather than your child continuing to pursue creativity.

An appropriate alternative response when your child shows you artwork is simply, "I see!"

Please read article, "Thoughts on Art"

Sunscreen

Parents are expected to apply sunscreen to their children before arriving at the school. We will have our own sunscreen on hand for those who forget to apply before school. Please let us know if your child is *not* wearing sunscreen. We will also reapply our school sunscreen to the children as needed throughout the day.

Dress Code

First and foremost, please dress your child in comfortable clothing that you are not concerned about getting messy. Also, please label every item that comes in our doors with your child's initials.

We use a wide variety of materials in our various areas of exploration that will likely get on your child's clothing. We do not use paint smocks, as they can stifle a child's creativity with the fear that they will become "messy".

Expect that your child will become "messy" daily, and therefore supply plenty of spare clothes for his or her time here. We ask that you stock your child's back pack with one or two extra outfits (complete with socks and underwear) daily, so that we have ample clothing for changes as needed.

Equally important is that you dress your child in simple clothing that encourages his or her independence (avoid many snaps, buckles, etc.) Children can begin learning most dressing self-help skills as early as 15-18 months of age.

We require that your child also has school "shoes". This means boots in the winter. Perfectly appropriate is a simple pair of rubber boots that can be worn with very thick socks in the very cold weather. In the summer, crocs or equally simple/closed-toe shoes are to be worn. Please send your child in "shoes" that are appropriate to be worn outside every day.

Cold Weather- Please see to it your child always has a heavy jacket, snow pants, gloves or mittens, and a hat. The children will be going outside as they desire every day, regardless of weather.

Warm weather- Please see to it your child always has a swimsuit and several changes of clothing. Again we will be going outside every day, which in hot weather means keeping cool with water play.

Nutrition

We provide two healthy snacks daily.

Morning snack-9:00 to 10:00am

Afternoon snack-3:00 to 4:00pm (or upon waking from nap).

If you are dropping your child off before breakfast has been eaten, you are welcome to bring a little something for your child to eat for breakfast here. Parents are also required to provide lunch in an insulated lunch-box with sufficient ice-packs to keep food cool and fresh. Please pack nutritious foods including such things as protein, cheese, fruit, vegetables, whole grains, etc. *Please do not send candies, fruit snacks, juices and other*

sugary items. We are happy to microwave food as needed for your child. We will provide whole milk and almond milk for children to drink with their lunch.

Our snacks consists of a homemade whole-grain bread or muffin, with a fruit or vegetable and water.

Personal Belongings

Please provide a small blanket and a crib-sized sheet to be used on your child's nap mat. Please leave bedding at school in your child's cubby, as we will be responsible for laundering all bedding.

To bring daily:

- Lunch box- packed as directed in above Nutrition section
- Back pack- packed with one or two extra sets of clothing and all necessary clothing and accessories appropriate for the day's weather

Please leave toys at home. While your child may desire to bring a toy from home, please understand that once they arrive at school said toy becomes an item of frustration for children. They are proud of special toys from home, but typically do not tolerate other children using the toy. Please let us know if you need further support or assistance in getting your child to keep toys at home.

Nap Time

Children are supported in napping according to their individual needs each day. Most children begin their nap any time between 12:30 and 3:00 each day, but we will accommodate napping outside those hours as needed. Children are able to nap as long as needed each day. In the effort to support children's napping needs, we do not allow children to be picked up between 1:00 and 3:00pm. If you have need for your child to be picked up early, please arrange to do so before nap time.

At this preschool age, some children are still sleeping for a regular nap time and others are not. We appreciate your communication as to what your child's typical sleep pattern is. We will not force the children to sleep. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of tiredness, but is resistant to napping,

we will help them to find something quiet to do to provide their body with ample rest. As the sleeping children wake up, they will join in snack and other afternoon play opportunities.

Field Trips

Our school will often take walking field trips. Upon doing so, notification will be left on our school door, providing parents with the cell phone contact information for those of us on a walk..

We may also be taking field trips throughout the year which require parent driver assistance. Before this happens, all parents will be notified and required to return signed permission slips.

Our children will be joined on all field trips by plenty of staff and volunteers to keep them safe and help them have fun. While we are away at a field trip, a note will be left on the school door, notifying parents of our location. Parents are welcome to pick up children at the location of any field trip if necessary.

Birthday Celebrations

We choose to keep birthday celebrations simple but special. The children bake a treat together for each birthday. The birthday child chooses their treat, and is fitted with a special birthday crown. All of the children decorate the cake, and we all then sing happy birthday as a group for the birthday child before eating the cake. (note: special tradition of birthday child seated in chair on top of table is most often the desired location for our birthday song and candles)

Parent-ed Pot-lucks

We hold monthly parent gatherings. These meetings are intended be a community-building time and are planned to be educational. They provide our parents essential support in raising independent, curious preschoolers. These evenings together are one of the ways we work to bridge a gap between parents and staff in handling early childhood issues, which is crucial for bringing consistency between home and school for our children, ensuring their success. In order for your preschooler to be a part of our

program, we ask that all parents take an active role in our school community through these parent nights, gatherings, and special assignments.

Family Gatherings

We also hold three family gatherings at our school each year, in April, August, and December. Each of these gatherings has its own specific focus, but the purpose of all three is to create (again) a community of support for our school families.

Special Assignments

It is important for young children to have a sense of belonging in their school community. One piece that can support this sense of belonging is when children find items that connect them to home at the school during play. We have family photos displayed on a wall at children's level, and will continually be assigning families "homework" of other specific contributions to be brought from home.

Volunteers

We have two basic volunteer types to be found in our program: family volunteers and student volunteers.

We ask for volunteer support of parents and even extended family in our program. In your volunteer time here at the school, we can have simple tasks or assignments for you. Occasionally we will have specific projects in which we ask for parents to join in contributing their time and energy. Additionally, if you have any special interests or hobbies you would like to share with the children, we would love to have you share. Please let us know what you would like to offer!

We also have a wonderful student volunteer program. We work in collaboration with the Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs at Central Oregon Community College and OSU-Cascades campus to provide quality educational practicum experiences for the students in those programs. The benefit of having those students in our program is multi-faceted. We get the opportunity to have extra hands and eyes

working with the children while the ECE students are here. Also, by helping to shape the educational philosophy of these students, we are creating wonderful teaching potential that will only help our community's educational future.

Flashlight Night

We offer three opportunities for flashlight night each year: in January, May, and September. Families in our school will receive details for registration for these events. They are not mandatory, but serve as a kids' night out for our families for the cost of \$20 per child, and \$10 for the second child in each family. Space is limited and registration will be first-come/first-served.

Substitute Teachers

The staff at Bloom work diligently to cover for each-other as substitutes in times of need. However, occasionally we find ourselves in need of additional support. In such cases, we will post specifics on the substitute situation at the school. All substitutes are a part of the Criminal History Registry, meet or exceed certification requirements, and are well qualified to be a part of our program.

Medications

If your child must receive medication during their time at school, please ask us for a Medication Release Form. We will only administer currently prescribed medications or OTC medications for which we have a current Medication Release Form.

Toilet Training

Toilet training is an exciting, but often challenging transition and milestone. Toilet training should happen when your child is physically, emotionally, and instructionally ready. First and foremost, we ask that parents wait until the child chooses to use the toilet. We find that the simplest, least stressful way to toileting is simply being patient until the child is ready.

Once you've begun toilet training, we would like to make every effort possible to support the toilet training you are doing at home. Our teachers will work with you to communicate throughout this process. In toilet training, we encourage your child to toilet independently as much as is possible developmentally. Please keep us informed as you begin the toilet training process, so that we can fully support your endeavors.

Until your child is toilet trained, please supply plenty of diapers to be stocked here at school. We will supply wipes. Also, if your child needs a diaper cream of some sort, you may bring us the diaper cream of your choice. We will ask you to fill out a Medication Release form to accompany it.

Wellness Policy

Please keep your child home if he or she is experiencing one or more of the following:

- -Diarrhea
- -Vomiting
- -Fever over 100 degrees F taken under the arm
- -Severe cough
- -Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes
- -Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- -Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above
- -Difficult breathing or abnormal wheezing
- -Complaints of severe pain

Please note: your child must be free of above *all* symptoms without assistance of medication for 24 hours before they return to school

Any child who shows signs of illness while in our care will be isolated from the other children, and the ill child's parents will be notified. We do not have the space or staff available to care for sick children, so sick children are required to be picked up *immediately*.

Child Abuse Policy

Law mandates that all of our staff, parents, volunteers, and other adults report suspected abuse and neglect to proper authorities. This is in accordance with Oregon policy of mandated reporting.

School Television

We do not use any television, movies, or video games during school.

School Closures

- Martin Luther King, Jr Day
- Spring break
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving week
- Christmas Eve through New Year's

Please check our school calendar for specific closure dates annually.

As for snow delays and closures, we follow the Bend-Lapine School District. You may find out about these delays and cancellations by dialing 323-SNOW or checking the local news and radio. If the Bend-Lapine schools are on break, and we are scheduled to be open we will leave a message on our school voice-mail indicating any weather-driven closure/delay.

Arrival and Departure

First of all, arrival and departure are transitions that can be emotionally challenging at the preschool age. For the sake of all of our children, please keep these transitions as quick-but-patient and smooth as possible.

Upon arrival, all children must be signed in with the signature of a previously approved adult.

Morning school starts at 9:00. Children may arrive as early as 7:30, and must arrive before 9:00. In order for children to arrive at school later than

9:00am, special arrangements must be made ahead of time and can only happen upon rare occasion. Please be considerate of your child, the other children, and our teachers by arriving every day before 9:00.

Before leaving your child in our care, you are expected to make contact with a teacher who will recognize that your child has arrived and is now in our care.

At the end of your child's time at school, please help your child gather any items to take home. We will do our best to brief you on any note-worthy events of your child's day. Again, we will need to keep this time brief, but will work out a way to communicate with you further if any of the events need further discussion.

Pick-up of half-day children is at 12:00/noon. Pick-up of all day and afternoon children is expected no earlier than 3:30pm and no later than 5:30pm. Late pick-up fees apply to every pick-up that occurs after noon and 5:30 respectively.

Before taking your child, you are responsible for making contact with a teacher who will recognize that your child is now leaving our care. Your signature will be required daily for "sign-out". When picking up a child, any adult may be required to show id as requested by a teacher. This is for the safety of your child, and we appreciate your cooperation in all of these details.

Late Pick-up Fees

Late fees will be charged for parents who enter the doors for pickup as follows:

-\$10 for the first five minutes

-\$1 for every minute following

Late fees must be paid in cash directly to the teacher who has stayed late for your child at the time of pick-up.

Payments

Payments are due by the 1st of each month. Payments not paid by the 1st will be subject to a \$20 late fee.

Extra days can be accommodated at the rate of \$40/day based on availability of space. Payment for an additional day is due on that day. Extra half-days can be accommodated at the rate of \$25/half-day based on availability of space.

Rates are subject to change annually and will be adjusted in February.

Absences

Please notify us as early as possible if your child will be absent due to either illness or vacation. In spite of absences, your full tuition will need to be paid in order to maintain your child's spot in the school. If your child's absence is due to a contagious illness, please let us know so that we can post a notice for other parents if necessary, as is required by law.

Changes in Enrollment

We require a 30 day notice for all changes in enrollment. The 30 day notice is mandatory, but a lengthier notice is greatly appreciated!

Parent Handbook Agreement

I have read the Bloom Children’s Center Parent Handbook. I hereby agree to adhere to all policies therein, upon enrolling my child at Bloom Children’s Center.

Signed _____ Date _____
(parent/guardian)

Signed _____ Date _____
(parent/guardian)

My student’s name(s):

