

Family Handbook



**240 E. Gowen Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19119
(215) 248-0919**

2013-2014

Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3
Early Morning Drop-Off Program	3
Lunch Program/Extended Care	3
Tuition Policy.....	3
Paid Substitutes	4
Arrival and Dismissal	4
<u>CO-OPING AT THE BIG BACKYARD:</u>	6
Co-oping Responsibilities	6
Your Co-oping Day.....	6
Interacting with the Children	7
Your Own Children on Co-oping Day	7
<u>HEALTH & SAFETY:</u>	8
Child Abuse and Criminal History Background Clearances	8
Accidents.....	8
Releasing the Children	8
Parking & Entrance.....	9
Emergency Closing.....	9
Medication	9
Health.....	9
Siblings at School	9
<u>COMMUNICATION:</u>	10
Between Parent & Teacher	10
Other Communications in School.....	10
Important Contact Information.....	11
Guidelines	12
<u>MISCELLANEOUS:</u>	12
School Bags	12
Birthday Celebrations	12
Toys & Other Treasures at School.....	12
Clothing.....	12
Snack.....	13
<u>APPENDIX:</u>	14
Snack Questions and Answers	14
Tips for Separation.....	15
Food Allergies.....	16

INTRODUCTION

Summit Nursery School was founded in 1952 as a parent run, co-operative, diverse, non-sectarian, not-for-profit school. In 1995, it was renamed The Big Backyard. The school is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and operates on a school-year calendar, from September to June.

The school is composed of three classrooms, Green, Blue, and Purple. Children must be 2 years, 7 months old by the opening day of school – the youngest students, along with three-year-olds, are in the Green Room. Older threes and young fours are in the Blue Room, and older four-year-olds and young five year-olds are in the Purple Room.

The core nursery school program meets Tuesday through Thursday for the Green and Blue Rooms and Monday through Thursday for the Purple Room from 9:00 to 12:00. 4- and 5-day enrollments are available for the Green & Blue Rooms, and 5-day enrollment is available for the Purple Room. Additional hours are available through use of the Early Morning Drop-Off and the afternoon programs (Lunch/Extended Care). Those enrolled for three or four days may add on additional hours or days on a regular or occasional basis, space permitting.

Early Morning Drop-Off Program

The Early Morning Drop-Off Program is available Monday through Friday mornings beginning at 8:30 a.m. Advance sign-up is required. Sign-up sheets are posted 2 weeks in advance on the hall bulletin board. Parents must add their child’s name to the sign-up sheet no later than the afternoon before they wish to use the program, dependent on availability of space. You will be billed monthly for your use of the Early Morning Drop-Off Program and should add these fees into your next monthly tuition payment.

Lunch Program/Extended Care

The Big Backyard’s afternoon program is available to all enrolled children and is taught by our core teaching staff. The Lunch Program runs Monday through Friday from 12:00 noon until 1:30 p.m. and Extended Care runs until 3:30. Because of staff limitations, a maximum number of children may use the Afternoon Program each day. Sign-up sheets are posted 2 weeks in advance on the hall bulletin board. Parents must add their child’s name to the sign-up sheet no later than the morning they wish to use the program, dependent on availability of space. Only those children whose names are on the list may stay for lunch. You will be billed for your use of the Afternoon Program and should add those fees into your next monthly tuition payment.

Tuition Policy

When a child is enrolled at The Big Backyard, the parent(s) agree that the child’s enrollment is for the entire school year and that the full yearly tuition will be paid. This is because the annual budget has been developed based on class size. Therefore, tuition is not refundable if a child is withdrawn from the program. Notice of withdrawal must be made in writing to the Board of Directors.

Tuition for The Big Backyard is determined by the Board of Directors and depends on the number of days your child is enrolled in school.

Traditionally, parents choose to pay in 10 installments, but you can choose to pay the tuition in full, or quarterly. A monthly invoice will reflect the tuition payment for the current month and the extra fees accrued in the previous month. All payments must be made 14 days from the date of the invoice, payable to “THE BIG BACKYARD”. Payments should be left in the tuition envelope on the wall of the kitchen. A \$10.00 late fee will be assessed for payment received after the due date. In addition, if payment has not been made in a timely manner, a first warning will go out in the form of a call from the Bookkeeper and payment will be expected within three days of the call. If payment cannot be made within three days, the family will need to make a verbal proposal to the Bookkeeper to rectify the bill. If this verbal proposal to pay the bill in full extends beyond the last day of the month, this proposal will need to be put in writing and addressed to the Treasurer of the Board, with a copy to the Bookkeeper. This written contract will be presented to the Board of Directors as soon as possible for consideration.

Please note that it has always been the school’s policy to be “family friendly.” Therefore, the Board will try at all times to work with families experiencing difficulties. Communication is the key—families remain in touch the Bookkeeper and abide by the procedures outlined above for tuition payment. However, the Board must take a hard line against continued non-payment or late payment due to the school’s reliance on tuition to operate.

If a verbal and/or written plan has not been fulfilled, the Board may reserve the right to request that family remove their child from school until the bill is paid in full. Additionally, if removal of the child extends beyond one week, the Board may reserve the right to withdraw the child’s place in the school.

Tuition payments may be paid in advance of due date.

A \$35 charge will be added for any check that is returned due to insufficient funds.

Paid Substitutes

A parent may wish to serve as a paid substitute when either a teacher or an aide is absent. Compensation is \$10.00/hour. You will be given a tuition rebate voucher after substituting and may submit the voucher with your next tuition payment. The amount earned as a paid substitute will be subtracted from the tuition payment.

If a parent cannot co-op on their scheduled day and needs to hire a substitute, they are responsible to pay the substitute \$10/hr directly. A list of substitutes will be provided shortly after the school year begins.

Arrival and Dismissal

When you arrive each day, please help your child hang up his or her jacket and greet one of the teachers or assistant teachers. After helping your child choose an activity or area of play, be sure to say goodbye. A staff member will be on hand to help with the transition. Please see appendix for some tips on separation.

Dismissal is at 12:00 for the Morning Program, 1:30 for the Lunch Program, and 3:30 for Extended Care. Please be prompt. Children are tired after day’s play and need to be reassured that they haven’t been forgotten! Make a point of saying goodbye to the teacher so that she knows who has left.

The following late fees will be charged:

For Morning Program--\$10 for child picked up between 12:01 and 12:15
\$1/minute for every minute beyond 12:15 that a child is in school's care

For Lunch Program: \$10 for child picked up between 1:31-1:45
\$1/minute for every minute beyond 1:45 that a child is in the school's care

For Extended Care: \$10 for child picked up between 3:31-3:45
\$1/minute for every minute beyond 3:45 that a child is in the school's care

Regardless of fees, chronic late pickup is a problem for staff and for your child. However, the school recognizes that emergencies do occur, and that any family could one day be a few minutes late. Please call the school if you know you will be delayed so that we may reassure your child. We try to check our answering machine frequently.

We know that pick-up time can be a time to touch base with other families. However, it is important to the teachers that children leaving at 1:30 and 3:30 do so promptly. At 1:30 the teachers need to settle the remaining children for rest time. At 3:30 the teachers need to finish closing up the classrooms so they can leave for the day. Therefore, we ask that if you want to remain at the school, you take your child to the playground where you are welcome to stay as long as you like.

CO-OPING AT THE BIG BACKYARD

Parent participation is a key ingredient in the success of our school. It not only enriches the program, but can be a rewarding experience for you and your child. Your classroom involvement adds vitality to the program, as does your contribution to the administration and maintenance of the school. With your participation, the program remains focused on the needs and desires of the school community it serves.

Co-oping Responsibilities

1. *Attend the Orientation Meeting in the fall.* At this meeting, you will meet the staff and parent Board of Directors and have a chance to ask questions about any aspect of the school. You will also be given important information about the first days of school.
2. *Participate in the two of the four scheduled workdays.* Held throughout the year, this is our opportunity to repair, paint, clean, and build so that the school is ready for the children.
3. *Complete your classroom co-oping days as scheduled.* In the event of illness or other emergency, it is your responsibility to find a co-oping substitute from your class list and inform you child's teacher. In order to find a substitute, most parents will "exchange" co-oping days. Simply put, you agree to work on another parent's co-oping day while s/he agrees to substitute for you on yours.
4. *Fulfill one of the jobs listed on the Job Description Form.*
5. *Participate in the fund-raising projects throughout the year.* Although 3 committee chairpeople guide our fund-raising efforts, we rely on all families to help. Each family is required to participate in all of the fundraising events, either by staffing, donating items, or attending the event. Tuition does not cover the school's full budget, and fund-raising is vital to allow capital improvements and enrichment programs. Each family must be on a committee for one of the fundraising events.
6. *Provide a mid-morning snack supplement for several weeks during the year.* Signup sheets will be posted. This helps us supplement the whole grain snacks and water the school provides with more fresh and varied menus.

Your Co-oping Day

Please arrive at 8:30 a.m. when you are scheduled to co-op so that you can begin setting up the classroom for the day with the teachers. When you arrive, you will be helping with such tasks as--

- Setting up snack
- Filling washbasins with water for the clean-up area
- Setting up the play dough table or any special activities under a teacher's direction

When in doubt, ask the teacher for guidance. An outline of daily co-oping duties is posted in the classroom as well and in the kitchen at the school.

Throughout the morning, you may be assisting the teachers in the following ways:

- Lending a hand—tying shoes, helping with paint smocks, etc.
- Remaining close to a table or rug activity so that you can help children as needed
- Supervising a project or activity
- Assisting with bathroom duty
- Helping to serve snack
- Wiping snack tables

At the end of the morning, you will help by--

- Washing the snack dishes
- Sweeping floors
- Cleaning the paintbrushes and project supplies

In short, our morning will include everything from ABC games to Zipping coats. We hope that as you become more comfortable in the classroom, you'll do what you enjoy—whether it's reading to a child, getting messy with our budding artists, exploring the science table, or kicking a ball around on the playground.

Your co-oping day does not end until 12:30. Many of the clean-up tasks cannot be accomplished during class time and can only be started once the children have left. If you finish early, please ask the teachers what else you can do to help.

Interacting with the Children

Each child needs encouragement and support as s/he plays and explores. Talk with the children freely, observe them, lend a helping hand when asked or when you sense that it would be appreciated. Of course, be vigilant about enforcing common-sense safety practices. If you see something happening that looks dangerous to you, let the children know. Show them how they can safely continue their play, but never disregard your gut feeling about safety. Of course, striking a child is not permitted. It is both unlawful and not in the best interest of the children. We believe that by modeling kind and respectful behavior, the children will learn to be kind and respectful of others. If you feel that a child needs to be disciplined, please discuss this with one of the teachers.

A few parents have expressed how hard it can be to know what to do when they are co-oping and a child, not their own, needs guidance. Feel free to consult a teacher if you are unsure. You can either ask her to handle it, ask for advice, or just follow her lead. Not only are we with the children every day, but this our profession. We know that our strategies may not always be obvious and we are happy to explain. Also, please understand, that while we are happy to provide guidance to you, we cannot provide personal information about a child. Even though you are helping in the classroom as a co-oper, we still need to preserve normal boundaries of confidentiality.

Please do not use your cell phone when in the classroom unless it is truly an emergency situation. Cell phones usage is not permitted when driving or chaperoning children on field trips.

Your Own Child on Co- oping Day

Be aware that on your co-oping day, your child may find it difficult to share your attention with a classroom full of children. Just as at home, s/he will not want you to be busy with the chores you need to do. Be patient, allow for a few extra hugs, and be sure to sit together at circle time.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Child Abuse and Criminal History Background Clearances

The school requires two clearances from the state of Pennsylvania to be completed for ***all co-oping adults***. This process will only be required for each adult upon their child's *initial* entry into the school, and for each new sibling admitted after a lapse of a year has gone between siblings.

Both of these forms can be downloaded at the PA.gov website under Child Welfare. For links to the forms and instructions, please visit the Background Check/Clearances page on our site at <http://thebigbackyard.net/admissions/background-clearances/>

If your forms are not returned by the start of school you will have to pay for a substitute co-oper at the cost of \$40 per day. You can have a friend or family member act as a guest co-oper without the clearances, but if they are going to be doing the co-oping duties on a regular basis they will also need to obtain the necessary clearances.

Accidents

The school is equipped with a first aid kit, found on the shelf next to the microwave oven. Whenever a child is hurt, s/he will get immediate attention. Usually, a band-aid will take care of the injury, or perhaps an ice pack. However, if a more serious injury occurs, the release you signed may enable us to secure emergency medical care without delay. Of course, every effort will be made to contact the parents or guardian of the child before emergency care is given. If the parents or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contacts you provided will be called.

Releasing Children

Many students are picked up every day by their mother or father and within the first days of school the staff and the parents get to know each other. However, we have asked you to complete a card indicating any other people to whom you have given permission to take your child from the Nursery School property. For your child's own safety, s/he will be released only to you or those you indicated on that card. If someone other than you will be coming for your child on a regular basis, be sure to introduce or give a description of that person to your child's teacher.

If there is an occasional need for someone to come for your child other than those people listed on the form (e.g. play date with a friend), fill out a Release Form. (Blanks are on the hall bulletin board.) Note the date, your child's name and the name and relationship of the person who will be picking up your child that day. Sign the form and leave it with your child's teacher.

WE WILL NOT RELEASE CHILDREN TO ANYONE NOT ON YOUR FORM WITHOUT PROPER CONFIRMATION FROM PARENTS.

Parking & Entrance

Please park curbside on Ardleigh Street and use the rear door (playground entrance) to the church. To avoid dangerous accidents, do not pull into the driveway. Children and parents will be walking through this area behind the building at all hours. Be very aware that traffic on Ardleigh Street is brisk; cars often speed past our school. Therefore, do keep your children at your side when you arrive and leave. For their safety, do not allow them to run ahead of you or play near your vehicle.

Emergency Closing

Whenever the Philadelphia Public Schools are closed due to the weather, The Big Backyard is closed. In addition, on days when roads are judged to be hazardous, the Chair and Director may decide to close the school. All parents should have alternative childcare arrangements available in such circumstances. Parents will be notified of emergency closing through email and/or texting alert.

Medication

All medication--

- Must be in the original container with your child's name and prescription label/dosage on the front.
- Must be accompanied by a signed note from the parent for each day it is to be given, along with instructions about dosage and when to administer.
- Must be given to a staff member for safekeeping. Children may not keep medications with them in bags, or lunchboxes.
- Will be administered by staff members only.

Health

All reasonable efforts will be made by the staff and co-oping parents to protect the health and well-being of every child. Please remember, however, that contagious diseases spread quickly in group settings such as nursery school and there is no way to protect children from all illnesses. To ensure the maximum health and well-being of all children, any child exhibiting the following symptoms may not attend school until...

Symptom	The child may return to school when:
Fever	At least 24 hours after the fever is gone (without Tylenol)
Vomiting	When the child has eaten and kept solid food down for at least 24 hours
Conjunctivitis	After 24 hour regimen of antibiotics (if bacterial) or physician's okay
Rash	When the rash is gone or has been examined by a physician and is determined to be no longer contagious
Diarrhea	Frequency and consistency of stool returns to normal
Extreme lethargy and/or	When child's behavior returns to normal or physician determines that the

any other symptom child is well enough to return
indicating communicable
disease

If your child shows any of the above symptoms during the course of the morning, you will be notified immediately.

If a medical condition arises that is judged to affect the health of the other children, the Director reserves the right to close the school.

Lice

The transmission of lice is a persistent problem in most schools, camps and daycare settings. The lice are passed from one person to another by the sharing of clothes, hats and very close contact. If your child has lice or nits (eggs) please contact your classroom teacher immediately. It is important to make sure that the school can take proper precautions in order to stop the spread of lice at school.

Siblings at School

If can be very disruptive to the class, and often unsafe, to bring siblings on your co-oping day. Please make other arrangements for their care. We make an exception for babies that are not yet mobile. If you have an emergency, please contact the director.

Family members & siblings are welcome at the Big Backyard on special event days. If in doubt, ask the teacher or your room rep.

COMMUNICATION

Between Parents & Teacher

Parent-teacher communication is vital. Your child's teachers will be offering feedback to you about your child in an informal, ongoing-way—on your cooping day, at noontime pick-up or, perhaps, by telephone. They will be looking for valuable information from you, too, when you arrive. Is someone in your household away on a trip? Was bedtime unusually late last night? Did your child refuse to eat breakfast this morning? So much can affect your child's morning at school! We value and respect your insight and therefore encourage you to share whatever information about your child you think might be helpful.

If you'd like to have a longer conversation about your child or any classroom issue, please feel free to call the school or make an appointment. Also, please feel free to email any questions or concerns and every attempt to make a timely response will be made. Remember any concern having to do with your child is probably most effectively addressed in person.

Each child will have a cubby where Staff and Board may put important notices or papers. Please be sure to remove papers on a daily basis.

There will be a fall conference (early November) to talk about your child's adjustment to school. Spring conferences will give us the opportunity to review your child's growth since September and to discuss any concerns you may have about his or her progress. Of course, a conference can be arranged any time throughout the year as needed.

Other Communication Within the School

For many of us, communication and decision-making in a cooperative school may be very different from previous school experiences. The cooperative structure is more fluid and inclusive, and may seem less-defined, even confusing at first. If you have a question or concern, it is important to contact the appropriate person(s) as soon as possible so that your questions are answered and your opinions, concerns, and feelings can be addressed in a timely manner.

The Big Backyard is a cooperative nursery school. All parents are members of the cooperative and contribute to its healthy operation. The BBY is overseen by the board of directors made up of member parents and the director of the school. Although only board members are required to attend board meetings on a monthly basis, all parents are welcome and encouraged to attend. Monthly board notes are distributed to all member families.

Important Contact Information

School: (215) 248-0919

Program Director & Blue Room Teacher: Judith Mercuris, (215) 247-8904, famerc5@aol.com

Purple Room Teacher: Theresa Raufer, (215) 842-3005, traufer@hotmail.com

Green Room Teacher: Bridget Flanagan, (215) 407-3438, bridget.holmes13@gmail.com

Board Chair: Andrew Herman, (267) 456-3739, andrew.herman@gmail.com

Purple Room Representative: Leah Snyder Batchis

Blue Room Representative: Alicia Zeleniak, (215) 242-0609, aliciacz@comcast.net

Green Room Representative:

Co-op Coordinator: Kelly Day, (215) 284-0453, kday@kellydayconsulting.com

Co-op Scheduler: Zach Hasse, (215) 873-6620

Bookkeeper: Jen Sorrentino, (215) 242-3262, jtsorrentino@verizon.net

If you have a question or an issue regarding...

your child's illness, absence, or late arrival, call the school directly and speak to any member of the staff.

a late pickup, call the school directly and speak to any of the teachers. The school staff wants to accommodate families whenever possible; however, children staying past pickup place additional burden on staffing and space, therefore, fines for late pickup will be issued.

a school policy, contact your Room Representative. If you have any ideas or suggestions about school policy, contact the Board Chair. School policy is set by the Board and your input is

welcome and valued. Board meetings are open to everyone; however, please let us know in advance your concerns so we can make space on the agenda.

the curriculum, it is always best to speak with your child's teacher first. If you have any ideas or suggestions about our curriculum in general speak with the Director of the School. The Director sets the curriculum for the school.

your co-op job, contact the Co-op Coordinator.

the co-oping schedule, contact the Co-op Scheduler.

your duties when co-oping in the classroom, speak with your child's teacher and/or assistant teacher first. If you feel that you need additional guidance, contact your Room Representative.

one of your child's teachers, speak directly with the teacher about your concern. If this does not seem productive, please speak with the Director.

another BBY family – contact the Board Chair.

anything not covered above – please ask away! Your teachers, Director, Board Chair and Room Reps are all happy to help in any way they can.

Guidelines

The hall bulletin board contains lots of important information. Look there for:

- *Lunch Program list*
- *Friday Drop-I list*
- *Co-oping schedule*
- *Blank dismissal forms*
- *Notices and memos*

In each classroom you will find a bulletin board that has:

- *Co-oper's checklist*: notes all the tasks that need to be accomplished throughout the morning
- *Food Restrictions/Allergies list*
- *Class trip/permission slip envelope*

MISCELLANEOUS

School Bags

Each child should bring a school bag each day to ensure that the blankie and the artwork and the Show & Tell come home each day...without your having to make an extra trip upstairs to find them.

Birthday Celebrations

Please let us know in advance if you'll be sending a special snack on your child's birthday. We need time to make arrangements for children with food allergies. Although we usually try to avoid sweets at snack time, we will welcome muffins, cupcakes etc. for celebrations. Please make all one type of treat (i.e. 16 identical chocolate cupcakes) and not a variety of colors and flavors! This is one less battle for the teachers to handle. Candles and matches are on hand at school. In an effort to protect the children's feelings, please do not distribute party invitations at school or leave them in the children's cubbies unless all the children in the class are invited.

Toys & Other Treasures at School

Fragile or special toys, candy, loose change, and valuable jewelry should not be brought into school by the children. We have found that, invariably, those items get lost, broken, or grabbed away by a schoolmate, adding unnecessary difficulty to your child's school day. Please do try to keep these treasures at home. Of course, the blankie or worn-out stuffed animal that may be necessary for your child's comfort is permitted.

Clothing

Please send your child to school in comfortable play clothes that encourage self-sufficiency. Elastic waist pants with a minimum of snaps, buckles and buttons are great! Sneakers are the safest footwear - year-round. Party shoes, sandals and slip-ons invite accidents on the playground and are not appropriate for school.

Unless it is raining or bitterly cold, the children will go outdoors every day and should wear appropriate outdoor clothing. In cold weather, it is important that each child have boots, mittens, snow pants, and a hat or hooded jacket to keep warm. You may find it convenient to leave boots and snow pants at school for those wet and muddy weeks.

Please label all outdoor and extra clothing. Believe it or not, children often don't recognize their own belongings! It will save the teachers' time and your money!

Snack

Each family will provide the class mid-morning snack supplement (fresh fruit/veg. and protein) for two or three week-long periods during the year. The school will provide juice and crackers. You are responsible for ensuring that the week's snack is delivered to school on Monday even if your child is absent.

The week before your snack week, you'll receive a reminder note that it is your turn to bring snack.

BECAUSE OF FOOD ALLERGIES, BE SURE YOU DON'T BRING ANYTHING WITH TREE NUTS, PEANUTS, OR PEANUT PRODUCTS. READ LABELS CAREFULLY!! (See Appendix for more information regarding food allergies.)

A Final Note

As you wade through Handbook material, health forms, schedules, and lists, remember that you, the teachers and the other parents in the school are all working together to enrich the lives of a group of young children. Whether you are washing paintbrushes, organizing a plant sale or comforting a child

whose feelings have been hurt, know that you play an integral part in the success of your child's school experience.

APPENDIX

Snack

NO PEANUTS OR TREE NUTS ARE ALLOWED AT ANY TIME

Who provides it?

Each family will provide the mid-morning snack supplement for several one-week periods during the year. Choose your weeks from the snack sign-up list posted in the classroom, if you have not done so at the September orientation meeting. The school will provide water, and crackers/pretzels/etc. Please bring the week's snack for your child's class on the Monday of your week.

Where do I put it?

Bring the snack to the kitchen and let the teachers know it has arrived. Place the perishables in your classroom's drawer/shelf in the refrigerator. Label any non-perishables left on the counter with the classroom name. Write the list of items you brought on the dry erase board on the fridge.

How much should I bring?

Send enough snack for the entire class for each day of the school week. They may be small, but they eat a lot. A larger quantity of several items is better than small amounts of five items. Please check the refrigerator daily to make sure there is enough snack remaining for the week.

What if my child has a food allergy or restriction?

We will make a snack substitution as necessary so that any diet limitation you listed on the Child's Health Profile is followed. A list of children's food restrictions will be posted on the refrigerator as a reminder for all snack preparers and staff.

Why not just stick with graham crackers?

School is a great place to expose children to new tastes and teach them about healthy snack choices. Your snack supplement will allow us to add a little variety to their snack menu. Also, we would like to encourage the conversation and interaction that comes from eating together. With your help, we can do just that.

Suggestions for a typical snack week for a classroom of 15 children:

- Day one: 7 apples and 1 lb. block of cheese
- Day two: 2 lb. of mini carrots and 16 oz. of hummus
- Day three: 2 containers 32 oz yogurt and 2 quarts of strawberries
- Day four: 2 doz mini bagels, 16 oz. of cream cheese and 3 cucumbers

Other snack suggestions:

Hardboiled eggs
Vegetables: red pepper, sugar/snow peas, cherry tomatoes, celery
Seeds or dried fruit
Dressings or dips
Salsa
Sunflower butter
Homemade baked goods such as pumpkin bread or banana bread
Fruit: just about any fruit is a hit

Special Note:

If you like to cook with children, let us know. On your co-oping day, we can easily set up a simple cooking project.

Tips for Separation

Separation can be difficult for both you and your child. This is normal! Here are some tips to make the process smoother and easier.

1. **SAY GOODBYE.** If you leave without your child knowing it, s/he may become more anxious in the future. Children usually become more vigilant and clingy because they don't know when you will disappear. Say goodbye and tell him/her when you are returning. "Goodbye. Have fun at school. I'll be back when you finish your lunch."
2. **DON'T PROLONG THE GOODBYE PROCESS.** Once you say goodbye, leave. It is less stressful for your child. The hardest part for them is anticipating and watching you leave, so the longer and more drawn out it is, the harder it is. Leaving quickly also tells them you mean what you say. If you tell them you are leaving and then relent when they cry or beg, they will just cry and beg more next time. If you can stay for ten minutes, fine. Tell them so, but then leave quickly when the time is up.
3. **BE SYMPATHETIC BUT POSITIVE.** Say things along the line of "I know it is hard to say goodbye, but you will have fun at school and I will see you soon."
4. **HAVE FAITH.** As hard as it is, be aware that your child is almost always fine within seconds of your departure. Feel free to call us to check in if you are worried. And we promise to call you if your child is in distress for 15 minutes or more.

During the first month of school, feel free to stay until 9:30 to help your child get settled. After the first month, plan to drop them off and leave by 9:15. While your child needs time to get adjusted, eventually your presence can inhibit them from making connections with their teachers and peers.

Sometime separation issues come up later in the year after a child has been coming to school happily for months. While this can be related to changes or events in the child's life, often it is just due to his/her developmental stage. Try not to worry—this too is normal!

Food Allergies

The Big Backyard strictly adheres to the following policy regarding nuts –

NO PEANUTS OR TREE NUTS ARE ALLOWED AT ANY TIME

This policy includes lunches, snacks, birthday party treats, events, cooking projects, and crafts
No peanuts or tree nuts are allowed at any time. Please check all ingredients carefully for items that contain peanuts or tree nuts, as well as those items manufactured in a facility that also manufactures products containing peanuts and tree nuts. Even minute amounts can be life-threatening, so check the label. Packaging for processed items should be clearly marked, but if you're unsure, please do not bring the item.

At-home exposure

If your child eats something containing peanuts or tree nuts before school, please make sure that they wash their hands and face and that their clothes are free of residue before coming to school.

Staff is well-versed in emergency procedures. These procedures are posted in each classroom and all parents are encouraged to take a moment to review them when co-oping. Accidental contact or ingestion can be life-threatening for many children, so we ask your help in keeping our children safe and healthy. If you have any questions or need more information, please speak with a teacher.

Email Guidelines

At the beginning of each school year, all email accounts listed in the school directory will be automatically added to the Big Backyard's online discussion list, housed on Google Groups.

Email communication among families and teachers is strongly encouraged; however, some families and teachers may not have an email account or may prefer to communicate in-person, by telephone, or in print. Therefore, we ask that any time-sensitive and/or important communications related to the school, the individual classrooms, or a specific child be provided to each family using one of the other accepted methods (in-person, by telephone, or in print).

If you choose to participate in the online discussion list, please observe the following guidelines when posting –

- Email is not confidential or secure.
- Email usage is at the discretion of each individual.
- An individual child's attendance, academic progress, and behavior are best addressed in person or by telephone.
- Jokes and chain letters are discouraged.
- Commercial solicitations and political posts are prohibited on the online discussion list.
- Email addresses posted in the school directory are not to be used as a mailing list for non-school purposes.
- If an email is meant for an individual, please send it to them rather than to the entire online discussion group.

If you have a question or concern regarding the online discussion list, please contact the Webmaster.