

Firefly Academy
Parent/Teacher Handbook
2011-2012

A Montessori-Inspired
CHILD-CENTERED
Preschool and Kindergarten Program
2110 Discovery Road
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Firefly Academy at a Glance:

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

At Firefly Academy we believe that children gather and retain information best through the process of discovery fueled by internal motivation. Socialization is a key component in personal and educational development, and needs to be fostered in early childhood experience and education. We believe that through play, developmentally appropriate and intellectually stimulating activities, children will achieve better preparedness for lifelong learning. In the preschool years learning is play and play is learning.

What does it mean to be Montessori-Inspired?

Montessori elements in our program: a differentiated classroom setting, self-directed learning, and the process of learning through positive peer influence while remaining independent and in control of one's choices. Access to self-correcting Montessori materials allows the child to be his/her own teacher with many objectives built into the design. In addition, we provide a carefully "prepared environment" to allow freedom of choice.

We also strongly maintain, and evidence supports, that children move through stages in a set order, but not necessarily at a set pace; this is one of many reasons we believe in the richness of a multi-age program. Another is that the positive interaction among mixed ages provides a framework to develop compassion, leadership, responsibility, accountability, and empathy.

MISSION STATEMENT

Firefly Academy provides the highest quality preschool and Kindergarten learning environment through nurturing your child's inner teacher, fueling self-discovery and awareness, and facilitating creative and social stimulation in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum at Firefly Academy will be designed to meet the specific needs of the program participants. We will participate in several hands-on activities including but not limited to life sciences, music, arts and crafts, foreign language exposure (French, Spanish and Chinese), community activities, dramatic arts, literacy and math development, outdoor play, creative play, and socialization. In general our day will follow a routine that complements the actual energy level of the children. We allow children to choose activities freely during the day provided they are respectful to their peers, the materials, and the classroom environment.

OUR DAY AT FIREFLY

Loose Routine: Events occur according to a set order, though not necessarily in accordance with the clock on the wall. The routine provides structure to our day while allowing for flexibility between activities.

9:00 Arrival, Free Work/Play, and Daily Journal: Children will quietly enter Firefly each morning, place their belongings in their cubbies, hang their coats, and remove their shoes. As the children enter and settle in, we will check in with each one individually to see if s/he has work/play to continue from the day before or, if s/he is going to choose new work. We will place some activities on the tables as guided choices and also help each child complete their daily journal during this time. Some children may spend a good part of this time exploring their environment and socializing with peers.

10:00 Group Time: We discuss the day's activities, talk about the weather, month and day of the week, read short stories, poems, and sing songs.

10:20 Snack: Food will always be available and accessible to the children as needed, but we will sit together at this time and practice manners, counting portions, and other table activities.

10:45-11:45 Outdoor Play/Walk

11:45-12:30 Free Choice Work/Play: Children may continue morning work. Art supplies, manipulatives, books on tape, dress-up, and other options will all be available at this time. Some days there will be the choice of a guided art, Spanish, French, Chinese, movement, or music activity, often with guest teachers.

12:30 Lunch: As with snack, we sit together at the table, but children are also free to eat throughout the day according to when their bodies are hungry.

12:45 Closing Circle: We come back together and review the high points of our day, talk about what we will do the next time we are together, read a story, and say goodbye.

1:00 Pick-up: Please be on time. All belongings will be set outside at 12:55. (Please do not knock on the door; all of the children may think it is their parent and get up to look.) We will quietly walk your child to the door so as not to disturb the circle and to limit the natural chaos that can occur during pick-up. *If you arrive before 12:40 we would love to have you join us as a participant in circle or a guest reader!*

The afternoon schedule from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. resembles the morning routine, with less time spent in Free Choice or Outdoor Play depending on the flow of the day.

Firefly Academy Policies and Procedures

Please thoroughly read the policies and procedures outlined in this parent handbook. They were designed to ensure the safety and well being of your children and the quality of our program. Keep this handbook throughout the year to use as a reference guide.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment is open to children from ages 2.5 years to 6.5 years old. Homeschoolers are also accepted on a space available basis into our Homeschool Enrichment Program. Preschool children need not be potty trained, but working towards it. We do not discriminate at Firefly Academy. We invite all children of any background or affiliation. We desire to establish harmonious and complementary relationships with families, so it is essential to share an understanding of the Firefly program.

To reserve a spot in the class, a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$100, the supply fee equivalent to one month's tuition, tuition agreement, and completed registration paper work must be received. Enrollment and supply fees are nonrefundable. If the class becomes full, your child's name will be put on a waiting list. The supply fee will not be collected until space becomes available. Once the enrollment procedure begins (Firefly accepts your fees and paperwork), one month's written notice is required to withdraw from the program.

Currently enrolled Fireflies who return their paperwork and fees will be given priority until April 15, 2011, at which point we will open our fall program to those on the waiting list.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

No later than June 15, 2011, the following items must be completed and received by the Preschool. Contact the director if you are having difficulty meeting this deadline.

1. Registration form, including emergency contacts and medical information;
2. Enrollment fee of \$100 for new students, \$50 for returning students;
3. A completed immunization form or statement of non-immunization;
4. Photo Release Form;
4. Supply fee equivalent to one month's tuition nonrefundable;
5. Financial Agreement and Permission Slip.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

In following Montessori philosophy, and borrowing from other developmental specialists and educators along the way, we strive to establish a self-directed learning environment in which very little overt “discipline” is used. Our goal is help the children create inner motivation and self-discipline to participate as a member of our classroom community. Children are taught through practice and example to treat their peers, teachers, and materials with care and respect.

We employ redirection, encourage communication, and proactively address the energy level of the classroom as a means to provide a safe and effective learning environment for all. The children are encouraged to self-assess throughout the day, especially as to how they are feeling in their bodies, and to find ways to express those feelings.

Many behaviors are actually the result of being tired, hungry, and thirsty, or developmentally not yet having a better way to work through conflict.

For example: a child’s patience is waning and s/he is becoming easily agitated. We might say: **“I have noticed you are having a hard time with _____. Do you think you might need a bit of space?”** Or **“It’s been a while since you had snack could you be hungry or thirsty?”**

We are here to help children find ways to meet their own needs or ask for help from a peer or teacher. We aim to have children develop empathy for others, and ways to understand and help each other.

Your child’s safety is our number one priority. In cases of continually physical behavior (such as hitting, pushing, or throwing), we will use “time-outs” but only after redirection and proactivity have failed. ***Time-outs are a break or rest, not a punishment. Many of these behaviors, although undesirable, are considered “normal” for this age group.*** Preschool is the environment where children learn to “use their words” and develop healthy ways of dealing with small amounts of stress and conflict. We strive to use each instance as a learning experience and to build upon the concepts of self-control, self-reliance, and responsibility including responsibility to the group. We hope to equip children with a strong sense of self, including self respect and self-discipline. ***We will always take into account developmental stages when applying guidance techniques.***

Children who are dangerous to themselves or others will be sent home, where their needs can be better met for the day. If over time we discover that we are not a good fit for your child, we will work to help you find a better one. Prior to that step, we will arrange a conference with you to overview your child’s needs versus our resources.

We have many materials in the classroom on discipline and Montessori as well as other educational philosophies that are available for loan. Please be sure to sign out all items.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Firefly Academy operates Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Our afternoon program is specifically designed for nap-skippers and homeschoolers. Your child may attend mornings or afternoons, but not both. At this time, early or extended care is not provided. Your child may enroll for 2 to 5 days per week. In order to provide continuity between the classes and consistency for your child, it is our strong recommendation that you choose consecutive days. Not only does it help in easing transition, but it also supports a routine for your child.

Enrollment options are as follows:

Preschool*	Morning	Afternoon
2 days:	\$250/mo	\$225/mo
3 days:	\$350/mo	
4 days:	\$450/mo	
5 days:	\$550/mo	

* You may combine mornings and afternoons of different days.

* One day per week will only be offered in very selective instances, and only if space permits.

Kindergarten*: \$675/mo Monday – Thursday 9-3*

* The 1-3 pm extended day is optional but recommended. Fridays are additional and by request.

Drop-in*:	Morning	Afternoon
	\$40	\$30

* Drop-in available space permitting.

* Prepaid discount punch cards are available for drop-ins.

TUITION POLICIES

Tuition is due on the 25th of the preceding month. It will be considered late after the 1st, at which time a late fee of 10% of your bill will be added.

If you choose to pay in full for the academic year (Sept 2011-June 2012) by August 15, 2011, a discount of 10% will be given. If you choose to pay quarterly, a discount of 5% will be given. Tuition paid in advance is nonrefundable.[1]

Pro-rating is not offered. Tuition is the same each month regardless of the number of days in the month. It is essential that the program operate with a consistent monthly budget. Over the course of the September–June school year, some months will have more sessions than others because of holidays, school closures, and the total number of weeks in each month. We require 30 days' written notice if you intend to leave the program. In the case of no notice, we will bill for one month's tuition unless special circumstances exist.

[1] Except in extreme circumstances, in which case a pro-rated refund may be offered at the Director's discretion once your child's space is filled.

TUITION POLICIES (continued)

For parents who enroll two or more children, full tuition is charged for the first child, and a discount of 10% will be given for subsequent one. We do not offer make-up days due to illness or vacation. The only make-up days will be for severe weather closures. We follow Port Townsend School District in determining weather closures. We also follow the district schedule for major holidays and school vacations. During these scheduled breaks, Firefly may offer minicamps for an additional cost.

Regional preschools and daycares are in line with these practices. We cannot hold a space for your child unless the month is paid for in its entirety. Tuition is due by the 25th of the preceding month. Thank you for understanding the business side of our program.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Items From Home

We cannot be responsible for personal possessions left at school, especially if they are not labeled. Special toys and clothing should never come to school. Exception: There will be “Show-and-Tell” days every month on which your child can bring a special object from home.

School Supplies

Your supply fee will cover most materials, but occasionally you may be asked to provide food or supplies for a party or special project. Your participation in these events is strictly voluntary but always appreciated.

Supply Fee

The nonrefundable supply fee equivalent to one month’s tuition is due no later than June 15, 2011. This payment will serve a dual purpose of both holding your child’s space in the fall program and allowing supplies to be ordered in advance for the start of the school year.[2]

Snack

At the beginning of each month we will provide a snack suggestion list. We encourage parents to provide nutritious choices such as fruit, veggies with dip, bagels and cream cheese, graham crackers, and cheese. The school always welcomes donations of nonperishable snacks throughout the year.

Arrival

Class begins at 9 a.m. If you arrive early, please visit with other parents and children in the yard. The teacher needs the time from 8:30 to 9:00 to prepare for the day. Afternoon class begins at 1:30 p.m. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, please wait patiently at the door and a teacher will come to let you in; knocking or entering abruptly disrupts the children.

[2] The summer supply fee is in addition to the fall supply fee and will be determined in March 2011.

GENERAL GUIDELINES (continued)

Sign-in

Please sign your child in every day, noting your arrival time, the phone number where you can be reached, and who will be picking up your child. These forms serve as an attendance record.

Clothes/Shoes

Children should be dressed in washable, comfortable play clothes for preschool. Even though we encourage them to wear smocks for messy activities, children do get dirty and should not have to worry about keeping special outfits clean. Many materials that claim to be washable are not. We prefer that children wear rubber-soled shoes, as they are safer when playing outside or going for walks about town. It is helpful and empowering if children can put their own shoes on. Rubber boots are great as are Velcro-fastened shoes.

Extra Clothes

Please bring an extra set of clothes for your child on the first day of school, in a large ziplock bag with your child's name on it. Include socks and shoes if you think it is necessary. These clothes will be stored in the classroom and given back to you at the end of the school year.

Dismissal Procedure

Morning class is over at 1 p.m., afternoon class ends at 5 p.m. Please arrive on time and follow the pick-up procedure outlined in our daily schedule. If tardiness becomes a problem, late fees will be applied. If someone who is not listed on the registration form will be picking up your child, you must inform the teacher in writing. Include the person's name, address, and phone number, and pick-up date(s). The teacher will ask for proof of identification for people whom she has never met before, so please be prepared.

Communication

Please call if your child will be late or absent. There are many times throughout the school year when we need to communicate with parents by phone or letter. Therefore, it is essential that we have correct addresses and phone numbers. Notify the teacher in writing to update your child's records for changes in any of your contact information. There will be a monthly preschool newsletter detailing activities and events. Please keep the newsletters posted where you can see them. They will contain important information, as well as describe everything your child will be doing that month.

Conferences

In the event that there is a problem or concern about your child, please try to discuss the issue with the teacher by phoning after class time or sending a note. Conferences will be held in November and in May. If you think a conference is needed before this time, please make arrangements with the teacher. **PLEASE do not try to have a conference with the teachers at drop-off or pick-up time; their attention must stay focused on the children to ensure everyone's safe arrival and departure. If you would like to talk to the teacher, ask to be**

phoned later in the day, or send an e-mail. We strive to keep parents in the loop by informing you of your child's daily activities and experiences.

GENERAL GUIDELINES (continued)

Class Play Lists

A Class Play List will be compiled and distributed only to preschool parents and staff. Please use this information for social networking (play dates, birthday parties, etc.), and not for commercial purposes. Your cooperation will allow us to continue providing this convenience.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very important! If you would like to send a special treat to celebrate your child's birthday at school, discuss your plans with the teacher. Invitations to private parties may be placed in school cubbies only if all children in the class are invited.

Parent Involvement

Parents are encouraged to participate at Firefly Academy. If you would like to volunteer in the classroom on a regular basis, please talk with the teacher. If you would be willing to share a hobby, play an instrument, talk about your job, bring in an animal, or offer anything else you think might enrich the learning experience, please discuss let us know; we would love to have you with us. We will also need chaperones and possibly drivers for field trips, refreshments for parties, and help with other special events. If there is any other way you would like to help, please let the teacher know.

Emergency Preparedness

Please read the attached form titled "Emergency Preparedness." These kits will be stored in the room and given back at the end of the year if unused.

Illness

If your child is sick, please keep him/her at home in consideration for others. **A CHILD WHO HAS HAD A TEMPERATURE OVER 99 DEGREES, A RASH, VOMITING, OR DIARRHEA IN THE PAST 24 HOURS MAY NOT ATTEND PRESCHOOL.** If a child develops any of the following symptoms at school, a parent will be contacted to pick up the child: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive nasal or chest congestion, discharge from the eyes or ears, head lice, or symptoms of communicable disease such as chicken pox or pinkeye. A sick child will be isolated from other children and made as comfortable as possible while waiting to go home. Please notify the teacher if someone in your home has a confirmed case of a communicable disease. You will be notified of exposure to diagnosed cases of communicable diseases at Preschool. Do not medicate your child with over-the-counter products in order to send them to our program.

Medication

If at all possible, arrange medication schedules so that your child does not need to take medicine during school hours. If necessary, we will administer medication from its original container labeled with child's name and dosage schedule. The medicine, measuring spoon, or other

supplies for administering the drug should be packed in a zip lock bag and given to the teacher (not put in a cubby). In addition, the parent must complete an "Authorization of Medication" form and give it to the teacher with the medicine.

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook and Enrollment Form

I, _____, parent/guardian of, _____, participant at Firefly Academy, have read and agree to the policies and procedures outlined in the handbook.

I understand that the policies and procedures are in place to provide a safe and harmonious environment for my child and his/her peers. If I do not understand any section of this handbook I will ask the director to clarify before signing.

Parent Signature

Date Signed

Teacher Signature

Date Received

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:

Tuition Agreement/Intent to Attend 2011–2012

Enrollment at Firefly is based on the September–June academic year.[3] Once the enrollment process begins, 30 days’ written notice is required to withdraw from the program. In the case of no notice, one full month’s tuition will be required at the time of separation. Once the school year begins, your child’s place is reserved solely for him/her. Pro-rating is not offered as we are not able to fill spaces short-term if you will be taking a vacation or in the case of illness. Extreme circumstances will be given special consideration. In general, Firefly will follow the Port Townsend School District schedule, with a few exceptions as noted on the calendar. Some months will have more sessions than others. Tuition is the same for all 10 months.

An enrollment fee of \$100 is required to reserve your child’s space. If you have previously paid an enrollment fee to Firefly and have had continuous enrollment since fall 2011, your enrollment fee is \$50.

A nonrefundable supply fee equivalent to one month’s tuition is due by June 15. This fee applies to all students-new and continuing.

Monthly tuition is due by the 25th of the preceding month. It is considered late after the 1st—a 10% late fee will be applied to your bill. If you are having financial difficulties, notify the director immediately so that a mutually agreeable solution can be reached.

My child, _____, will attend _____. Thirty days’ written notice is required to withdraw from the program once the enrollment process begins. My monthly financial responsibility is _____, based on the current tuition schedule.

I have included the \$100/\$50 nonrefundable enrollment fee* and the equivalent to one month’s tuition nonrefundable supply fee. By signing below, I acknowledge and accept full financial responsibility for the participation of my child in the Firefly Program and agree to give thirty days’ written notice in the case of withdrawal or I am responsible for paying one month’s tuition.

Parent Name:

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Teacher Signature Date Received

[3] * The summer program (July and August) is considered separate, with its own distinct enrollment and supply fees. So if you began in July 2011 and paid the summer enrollment and supply fees, a new \$100 enrollment fee is due for the fall.

General Walking and Bus Ride Permission Slip

I give my child, _____, permission to participate in walks on various dates in the field behind Firefly Academy Preschool. My child may participate on field trips on Jefferson County Transit buses. Trips may include: Uptown, Kai Tai Lagoon, and the library. The destination will be announced and posted at the school prior to departure.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Photo Release Form

I understand that my child may be photographed while participating in activities at Firefly Academy and that those photos may be printed in school literature or in the local newspaper.

Child's Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Withdrawal Notification

I agree to give 30 business days notice prior to withdrawing my child from the program once the enrollment process begins. I agree to pay one month's tuition if I fail to give notice. This policy also applies to changing or reducing days. Summer programming is separate from the September–June school year. Different fees and policies may apply to provide flexibility during July and August.

Child's Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Firefly Enrollment Form:

CHILD'S NAME:

CHILD'S BIRTHDATE: _____

CHILD'S ADDRESS: _____

PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' NAMES AND ADDRESS(ES):

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PARENTS' PHONE NUMBERS (in order of most reachable):

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME, PHONE, ADDRESS:

1) _____

2) _____

Are these people authorized to pick up your child in case of emergency?

CHILD'S ALLERGIES, FOOD SENSITIVITIES, AND/OR RESTRICTIONS:

CHILD'S HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS (name, address and phone):

Physician: _____

Dentist: _____

INSURANCE PROVIDER:

Medical Release:

I understand that in the case of serious injury or emergency, 911 will be called and my child, _____, will be transported to the local emergency department via emergency transport. If I cannot be contacted, I authorize appropriate treatment measures be administered in my absence. I have listed my contact numbers in order of most reachable above.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Getting to know you:

Please include information about spouses, partners, or caregivers on this page as well!

IS THERE ANYTHING WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD IN ORDER TO SERVE HIM/HER BEST?

Does your child have siblings? Names? Ages?

Does your child have pets?

How do you handle discipline at home? We strive for consistency within reason, so please be specific

Do you want to participate in our classroom as a volunteer?