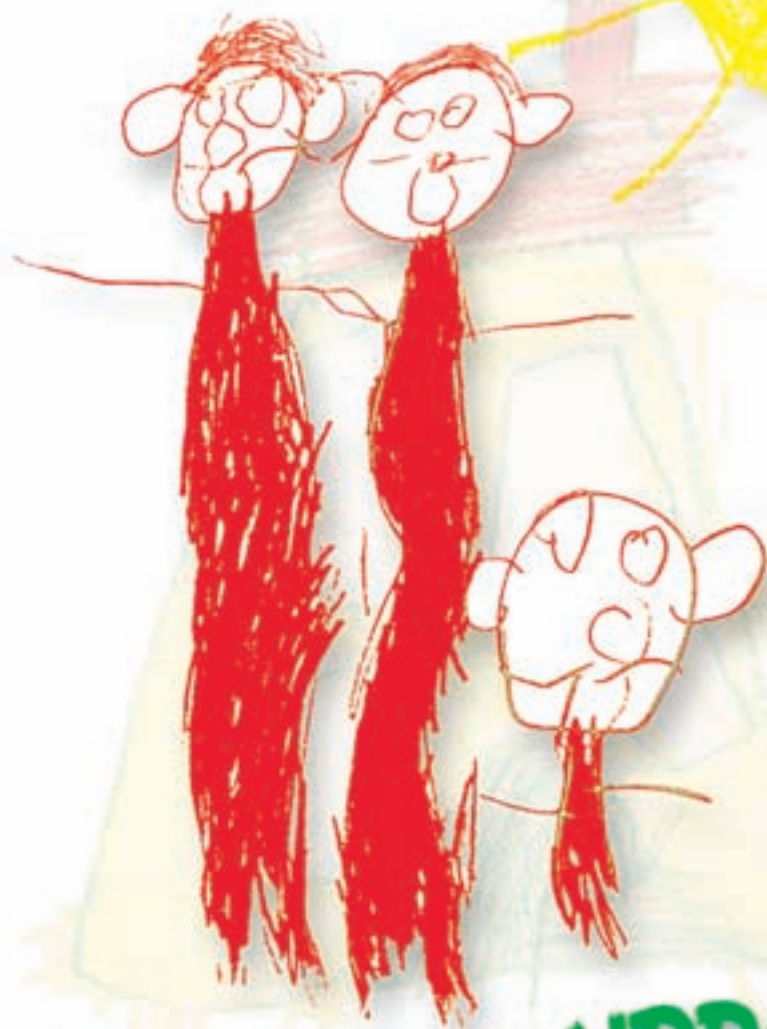


Orange Coast College

**EARLY CHILDHOOD LAB SCHOOL**



**PARENT HANDBOOK**

# ORANGE COAST COLLEGE

## EARLY CHILDHOOD LAB SCHOOL

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## **WELCOME**

Welcome to the Orange Coast College Early Childhood Lab School. Our staff strives to work closely with you to provide a nurturing, stimulating environment that extends and enriches your child's early home experiences. We welcome your ideas and creativity in helping us to maintain a high quality program for your child, and encourage your active participation in our program. This handbook has been developed to answer most of the questions you may have regarding our program and policies. Please keep it in a convenient place for easy reference.

Again, welcome! We look forward to serving the needs of you and your child.

## **PURPOSE**

The Early Childhood Lab School is operated by the Department of Early Childhood Education at Orange Coast College as a demonstration setting for the preparation of teachers of young children. Through the study of child development theories and a unique training experience in the child development lab, college students learn to be teachers of preschool children.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The individual needs and interests of the children form the basis for determining the design of the play space and for the development of curriculum. Children are able to choose freely from a wide range of play and learning

experiences. The fostering of curiosity and creative exploration of quality materials provides a foundation for cognitive development. The program emphasizes the development of strong self-esteem, feelings of independence and competence, and sensitivity to others.

## **CURRICULUM AND DOCUMENTATION OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Our curriculum is designed to nurture young children, stimulate their language, physical, cognitive, and creative development, and encourage positive self-esteem and social interaction. The curriculum is designed to meet the individual needs and interests of the children, emphasizing the building of autonomy, problem-solving abilities, self-awareness and sensitivity to others in the following areas: music and movement, language and literacy, math, anti-bias goals, physical development, creative art, dramatic play, physical and natural science.

We seek to foster children's concepts of self-identity and confidence, while learning to build comfortable, empathetic relationships with others. We strive to create a cooperative school community where diverse ideas, beliefs, and cultures are valued and appreciated. With the support of their teachers, children learn to express their needs and feelings, and to listen to the needs and feelings of others. Children's social, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills are developed by fostering critical thinking about what's fair to themselves and others, and learning to formulate mutually positive solutions.

Teachers use a variety of strategies to document individual learning and classroom activities including: observations, work samples, assessment checklists, and photos of class activities. Individualized information is collected in children's portfolios for discussion at parent-teacher conferences.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

The partnership of parents and staff is a vital part of our total program. We encourage you to visit, observe, offer ideas and suggestions, and maintain open communication with our staff. Please keep us aware of changes in your child's home life to help ensure that our staff has the information needed to meet your child's unique and changing needs.

Please check your child's folder each day for notices, receipts, newsletters, and other important information about your child's development. Parents may observe through our one-way mirrors at any time. Our sound system enables you to listen to the activities in each classroom. Please respect the confidentiality of children enrolled, and refrain from conversing about other children's behavior or development while in observation areas.

## PARENT CONFERENCES

You will have the opportunity to communicate more formally with your child's teacher at scheduled conferences. We schedule school-wide conferences during January. If you would like to schedule a conference, please return the conference request form to the director and she will schedule an appointment for you. Your child's teachers will meet with you to discuss your child's progress and needs, and share his/her portfolio with you.

If you need to meet with your child's teachers at another time, to discuss questions or concerns, please let us know. While we cannot discuss issues in depth at the door, we do want to communicate openly with you. Full time teachers have specific times set aside for phone conferences, and special meetings may be arranged by request. Please let the teacher or director know if you would like to schedule a special meeting.



## **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

We have a variety of volunteer opportunities for family members who are interested. Parents can make informal arrangements with the teachers to come in and read a book with small groups of children or visit as guest speakers sharing a talent, hobby, family member, or cultural tradition with the class. Classroom involvement is encouraged, so please let us know if you'd like to participate in the classroom, and we'll be eager to discuss the specifics and schedule a time that will be mutually convenient.

## **PARENTEERS**

Parenteers is a parent support group which plans family activities, fundraisers, parent education and other activities on behalf of the Lab School. Parenteer events are planned in collaboration with the director and the teaching staff and family participation, on a volunteer basis, is welcomed. Please check the Parenteer Bulletin Board for specific information about plans for the current year.

## **STAFF**

The Lab School is an integral part of the Early Childhood Department.

The director, assistant director, mentor teachers, and co-teachers in the program have been selected because they have an especially strong background of coursework and experience in Early Childhood Education. They exhibit a standard of positive adult-child interaction for students to model, and from which parents may draw support.

All staff are members of the local affiliate section of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Regularly scheduled staff meetings and professional development activities encourage staff members to continually increase their knowledge of developmentally appropriate teaching practices, so that they may better serve your children.

In addition to paid staff, the program is also staffed by students enrolled in early childhood practicum and field experience courses. Beginning-level student teachers are scheduled once a week, and advanced-level student teachers twice a week. Student teachers are always under the supervision of our staff and are never left alone with the children. In addition, we sometimes have students enrolled in child development classes who will be observing and recording children's behavior without interacting in class activities.

## **ENROLLMENT**

Enrollment in the Lab School is open to all children without discrimination with respect to sex, race, color, creed, national origin, or ancestry.

Enrollment is open to any child able to benefit from the program that is between the ages of 2 to 5 years. Enrollment is limited and schedules remain in place for one school year. Requests for schedule changes are submitted with Fall Enrollment forms in January, for the following school year.

Prior to your child's enrollment, our staff will discuss the philosophy, curriculum, and policies of our program with you and set a time when you can explore the environment. If you determine that the program meets the particular needs of your child, you will be given an enrollment packet. All enrollment forms, including medical release and current TB clearance, must be completed before your child begins school.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Special needs children will be accepted if it is determined that the program is appropriate for the child, the staff is able to meet the individual needs of the child, and the child is developed to the extent that he/she is not a hazard to him/herself and does not endanger the well-being of the staff and other children enrolled in the program. Parents of children with diagnosed special needs will be asked to sign waivers granting permission for our staff to communicate with other agencies providing

services so that we can promote continuity on behalf of the child, and to share copies of assessments and I.E.P. information as appropriate.

When we suspend that child, who is already enrolled at the Lab School, may need additional specialized services to meet an undiagnosed need, a special meeting will be scheduled with the family, the teacher, and the director. Together, we will develop a plan which may include: referrals for specialist evaluation, individual adaptations to the program or child's schedule, further observations, follow-up meetings and collaborative goal-setting to ensure the child's needs can be met appropriately within the limits of the program.

## **TUITION**

The Lab School is entirely self-supporting and depends upon tuition for its operation. Tuition is assessed on a yearly basis and divided into ten equal monthly payments. The first tuition payment is due with enrollment registration and is non-refundable. The final payment is due May 25th. Tuition may be paid by check, M.O. or credit card. If tuition is paid after the 5th of the following month, a \$15 late fee will be assessed. The college will assess a \$25 service charge for returned checks. In order to ensure the quality operation of our program, no tuition credit will be given for any of the holidays the school is closed, or for any other absence during your child's enrollment.

One-month advance notice (in writing) must be given if your child is being withdrawn from the program.

## **LUNCH BUNCH**

Preschool & Pre-K children have the option of attending Lunch Bunch for an additional daily fee. Hours are:

11:30 – 12:50 for AM children

11:40 – 1:00 for PM children

Registration is available in advance on a first-come, first-served basis, due to a limited number of spaces. Lunch Bunch is not offered one day each month, so teachers may attend an all-staff meeting. The fee for Lunch Bunch is payable at the time of reservation and is **not refundable**.

To ensure safety of the children during drop-off and pick-up times, AM Lunch-Bunchers must be picked up by 12:50, and PM children may not arrive before 11:40.

## **EXTENDED DAY**

Morning Preschool and Pre-K children who are potty trained have the option of attending Extended Day for an additional monthly fee. Two schedule choices are offered:

9:00 AM – 1:30 PM

9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Registration involves a semester commitment. The first payment is non-refundable and early withdrawal requires full payment for the remainder of the semester. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis due to a limited number of spaces.

## **CALENDAR/SCHOOL HOURS**

The Lab School follows the Orange Coast College calendar. A current calendar is included with the enrollment packet.

Generally, the fall semester begins in late August, and runs through mid-December; spring semester begins in mid-January and runs through the middle of June.

Children may attend the Lab School from 9:00-11:30 A.M. or 1:00-3:30 P.M., Monday through Friday. An Extended Day option is offered from 9:00 AM - 1:30 PM or 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM. A full-day option is not available.

## **WHAT TO BRING/WHAT TO WEAR**

Each child has an assigned cubbie for his/her personal belongings. Preschool and Pre-K children bring their things to and from school each day in a backpack or school bag. Children are welcome to bring any comfort items that will ease their transition from home to school. The children should not bring toys to school.

Please label all items, including clothes, backpacks and lunchboxes, that your child brings to school.

Please send your child to school wearing comfortable play clothes. Remember that your child will be involved in painting, water play, and other messy play experiences. Although soap is added to paint, it does not wash out. Jeans, shorts, and old T-shirts are VERY APPROPRIATE for our program.

Send your child(ren) to school wearing tennis shoes. Sandals, thongs, dress shoes, and boots are not appropriate for school and can be dangerous on bikes and play equipment. All children should have an extra set of clothes available in their cubbie.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

Please bring your child directly to his/her classroom and pick your child up immediately after the session ends. Teachers need the time before class and between sessions for curriculum planning, mentoring student teachers, and other duties.

Please sign your child in and out each day on the clipboard near the classroom entrance. Signatures must be legible. Bring your child all the way into the classroom and help him/her to relax and feel comfortable. A warm greeting from the teacher and a big hug from you will be a nice beginning to your child's day.

**Children will only be released to their parents or to other adults previously authorized in writing. Please keep personal information and release authorization current.**

Please notify the Lab School if your child will be absent or arriving more than 15 minutes late to class.

It is important that you arrive on time each day to pick-up your child. Children become stressed when no one arrives for them at the end of the school day and teachers have other responsibilities (record-keeping,

planning, and meeting with students) to do after dismissal time is over.

If you will be late due to an emergency, please call the Lab School to let us know you are on your way.

If your child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the session's end, our staff will contact any authorized adult on your emergency card to pick up your child.

## **NUTRITION**

Nutrition is part of our curriculum. Children will have the opportunity to prepare and eat a variety of foods. Nutritious snacks consisting of two of the following: (fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, protein rich food, dairy products, bread or cereal products) are served daily.

Parents of children that have food sensitivities or special nutrition needs should see the director and notify their child's teacher.

Children enrolled in Lunch Bunch need to bring a lunch consisting of nutritious foods and beverage in non-breakable containers. Please label lunch boxes. Due to limited space, we are unable to heat or refrigerate any foods. In order to ensure a healthy and safe environment for all children, the Lab School is a "peanut free" environment. We request that no peanut products be brought to school in lunches or "special snacks".

## **BIRTHDAYS AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS**

Birthdays may be celebrated with a special treat at snack time. Parents may provide party napkins and a snack. The teacher provides a birthday crown and the class sings "Happy Birthday" and eats snack together. Suggested snacks include: fresh fruit, muffins, cookies, frozen juice or yogurt bars, or cupcakes with a small amount of frosting. **DO NOT SEND** gum, candy, party favors, or balloons.

Please schedule your child's birthday celebration in advance with one of your child's teachers. If you do not want your child to participate in other children's birthday celebrations, please speak with your child's teacher.

Other celebrations are planned that support our school philosophy and anti-bias goals. Children and teachers may plan class parties to celebrate the end of the semester, or to culminate a specific learning project within the curriculum. Families are encouraged to share celebrations that reflect their culture with their child's class.

Family celebrations, coordinated by Parenteers in collaboration with the staff, may include activities such as: Friendship Pizza Lunch/Sing-a-Long, Dad's Play Day (Saturday Morning), and Family Picnic (Sunday Afternoon).

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Your child must have received the required immunizations and current TB clearance prior to enrollment in the Lab School. Immunizations must be kept current throughout your child's enrollment in our program. Your child must have a preadmission health evaluation within one year of entrance completed by a licensed physician.

Please verify that your child's health is adequate for participation in program activities before bringing him/her to school. A child who is not feeling well will not enjoy the school day and may possibly infect other children:

If your child is sick with a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, ear ache or sore throat, please make sure s/he has been symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Children with contagious conditions such as conjunctivitis and impetigo must be seen by a physician and treated with appropriate medication before returning to school.

Children with symptoms such as rashes, continuous nasal discharge, coughing, and sneezing should stay at home until symptoms disappear or are determined by a physician to be non-contagious (e.g. allergies).

## **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Please notify the school immediately if your child has a communicable disease so that the incubation dates can be verified and other parents informed of the exposure.

## **ILL CHILDREN/FIRST AID**

If your child becomes ill while at the school, we will notify you immediately. If you are not available, we will call someone else on your emergency list.

Our staff is trained in basic First Aid and Pediatric/Adult CPR. We will administer minor treatment as needed. Parents are notified in writing of any injury. A copy of the written notice will be placed in your child's file.

Parents will be notified immediately if the injury requires more than a simple first aid procedure.



## **MEDICATION**

In the rare instance (e.g. emergencies for children with special needs) that you would need a Lab School staff member to administer medication to your child, you must sign a release form as well as bring the medication in its original container with a copy of the doctor's prescription. Medications must be stored in the office and may not be left in the child's lunch or cubbie.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

The Lab School has developed a comprehensive emergency response plan in conjunction with the college. This plan includes on site emergency and first aid supplies, a 3 day supply of food and water and the practicing of fire and earthquake drills. Drills are practiced monthly alternating between fire drills with evacuation of the building and earthquake drills with duck and cover. When leaving the building for emergency purposes, we will take our emergency notebook with special contact information.

At the beginning of each school year, parents are required to supply an emergency packet for their child including a change of clothes and a personal note to the child.





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