

PIEDMONT PROGRESSIVE PRESCHOOL

Parent Handbook



Contact Information

Co-Directors: Leslie Studer & Maloree Shockley

Address: 9704 Mallard Creek Road
Charlotte, NC 28262

Web: www.piedmontprogressive.org

Email: progressive.preschool@gmail.com

Table of Contents

History and Founders	3
PPP Council	4,5
The Philosophy of PPP	6,7
The Benefits of Ease-In	8
Holidays and Holy Days	9
Talking About Children	9,10
Helping that Hinders	11
Why Red Paint?	12
Centers	13
Appropriate Attire	16
Personal Belongings	16
Lunch	17
Closing/Emergencies	18
Transportation and Traffic Safety	18
Carpool Safety	18
Late Pick-Up Policy	19
Visitor Policy	19
Traditions	20
Photo and Media Consent Policy	20
Our Approach to Behavior	21, 22, 23
Health Care Policies	24
Diapering Procedure	25
Supporting Children with Special Considerations	25
Financial Arrangements/Tuition Policy	26
Tuition Payments	26
Addressing Concerns and Grievances	26
Suggestions for Separating	27
Doing Your Part at PPP	28
Guidelines for Volunteering in the Classroom	29, 30
Woodworking	28
Conferences and Meetings	29
Open Door School and PPP	31



History and Founders

In 2001, Mary Coppola and Susan Burns, whose children attended a South Charlotte preschool, envisioned a similar nurturing environment closer to home. This shared dream led them to establish a non-profit, progressive preschool in the University area, drawing on the philosophy of Sue Riley, a highly respected early-childhood educator in Charlotte. Sue's wisdom and guidance were instrumental as the school began its journey.

Mary and Susan sought to create a secular preschool that fostered freedom of thought, creativity, and strong visual aesthetics. They chose the Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church for its convenient location, wooded grounds, and appealing classrooms. Although the preschool operates independently, it maintains a close, supportive relationship with the church. The school officially opened on October 16, 2001, with a multi-age classroom for three-to-five-year-olds. By January 2003, a class for two-year-olds was introduced, followed by a four/five-year-old class in the school's third year, both of which were met with enthusiastic support.

In 2005, Mary and Susan transitioned leadership to a Parent Council model to focus more on their own children who had aged out of the program. This shift empowered parents and teachers to collaborate in sustaining the school's mission. Over the years, the dedicated involvement of parents and a committed teaching staff has preserved the original vision of a creative, independent, and supportive learning environment.

Today, the preschool continues to thrive as a unique, secular, non-profit institution where each child's individuality is celebrated and nurtured. The enduring partnership between parents and teachers ensures that the school remains a cherished and vital part of the community.

Piedmont Progressive Preschool Council

Piedmont Progressive Preschool (PPP) is a nonprofit organization governed by a Parent Council in accordance with our bylaws. Council members serve as volunteers or elected representatives and are entrusted with sustaining the mission, philosophy, and operational health of our school.

PPP believes children are capable decision-makers who learn through discovery, curiosity, cooperation, and respectful community engagement. As Council members, we model these same values in our leadership, communication, and service.

Council Positions and Responsibilities:

All Council Members Agree to:

- Uphold PPP's discovery-based, inclusive philosophy
- Act in the best interest of all children and families
- Maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive financial, personnel, or family matters
- Communicate respectfully and support Council decisions once made
- Prepare for and participate constructively in meetings
- Fulfill the duties of their specific role, including but not limited to the summaries below

Voting Positions:

Council Chairperson (or co-chairpersons) - see bylaws Article IV, Section 1 for responsibilities

Vice-Chairperson - see bylaws Article IV, Section 2 for responsibilities

Treasurer - see bylaws Article IV, Section 3 for responsibilities

Secretary - see bylaws Article IV, Section 4 for responsibilities

Volunteer Coordinator - organize volunteers as needed and coordinate with class reps

Ex: recycling/towel rotation, teacher appreciation week, beginning of school teacher lunches, food for ease-in, set-up and clean-up for pot lucks, parent work days, etc.

Fundraising Chairperson

- organize annual fundraising events (carnival, silent auction, etc.)
- organize various fundraising campaigns
- keep council members updated on annual events
- report fundraising costs, funds raised, and net profit
- manage fundraising team, if applicable

Building and Grounds Chairperson

- Oversee maintenance and upkeep of playground and outside of fence area
- Maintain safety of trail area
- Inspect for hornet's nests, poison ivy and any other hazards
- Check safety of swings and other equipment

Voting Members Agree to:

- Attend at least 80% of monthly meetings (minimum of 8 meetings per August–May cycle)
- Participate in discussion and voting
- Review budget updates and relevant materials in advance
- Refer to Article IV, Section 6 of the bylaws for additional attendance policies, including procedures for notifying Council of an absence.

Non-Voting Positions:**Community Engagement Chair**

- Research articles/activities pertaining to PPP's curriculum:
- Nature-based learning, Play-based education, Places to visit
- Present found materials in an engaging way, such as:
 - Blog, Facebook page, Book club, PPP's website, Parent Education Night

Class Representatives - 2/3s, 3/4s, 4/5s. (3 positions)

- Communicate to council any ideas, suggestions, etc. from parents
- Notify parents about changes, new policies, etc. (with provided flyers)
- Organize teacher appreciation if parents are interested (not required)
- Assist other council members with communications to parents if needed

Non-Voting Members Agree to:

- Attend meetings when possible
- Provide updates related to their area
- Support communication and engagement within the PPP community



The Philosophy of Piedmont Progressive Preschool

Learning from decision making:

to make the complex and numerous decisions required of them as adults, children must begin when they are very young to believe that they are capable of deciding.¹

PPP's philosophy is based on discovery learning - the belief that learning, growing, and developing are natural, intuitive, and inevitable processes. Children want to learn, be independent, and competent. They are naturally curious, innovative and creative. Thus, teachers should function as facilitators, protecting children's natural curiosity and encouraging investigation and inquisitiveness, thereby enabling children to develop according to their own potential. Growth cannot be compartmentalized. PPP nurtures each child's strengths and weaknesses at each stage of development and maturity.

Throughout its history, Piedmont Progressive Preschool has embraced and celebrated diversity in all its forms- including racial, cultural, religious, economic, and ability diversity. The school is committed to creating an inclusive environment where all children can learn from and with one another, fostering understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

PPP is dedicated to upholding the dignity of every individual, ensuring that children feel safe and supported as they explore, question, experiment, and play. The school encourages peaceful conflict resolution, cooperation over competition, and the recognition and celebration of our differences as essential parts of a vibrant, respectful community.

Sue Spayth Riley, *How to Generate Values in Young Children*. 1

What We Teach

Piedmont Progressive developed its own rich curriculum to include music, art, science, blocks, books² and literature, dramatic play, outdoor play, gardening, cooking and woodworking. The goal of the curriculum is to give children the skills they need to be competent learners:

A positive self image	Problem solving
Resourcefulness	Self-reliance
Observation	Flexibility
Adaptability	Tolerance
Cooperation versus competition	Self-direction and self-motivation
Ability to resolve conflicts peacefully	
Ability to analyze and generalize, associate and differentiate, and integrate	

Pathways to Learning: An Early Childhood Resource and Curriculum Guide, self-published. 2

How We Teach

Piedmont Progressive believes that education is a lifelong process, and that growth cannot be compartmentalized. Here at Piedmont Progressive, we encourage discovery learning through hands-on activities, open-ended situations, and play. There is more information on this topic in the section on centers, page 9.

Educational Philosophy

The educational philosophy of Piedmont Progressive Preschool is grounded in the research and insights of influential educators, including Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, Constance Kamii, Bev Bos, and Erik Erikson. Our unique curriculum is also guided by Pathways to Learning, developed by Sue Riley, which outlines key learning areas such as learning centers, woodworking, and gardening.

Piedmont Progressive is committed to creating a developmentally appropriate curriculum that nurtures the whole child - physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively.

To support this approach, our teachers will:

- Integrate all areas of child development—physical, emotional, social, and cognitive.
- Observe and document each child's unique interests and developmental progress.
- Introduce materials and experiences sequentially, increasing complexity as children's understanding and skills grow
- Engage children through open-ended questions and thoughtful prompts that stimulate critical
- Design learning environments that encourage active exploration and interaction with peers, adults, and engaging materials.
- Use hands-on, concrete materials that are relevant to the lives of young children.
- Make reasonable efforts to support children with interests, abilities, or needs that fall outside typical developmental ranges.
- Provide a wide variety of activities and materials to foster curiosity and discovery.
- thinking.
- Support children in successfully completing tasks through encouragement, focused attention, and physical and emotional presence.
- Recognize that learning through trial and error is valuable, and understand that misconceptions are a natural part of the learning process.
- Provide inclusive, multicultural, and non-gender-biased experiences, materials, and resources that reflect the diversity of our community and the broader world.



The Benefits to Ease-In

What is "Ease-In"? Why does it take so long? These are two questions parents often ask at the beginning of each year. This is an attempt to help you understand the importance of Ease-In and the benefits it provides to your child and the classroom.

Have you ever worked in a job that threw you right into the regular routine without giving you the opportunity to figure out with whom you were working, a tour of the facility where you worked, and an orientation to give you expectations and schedules? It can be a bit overwhelming for us as adults. Now imagine a child two, three, or four years of age jumping feet first into a new situation. At school, the children come to a new environment, encounter new and interesting tools for learning, meet and interact with new adults and lots of new children, and are asked to conform to a new routine.

Our goal is to make this transition into school as smooth and gentle as possible. Of course, children develop at different rates, and some may be able to handle coming to school all day on Day One. The reason for Ease-In is not based solely on the individual child, but rather on the class as a whole. The ideal situation is that, together, the children and teachers experience the routine a little bit at a time, adding on as the routine becomes familiar and the month progresses. This has been successful in helping children learn all the transitions they have to face each day at school without being overwhelmed and stressed by the big picture (the whole day).

It can be easy to forget that time and simplicity are powerful gifts. In today's fast-paced world, we're often pushed to keep going until we're exhausted - until we break down, or burn out.

At Piedmont Progressive Preschool, we choose a different path. We embrace the gentle, steady rhythm of the Turtle rather than the hurried, frantic pace of the Hare.

As we move through the Ease-In period each fall, please remember that our approach is grounded in what's best for your child - and for the entire class. We're here to support a smooth, thoughtful transition that nurtures each child's sense of security, trust, and belonging.



Holidays and Holy Days

We believe that holidays are best celebrated within the context of family, homes and places of worship where they can be honored with the respect they so richly deserve. Our classrooms are places where children of all beliefs, cultures, and traditions come together to grow and learn while experiencing traditions common to all (i.e. "The Candle Song" at lunchtime). In a society where holidays are surrounded by commercialism, we strive to make PPP be a respite for children (and adults!) from a frantic world that overwhelms us all.

We are a place where children are encouraged to express themselves using an array of colors and materials rather than colors and decorations dictated by the traditions of each holiday. We are a place where children can sing, tell stories, dress up, build blocks, and cook without being confined to songs, stories, and recipes of the "season." Remember that caring and nurturing adults will listen to stories that your children tell and the conversations they have about their own traditions and celebrations. What we can do well in this setting is listen well and warmly to what children share, and share that back with you.

Talking About Children

One aspect of our philosophy is that we try never to talk about children in their presence. We feel that it is disrespectful to the child to behave as if they are not present while discussing them. If you would like to discuss issues about your child, please feel free to send a Brightwheel message to arrange a time when when your child is otherwise engaged. Here is an article that might shed light on this subject:



TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN IN THEIR PRESENCE

By Katherine Reeves ³

We all talk about children in their presence. In our thoughtlessness, we all have at some time done it – before we had our eyes opened to its cruelty and discourtesy. We have all undoubtedly been the victims of it, as children. And the memory of our discomfort and embarrassment should have been enough to deter us from its practice forever. But strangely, when we become adult in years, we often forget what it was like to be a child. We forget how keenly children feel, how insufficient their understanding of the ways of grownups is, what it is like to be small and defenseless and to have to stand by miserably while your shortcomings are discussed.

Why do grownups talk about children in their presence? Do we really think children have no ears, no comprehension of words, no sensitivity to glances, and no ability to catch implications from adult talk? And what kind of example of manners, in courtesy to others, is communicated to a child who must listen in while he is being discussed?

Such conversation gives sanction to two kinds of behavior (which adults often at great pains try to teach children not to indulge in) – namely, gossiping about other people and eavesdropping on adult conversation. We must believe that this is simply thoughtlessness and not intent. But it is well to think of its meaning to everyone.

We would not suggest, of course, that adults should not talk together about children – their own and other people's. This is part of adult responsibility, especially that of parents and teachers who share in the guidance and teaching of children. But we do suggest that much of what is said about children in their presence borders on gossip and is destructive to morale. Often the adult uses the device of talking about a child's problems and difficulties in an effort to teach a lesson obliquely. And the child knows this. He readily gets the slant of the conversation and discovers that it is directed to him, although his actual physical presence is ignored.

One of the great needs of the child, and one which does not diminish greatly with age, is the need to feel that not only is he accepted by the important people in his world – and all grownups are important in a child's world – but also that he is respected. A child doesn't have the words to label the relationship that accords him respect for what he is and what he tries to do. But he has the feeling. And when this feeling is violated, as it must be when he must stand by and know that he is the subject of secretive conversation (or of conversation that is not at all secretive but that is disregarding his presence), he loses a little of his faith in the grown-up world.

Katherine Reeves was professor of Child Development and Family Relationships, at Cornell University at the time ³ this was printed in *Growing*, vol. 14, No. 2, January-March, 1962, pp 16-18.

HELPING THAT HINDERS

Our classroom has a steady, hummy feel to it in the mornings. Your children enter, greet friends and teachers and dig into the work of childhood—exploration! We adults are excited to see children learning as they play, and most of us want to join in, perhaps in fond remembrance of our own early days. We are often quite eager to share with them what we know.

However, there is a fine line between imparting helpful information and interfering with the child's exploration of materials. Some adults may think it's fun and educational to demonstrate play dough techniques such as worm rolling and snowman crafting; or, a grown-up might want to show a child how to do a really nifty drawing with crayons; one might also conclude that when an adult demonstrates the art of bridging in the block corner it would be useful for a preschooler.

Unfortunately, adult modeling (showing how) robs a child of the chance to discover creativity on her own, in her own good time. It really doesn't teach these skills. Modeling does train a child to wait, to follow directions, to follow someone else rather than think one's own ideas.

Most of us are aware of the scribble stage that children go through with art. They actually need time to "scribble" with sand, blocks, and other materials as well. A young child playing with blocks for the first time will probably enjoy piling them and moving them around the room. The child is getting a sense of the blocks' weight and feel. Later comes stacking and placing side by side. There are decisions to be made here. With enough opportunity to really experience the blocks, the children will discover on their own that by placing a block lengthwise across two other blocks they have built a bridge. What joy! What a great satisfaction!

A well-meaning adult may build a structure with blocks that pleases the child. But what frustration the child may feel as she tries to reproduce it! The child has been robbed, for the block building has become something to watch, not do.

Children who are given the chance to explore materials freely grow up to be creative thinkers, problem solvers. Their creativity is not stifled because they do not stumble over the thought, "What am I supposed to do with this? I don't have any ideas." Creative children work to please themselves, not to please someone else. They grow up to be our thinkers, our doers.

Of course we still want to join in their play, and we can if we follow their lead. Poke the play dough, sift the sand, but don't call the shots.⁴

This article, formerly "Helping that Doesn't Help, but Hinders," is a revised version of a letter written by an Open Door teacher to the parents of her class, edited by Sue Riley. ⁴

Why Red Paint?

Yes, it is true that for weeks, every time we have paint, it will be red, and will continue to be red for a long time. Very young children have had little opportunity to experience painting, and we want them to explore the process of applying paint to the paper without being distracted by making choices about which color to use.

We see the amazement in their eyes as they take the brush, dip it into the paint, and actually make red appear on the paper. They will learn that the use of paint is soon followed by the very popular washing of hands. They will learn that an adult will put their name on the paper, and that they can take the wet painted picture to the hall to dry. They will learn to make strokes with the brush, or to dip with a sponge or another object. They will learn the difference between painting on paper and painting on the table. They will learn to wipe off the table, floor, and hands when they, too, become red. This is a lot for them, and for now, it is enough. Other colors will come along as the children mature. Right now, they are simply into painting for painting's sake.

Learning is a process, not a product.



Centers

Art

Art is a means of expression and a path to individuality. The artistic process serves as an important creative outlet for children. Image-making helps children process life experiences and fantasies while heightening their aesthetic awareness and sensitivity to beauty. Engaging in art fosters numerous opportunities for problem-solving; creative, critical, and especially intuitive thinking; as well as the development of decision-making skills. Manipulative, pre-writing, reading, and social skills are enhanced as children code and decode the world around them through their creations.

Art is fundamentally a matter of seeing—both literally and intuitively—and it aids in cultivating the senses. It is also pleasurable and satisfying, offering children opportunities to express something about themselves, by themselves, through unique marks on paper.

Piedmont Progressive Teachers:

- Give no pre-direction, modeling or expectation to children in terms of finished product or use of materials
- Respect the right of children to discard what they have made
- Recognize and accept age and child appropriate skills
- Change plans at the children's suggestions
- Observe children carefully and strive to identify and meet their needs, and let children go about their discoveries in peace

Blocks

Almost every aspect of a child's development can be enhanced through the use of blocks. Because blocks are designed in mathematical units, they support the development of a concrete understanding of concepts essential to logical thinking. Children develop awareness of size, shape, number, order, area, length, and weight as they select, build with, and put away blocks. Both large and small muscle development is supported through block play. Additionally, language, aesthetic appreciation, and social skills grow alongside problem-solving abilities, cooperation, and respect for others and their work.

Books

Books have long been the traditional backbone of learning. Despite the wide variety of materials now available to children of all ages, books remain an essential part of the learning process. Today's book offerings have expanded significantly in both range and expertise. At Piedmont Progressive, our primary goal is to help children develop a love of books and reading, along with the vocabulary growth and communication skills that come with it. Through regular exposure to books and reading, children nurture their creativity and imagination. Books also support the recognition of cause and effect, as well as the sequencing of sentences and events. At Piedmont Progressive, we aim to engage as many senses as possible to stimulate holistic growth

Dramatic Play

In dramatic play, children take their real experiences with people and things, combine them with their thoughts and feelings about those experiences, and come up with new ideas. They can then use these ideas to create new experiences, which in turn produce more ideas—and so on it goes. A wonderful creative outlet, role-playing allows children to try out new ideas in a safe environment, work out emotions, and share experiences. It promotes interaction with peers, and aids in the development of vocabulary and social skills.

Manipulatives

Manipulatives not only foster versatility and creativity but also provide opportunities for simultaneous learning across multiple areas, including math, physics, spatial relations, verbal and social development, problem-solving, decision-making, coordination of both small and large muscles, aesthetics, and imagination.

Music & Movement

Music and rhythmic movement are fundamental elements of cultures worldwide, which is why we integrate them into many aspects of our classrooms. Our goal is to provide children with opportunities to enjoy music and experience rhythm, mood, and melody in a relaxed and joyful environment. While music serves as a creative, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive outlet, above all, it is a source of joy and fun. Classroom music activities include singing, listening, playing instruments, and creative movement. These experiences enable children to express their feelings, process information, and develop language skills.

Music is used in the Piedmont Progressive classroom to:

- Transition from one activity to another, i.e. from group time to the lunch table;
- Focus the attention of a group of children'
- Rest our bodies;
- Practice sound, rhythm, patterns, numbers and language;
- Be a living participant in the oral traditions of our culture;
- Inspire and to be enjoyed!

Outdoor Play

The primary difference between indoor and outdoor play is the availability of more space, greater freedom, increased movement, more noise, and different materials - especially sand and dirt. The outdoors provides opportunities for adults and children to make music, cook and eat, enjoy stories and bring them to life, play with water, work with tools, care for dolls and dress up, and create with paint, clay, and other natural materials. Much of children's social development occurs on the playground as they learn to take turns, form groups, and engage in cooperative play.

We believe outdoor play is a vital part of a child's development, offering daily opportunities to explore the environment in all kinds of weather - except in extreme conditions.

It is important for children to dress appropriately for the weather, and please expect that your child may be quite dirty at the end of each school day.

Play Dough & Clay

Play dough and clay are fundamental materials in a quality preschool program. Both are forms of three-dimensional art that are accessible and engaging for children of various ages. Play dough is soft and made from a flour-and-salt base, while clay is derived from natural earthen materials and has a firmer texture. Both materials are easy to manipulate and highly appealing to the sense of touch. Clay, in particular, satisfies the natural desire to be "messy" due to its damp consistency. Activities such as pounding, smashing, and pulling apart clay and play dough also provide children with a healthy outlet to express and release intense emotions.

Sand & Water

Sand and water are naturally soothing materials that strongly attract children's curiosity. Exploring these media provides rich sensory stimulation as well as opportunities for scientific discovery. Children develop cognitive and observational skills as they investigate how adding water changes the weight, texture, and cohesiveness of sand, and explore why some objects sink in water while others float. Like many other activity centers, the sand and water tables also encourage cooperative play, helping children build friendships and develop social skills.

Woodworking

Woodworking involves a wide range of skills, tools, and materials, offering virtually unlimited opportunities for unstructured conceptual learning. Mathematics and fundamental principles of physics come into play through activities such as measuring, fitting, balancing, and applying force. Children continuously practice coordination, while decision-making and planning are integral parts of the experience. They are encouraged to learn independently, with support and guidance provided by a parent volunteer.



Attending Piedmont Progressive Preschool

Appropriate Attire

To ensure your child's safety, comfort, and full participation in all activities, please adhere to the following clothing and footwear requirements:

- Clothing: Children must wear casual, **washable** clothes suitable for active play and messy activities. Clothing should be easy for the child to manage independently during toileting. Please avoid any clothing that you do not want to get dirty or stained.
- Footwear: Sturdy, soft-soled shoes are required. Tennis shoes are ideal. Flip-flops, cowboy boots, and slick-soled shoes are not permitted, as they increase the risk of injury.
- Outdoor Wear: Children will play outside even in drizzly or cold weather. Please provide appropriate raincoats and boots.
- Layering: During transitional seasons such as spring and fall, layering clothing is recommended to accommodate temperature changes throughout the day.

By following these guidelines, you help us maintain a safe and comfortable environment where children can explore, play, and learn freely.

Clothing and Personal Items Guidelines

- Labeling: Please put your child's name on all clothing items to prevent loss or mix-ups.
- Extra Clothing: Send a complete change of clothes, including socks, to be kept in your child's cubby. Check and update these extra clothes regularly to ensure they are appropriate for the current season and weather conditions.
- Backpacks: backpacks are not permitted, as they are too bulky for our small cubbies, instead each child should have a PPP Tie-Dye bag that is perfectly sized to fit anything you child needs at school, and so that they can handle their belongings independently.
- Toys from Home: To support a positive group play environment and the developmental goals of our program, we ask that children do not bring toys from home. Personal toys can create competition and distractions among children.
- Comfort Items: If your child has a special comfort item ("lovey") that they need to have at school, please discuss this with their teacher to make appropriate arrangements.



Lunch

- Please pack your child's lunch in reusable containers rather than disposable packaging to reduce waste and support environmental responsibility. Reusable containers also help foster your child's independence and allow us to send home any uneaten food so you can monitor what your child eats.
- Include a cloth napkin, any necessary utensils, and a reusable water bottle with your child's lunch.
- Make sure your child's name is clearly labeled on their lunch box and all accompanying items.
- Please **do not send candy**, or excessive sweets.
-

Suggestions for Lunches:

Sandwiches	Deviled/boiled eggs
Cut up fruits and vegetables	Crackers
Oatmeal	Pretzels
Cut up cheese	Cooked Noodles
Cut up meat	Muffins
Raisins and dried fruits	Dry, whole-grain cereal

Thank you for supporting our efforts in encouraging healthy lunches!

Zero Waste Lunches

A few years ago, starting on Earth Day, we introduced a special challenge for our community: sending "Zero Waste Lunches" to school. It's a tradition we proudly continue today!

As an environmentally conscious school, we aim to lead by example and help children learn the important role each of us plays in caring for our planet.

We kindly ask families to follow these guidelines when packing lunch:

- Use only reusable containers, cloth napkins, and washable utensils.
- Avoid disposable items such as plastic baggies, juice pouches, single-use water bottles, or prepackaged foods like Lunchables.
- By reducing packaging and waste, we teach children to be thoughtful stewards of the environment—and every little effort makes a big difference!

Thank you for helping us make sustainability a part of everyday learning!



Closings/Emergencies

In the event of inclement weather, emergencies, schedule changes, or other unforeseen circumstances, all updates regarding school operations - including delays, closures, early dismissals, or other schedule changes - will be communicated through the Brightwheel app. Notifications may be sent as a Brightwheel message or, when time-sensitive, as a Brightwheel text alert. Families are responsible for ensuring their Brightwheel notifications are enabled and for monitoring the app for important announcements.

In the event of an emergency requiring the school to close early, teachers will remain with the children until each child has been picked up by a parent or authorized emergency contact.

Transportation and Traffic Safety

Morning Drop-Off Guidelines - 3-4's and 4-5's classes **The 2-3's class Drop-Off begins at 9:00 a.m.*

- To ensure a smooth and safe start to the day, a teacher will be outside to greet and assist children out of their cars between 9:15 and 9:30 a.m.
- Please note: Children should not arrive before 9:15 a.m. Our teachers use the time before drop-off for important planning and classroom preparation, and are not yet available to give children the full attention they deserve.
- We kindly ask that families respect this schedule—we're unable to make exceptions.
- Thank you for helping us create a calm and focused start to the school day!

Afternoon Pick-Up Guidelines - 3-4's and 4-5's classes. ** *The 2-3's class Pick-Up begins at 12:00 p.m.*

- Please make every effort to pick up your child on time each day. Timely pick-up helps ensure a smooth and low-stress end to the school day- for children and teachers.
- We understand that unexpected delays can happen. We encourage families to set up a buddy system with other parents who pick up at the same time, so you have someone to call if you're ever running late.
- Sometimes, waiting in a friend's car or having a quick playtime on the playground can turn a delay into a fun little adventure—while easing stress for everyone involved.
- As a community, we support each other best when we plan ahead and work together. Thank you for being part of that effort!

Carpool Safety Guidelines

For the safety of all children and families, we ask that the car line move as efficiently and quickly as possible during pick-up. If cars stop for conversation or questions, it can block traffic and create a potentially unsafe situation for families trying to turn in from the road.

- Please save conversations with teachers for another time. Dismissal is not ideal for discussions about your child. If you'd like to talk, feel free to send your teacher a Brightwheel message or arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time when your child is not present.
- All children must be secured in an appropriate child restraint seat before leaving. Teachers will help bring your child to the car, and you are responsible for buckling them in.
- Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the parking lot. Please hold your child's hand when crossing to or from your car. If you would like to chat with another parent, please park in a designated space—and remember, children should never be left unattended in a vehicle.

- Teachers cannot supervise siblings or other children who are visiting with you during classroom or playground visits. Their full attention must remain on the students in their care.
- We cannot accept verbal messages from children. If your child will be going home with a friend or someone other than the usual driver, please send a message through Brightwheel.
- Thank you for helping us keep dismissal safe, smooth, and stress-free for everyone!
- Please respect Accessible Parking Spaces

Late Pick-up Policy

Picking your child up on time is important—not only for your child’s sense of security and routine, but also for the well-being and schedule of our teaching staff. **When children are picked up promptly, it reinforces trust, reduces anxiety, and supports a smooth end to their school day.**

We understand that occasional delays can happen. However, consistent punctuality is essential, and we appreciate your full cooperation.

If you are late for pick-up, the following policy applies:

- First Occurrence: You will receive a written warning via Brightwheel.
- Subsequent Occurrences: A late fee will be charged through Brightwheel Invoicing at a rate of \$15 for every 15-minute increment:
- 1–15 minutes late: \$15, 16–30 minutes late: \$30, and so on

In Case of an Emergency:

- Please have a back-up plan in place for pick-up emergencies.
- Notify the PPP staff as soon as possible if you’re delayed.
- Ensure your child’s Brightwheel profile includes current emergency contacts and clearly identifies all adults authorized for pick-up.
- Thank you for helping us maintain a respectful and supportive environment for our children, families, and staff.

Campus Access & Visitors

For the safety and security of our school community, the front door of the building remains locked at all times. All family entry and exit should occur through the playground gate.

To minimize disruptions to the school day, walk-in visits and tours are not permitted during school hours. If you need to visit campus, please make arrangements in advance through Brightwheel or by contacting a Director. The playground gate remains locked outside of designated drop-off and pick-up times. Upon arrival, approved visitors may use the Ring camera at the gate to notify staff.

Please understand that staff may not be immediately available to admit visitors, as their primary responsibility is supervising children. Unauthorized solicitation, sales, or promotional activities on campus are not permitted.

Traditions

The Candle Song:

Little candle burning bright,
Won't you share with us your light?
May we always learn to share,
With other children everywhere.



The Candle Song is sung before lunch (snack in the 2/3's class) to foster a sense of community.

Founder's Day Parade

Every fall, the school celebrates and honors our founders, Susan Burns and Mary Coppola. The 3/4's and 4/5's classes and teachers dress up and parade around the tree planted for their dedication.

End of the Year Picnics

During the last week of school, your family will be invited to join your child's class on the playground for a picnic lunch. Coming together is a wonderful way to finish out the year and welcome summer.

Photo and Media Consent Policy

At PPP, we love sharing the joyful moments of your child's day — but we also take the privacy, safety, and dignity of every child and family seriously.

Before any photo, video, or piece of your child's work is shared publicly, we require your written consent.

When you enroll, you'll choose from a few consent options: internal communications only (e.g., classroom newsletters or Brightwheel), external communications (e.g., our website or social media), all of the above, or none.

You're welcome to change your preferences at any time — just let us know in writing.

If we don't have full media consent on file for your child, they will not be photographed or included in anything we post or share.

To protect every child's privacy, anything we do share will never include last names or other identifying details, and will always be appropriate for a public audience. Staff are never permitted to post photos of children on their own personal social media accounts.

If you have any questions about your consent preferences or would like to update them, please reach out to a Director.

Our Approach to Behavior

We view behavior as a form of communication. Our approach is rooted in respect for the child, an understanding of child development, and a commitment to supporting social-emotional growth within a play-based, group environment. Our goal is never to punish, but to help children build the skills they need to participate successfully in a group setting.

Positive classroom management guides everything we do. This includes:

- Recognizing that each child behaves and learns in their own way
- Modeling appropriate behavior and offering assistance so children can solve their own problems
- Stating expectations positively ("walk please" instead of "don't run")
- Speaking to the behavior, not the child ("hitting hurts; let's find another way" instead of labeling the child)
- Respecting the child and their belongings
- Allowing natural and logical consequences whenever possible (e.g., a spill is cleaned up by the child who spilled it)
- Supporting healthy emotional expression - crying, talking it out, or physical outlets like hitting a pillow are all acceptable
- Using brief, calm "quiet time" away from the group only after other strategies have been tried, so a child can settle and rejoin when ready
- Using a brief, calm physical hold only if needed to prevent a child from hurting themselves or others or damaging equipment - never as punishment
- Never using corporal punishment

When a child's behavior is consistently affecting the classroom, teachers will talk with parents so that we can build strategies together.

Aggressive and Unsafe Behavior

Young children are still developing impulse control, and occasional lapses are expected. However, behavior that is unsafe for others requires immediate, consistent intervention. Unsafe behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Hitting, kicking, biting, or pushing
- Throwing objects with force or intent to harm
- Using materials in a way that could cause injury
- Moving through the classroom in ways that create unsafe conditions
- Repeated verbal aggression or threats toward peers or staff

When these behaviors occur, staff will intervene immediately to ensure safety, help the child step away from the situation, and support them in regulating and re-entering the group when possible.

If unsafe behavior repeats within a day, or a child is unable to regain regulation, the Director may determine the child needs to be picked up early (see below). Patterns of aggressive or unsafe behavior that are frequent,

escalating, or unresponsive to typical classroom support will prompt a formal meeting with the family and the development of a support plan.

Biting

Biting is developmentally common in early childhood, but because of the risk of injury to other children, it requires an immediate and consistent response:

- Any bite that breaks the skin or leaves a visible mark requires immediate pick-up.
- For bites that don't break the skin, early pick-up may still be required depending on severity, context, and whether the child can safely rejoin the group.
- Repeated biting incidents will prompt a meeting to determine next steps, which may include a support plan, outside consultation, or additional supervision.

Our priority is always the safety of the group alongside helping the child develop safer ways to communicate.

Early Dismissal

Early pick-up is used to ensure safety and give a child time to reset in a more supported environment - it is not a punishment. A child may be dismissed early if:

- Their behavior poses a risk of harm to themselves, other children, or staff
- There are multiple incidents of aggressive or unsafe behavior in a single day
- They are unable to regain regulation despite teacher support
- Their needs require continuous one-on-one support that cannot be safely provided in the classroom at that time

If early dismissal is necessary, we will contact the family for prompt pick-up and share a brief summary of what happened. Repeated early dismissals (generally more than 2–3 within a short timeframe) will prompt a meeting with the family to determine next steps.

Individualized Support and Reasonable Accommodation

We are committed to partnering with families to support each child's development and participation in the classroom. As a small, play-based program with fixed staffing ratios, we also have real limits on the individual support we can provide.

When challenges arise, we may:

- Adjust the environment or daily routine
- Provide increased teacher support and proximity
- Implement individualized strategies
- Recommend outside evaluation or consultation

If a child requires ongoing, individualized supervision to participate safely, we may ask the family to arrange for a dedicated support person ("shadow") to accompany the child during program hours.

Any shadow must:

- Be able to work within a play-based, child-led environment
- Follow the guidance of classroom teachers and program leadership
- Support the child in a way that fosters independence, social connection, and regulation within the group, rather than creating a separate, adult-directed experience

The Directors will determine whether a proposed shadow is a good fit for the classroom.

If staff identify a need for professional consultation or a shadow and the family declines to pursue it, the family may be asked to find placement in another program.

Determining Program Fit

PPP is designed as a play-based, group experience, and most children adjust and thrive here with time and support. In some cases, however, a child's needs may not align with what we can provide.

A child's enrollment may be reconsidered if:

- Their needs require consistent one-on-one support beyond what the program can reasonably provide
- Aggressive or unsafe behavior continues despite interventions and support
- The classroom is no longer supporting their development
- Their needs are significantly affecting the safety or well-being of the group

At PPP, the safety and well-being of the entire class must always take priority over the individual needs of any one child. We hope to serve as diverse a population of learners as possible, in the belief that this diversity strengthens our whole community.

Partnership with Families

Open, ongoing communication is essential. We view families as partners in supporting each child, and we believe collaboration is key to helping every child succeed in a group setting.

Conferences & Meetings

Two formal parent-teacher conferences are scheduled annually. In addition, parents and teachers are encouraged to communicate informally via phone, email, or notes.

Parents and family members are always welcome to visit the classroom- to have lunch, read a story, or simply say hello. Visits provide a wonderful chance to see your child interacting with peers in a relaxed setting.



Health Care Policies

To maintain a healthy and safe environment for all children and staff, we ask that families follow the health care guidelines below. Prompt communication and cooperation help us minimize the spread of illness and ensure children are cared for appropriately.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Children must stay home and will be sent home from school if they exhibit any of the following symptoms. In these cases, your child must remain at home until they have been symptom-free without the use of fever-reducing medication for at least 24 hours:

- Fever of 100°F or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea or loose stools that are not typical for your child
- Any suspicious or unexplained rash
- Persistent colored nasal discharge
- Any contagious illness (e.g., flu, COVID-19, strep throat, pinkeye)
- Any condition requiring one-on-one care or causing significant discomfort

If Your Child Becomes Ill at School

If your child shows any of the symptoms listed above during the school day, we will contact you to pick up your child as soon as possible. If we are unable to reach a parent, we will contact someone listed on your child's emergency contact list. Please make sure your emergency contact information is always up to date in your Brightwheel profile.

Returning to School After Illness

Before your child returns to school, please ensure the following:

They have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours without medication

They are able to fully participate in all daily activities, including outdoor play

If they were prescribed medication for a contagious illness, they must have been on the medication for at least 24 hours

Medication Policy

Teachers cannot administer any medication, including over-the-counter items such as:

Prescription medications Fever reducers or pain relievers

****This includes Sunscreen or bug spray as we can not monitor every child's reaction.**

If your child requires medication, it must be administered at home before school. Since our school day is limited to four hours, there should be no need for medication during class time.

Communicating Absences

If your child is sick, contagious, or unable to attend school for any reason (including family vacations), please send a message through Brightwheel letting us know.

Thank you for supporting our shared goal of keeping our school community healthy and safe!

Diapering Procedure

We believe that all children are individuals and, as such, deserve individual attention when it comes to diapering. Teachers will periodically check each child and change them if they detect that a diaper needs to be changed or when the child requests it. We certainly do not want a child to be uncomfortable.

Because our teachers' first responsibility is to ensure the safety and supervision of the entire class, there may be times when a diaper change cannot occur immediately if stepping away from the group would compromise the safety or care of the other children. In these situations, the diaper will be changed as soon as it is safe for a teacher to do so.

Teachers will not change a child if the diaper appears to be relatively dry. This approach allows teachers and children to spend the majority of their time engaged in the classroom or on the playground with the rest of the class while ensuring that each child's needs are met as promptly and safely as possible.

Supporting Children with Special Considerations

At Piedmont Progressive Preschool, we believe that families have both the right and the responsibility to participate in decisions regarding their child's care and education. Open communication between families and school staff is essential to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for every child.

For the safety and well-being of all children in our program, we ask that parents or guardians notify the Director in writing - in the "Getting to Know You" form and via Brightwheel profile - of any special physical, emotional, developmental, or medical considerations prior to registration and enrollment.

This includes (but is not limited to) children with:

- Chronic medical conditions
- Physical disabilities
- Developmental differences
- Emotional or psychological needs
- Severe allergies or other health concerns

Piedmont Progressive Preschool is committed to fostering an inclusive and accommodating environment for all children and families. We approach every child's needs with compassion and a willingness to collaborate.

That said, we also have a responsibility to ensure that we can meet the needs of each child safely and effectively, while maintaining a supportive and respectful environment for all students. PPP reserves the right to assess whether we can reasonably and safely accommodate a child's individual needs within the context of our program, staffing, and resources.

Once enrolled, some children may require additional support and collaboration. In these cases, PPP staff will work closely with families - and, when appropriate, other community resources - to create a welcoming, inclusive classroom experience. This may also involve increased communication and cooperation among teachers, the child's family, and in some cases, the families of classmates.

We are honored to partner with families to help every child feel valued, safe, and included in our learning community.

Financial Arrangements / Tuition Policy

- A registration fee is required at the time of application to Piedmont Progressive Preschool.
- Applications will not be processed without payment of the registration fee.
- Once a child is accepted and an enrollment slot is reserved, the registration fee is non-refundable.
- If no space is available, your child will be placed on a waiting list, and your registration fee will be refunded.
- When a space becomes available, registration fees will be due upon acceptance of the enrollment offer.
- Registration fees must be paid within 5 days of notification to secure the enrollment slot; otherwise, the space will be forfeited.

Tuition Payments

- Tuition payments are due on the 1st of each month, including during winter vacation and other school holidays.
- Please submit all tuition payments through the Brightwheel App.

Late Payments

- A \$10 late fee will be applied if payment is received after the 5th of the month.
- As a non-profit organization, timely tuition payments are essential to maintaining our operations.
- If you have financial concerns or questions, please contact the Co-Directors

Tuition Deposits

- Tuition deposits collected at registration are applied toward May's tuition.
- No tuition payment is due in May.
- Tuition Deposit and portions of unused tuition will be refunded on a case-by-case basis.

Addressing Concerns and Grievances

- If you have concerns about your child's classroom experience, please first speak directly with your child's teachers.
- For issues outside the classroom, please address the parties involved directly.
- If your concerns are not resolved, the next step is to bring them to the attention of the director.
- Should your concerns remain unresolved after speaking with the director, please submit a written statement to the council. You may drop it off at the school labeled "Attn: Council Co-Chairs."
- The school's governing council will review your concerns and make the final decision.



Suggestions for Separating

To help your child transition smoothly during drop-off, please consider the following guidelines:

- Talk with your child at their level about your departure. Clearly explain that you will not stay with them at school but will always come back to pick them up.
- Leave promptly once you say goodbye, if your child is able to separate easily. Quick departures can help ease the transition.
- Use time-related phrases your child can understand, such as “I will play one puzzle with you, then I must go,” or “I’ll be back at outside time.”
- Always say goodbye before leaving. Sudden disappearances can cause fear and mistrust.
- If you say you are leaving, please follow through and leave. Lingering or returning after leaving can create confusion and mixed feelings.
- If you feel uncertain about leaving, you’re welcome to wait quietly in the foyer or nearby. Please ensure your Brightwheel notifications are on so that we can notify you if your child becomes inconsolable—we will always let you know.
- Bringing a comfort item (“lovey”) can sometimes help your child feel secure during the transition. Please talk with your child’s teacher if this would be helpful.
- If your child needs extra moral support, try to find a quiet corner, sit quietly, and allow them some space to engage with others without feeling overwhelmed.



Doing Your Part at Piedmont Progressive Preschool

Volunteerism and Our Community

Piedmont Progressive Preschool is a nonprofit organization that receives no financial support from state or government sources. Nearly 100% of your tuition goes directly toward operating costs. Because of this, parent involvement and volunteerism are essential to our school's success.

While each family may have different reasons for choosing Piedmont Progressive and different educational goals for their children, we all share the desire for our children to have a joyful and positive preschool experience. Active participation in our community benefits not only the school but also your entire family. Children learn by example, and your involvement shows enthusiasm for PPP and helps foster a strong community spirit.

Volunteering is also a wonderful way to connect with other parents and the dedicated people who make Piedmont Progressive such a special place.

We recognize that everyone's availability and skills vary. Rest assured, there are meaningful volunteer opportunities for every level of expertise, interest, and time commitment. Sometimes, simply sharing your opinions and ideas is a valuable contribution. If your schedule is tight, consider whether a family member or close friend could assist in your place.

At Piedmont Progressive, volunteer activities are not only important—they're also fun! We strongly encourage all families to participate and experience the joy of giving back.

Our Parent Volunteer Coordinator is available to support you and answer any questions. We want you to feel fully connected and welcomed in our community. If you have questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to reach out to any council member.

Your cooperation and participation are greatly appreciated and vital to the success of our preschool community.



Guidelines for Parents Volunteering in the Classroom

- A. Please arrange childcare for any siblings or other children not participating in the classroom volunteer time.
- B. Wear comfortable clothes suitable for interacting with children and classroom activities.
- C. Your child may be excited or more emotional than usual with you in the classroom. This is completely normal, and it's okay to give your child some extra attention.
- D. You can assist by reading to the children, labeling artwork, and helping children wash and dry their hands after art activities. In the 2/3's class, parents also help prepare and set up snack.
- E. Teachers will handle diaper changes for all children except their own.
- F. Except in special circumstances, teachers will manage conflicts between children. However, your extra eyes and ears to alert staff to any concerns are greatly appreciated.
- G. When speaking with children, get down to their eye level and use calm, gentle tones. Whenever possible, sit rather than stand. Avoid phrases like "I like that" or "That's good." Instead, describe what they did, for example, "I see you stacked the blocks very high," or "You drew many lines on your paper."
- H. Encourage children to explore materials independently. Instead of giving instructions or ideas, ask questions such as, "What can you do with that?"
- I. On the playground, please do not pick up children and place them on equipment. Children's ability to get on equipment by themselves shows readiness and builds their confidence and sense of accomplishment.
- J. If you are unable to volunteer on your scheduled day, please arrange to switch with another parent.
- K. For the 2/3's class, please bring snack for 10 children and 3 adults. Healthy options include fresh fruits and vegetables such as apples, bananas, oranges, strawberries, melons, kiwi, pineapple, carrots, corn, peas, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, and green peppers.
- L. We hope you enjoy your volunteer days in the classroom. Your participation is not only educational and rewarding but also makes a significant difference in meeting the needs of all children.

When Parents Observe in the Classroom

We value parent involvement and warmly welcome you to visit and observe in the classroom. However, to maintain a positive and focused learning environment, we ask that you please follow these guidelines during your visit:

- A. If you plan to observe, please find a quiet spot where you can sit and be as unobtrusive as possible. Give your child space to engage and interact with their peers independently.
- B. Kindly take any conversations with other parents or teachers to the hallway or another designated area. Talking in the classroom can be distracting to the children.
- C. Remember that speaking with a teacher during class time can divert their attention from the children. If you have important concerns or questions, please send a Brightwheel message or schedule a meeting outside of classroom hours.
- D. All conflict resolution and discipline matters are handled exclusively by the teaching staff.
- E. Pay attention to how teachers communicate with children, and try to mirror their approach. Use calm, respectful tones and positive, non-judgmental language when speaking to your child or other children.
- F. When a child shows you their artwork, offer specific and thoughtful comments rather than general praise. For example, you might say, "I see you used a lot of blue here," or "You made zigzag lines instead of straight ones." This shows the child you are genuinely noticing their work and encourages meaningful engagement.

Woodworking

Starting in the spring, the 3/4's and 4/5's classes spend a morning each week doing woodworking. Parent volunteers are essential to help supervise and support this activity. Sign-up sheets will be posted in the classrooms.

(Wood)Working with Children

At Piedmont Progressive, woodworking is focused on the process, not the product.

- Three-year-olds enjoy exploring tools and materials, especially making sawdust.
- Four-year-olds experiment by combining pieces and may give names to their creations.
- Five-year-olds often begin with an idea of what they want to create.

Teachers observe children for signs of fatigue or frustration and respond with appropriate support, which might include:

- Helping start a nail hole after the child chooses the spot
- Asking questions to prompt problem-solving
- It's important to remember that when adults do the work for children, the children miss out on learning and the sense of accomplishment.

Safety Guidelines

- Children are never left unattended, even briefly.
- Everyone, including adults, must wear safety goggles.
- A maximum of two children are allowed at the workbench at a time, one on each side.
- Each child uses only one tool at a time.
- When using saws, the wood must be secured in the vise, and both hands must be on the saw handle.

Woodworking Supplies & Donations

- We only accept soft, untreated, and unpainted wood (cedar and white pine are preferred).
- Roofing nails ($\frac{3}{4}$ "–2"), box nails, and common nails are most useful.
- Drill bits up to $\frac{1}{4}$ " are needed.
- Other helpful materials include rubber bands, wooden beads, twist-ties, corks, potholder loops, and sandpaper.



The Relationship Between Open Door School and Piedmont Progressive Preschool

Piedmont Progressive Preschool was inspired by The Open Door School, located at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte in the Cotswold neighborhood. As Charlotte's first open and integrated preschool, Open Door set a powerful example.

PPP's founders, Mary Coppola and Susan Burns, met as parents at Open Door and began carpooling across town—drawn by the school's unique philosophy and the impact it had on their children. Encouraged by Open Door founder Sue Riley to start a similar school in the University area, they took the leap—and Piedmont Progressive was born.

Though the two schools are not officially connected, the Open Door community has generously supported PPP with shared resources, guidance, and encouragement. We are especially grateful for the inspiration and vision of the late Sue Riley, whose legacy continues through our work.