

Kids Choice After School Care, Inc

Parent Handbook

Welcome

Kids Choice After School Care, Inc (Kids Choice) offers an enriching, supportive educational environment for Palo Alto Unified School District children, Kindergarten through Fifth Grade (ages 5-12) on site at Nixon Elementary School. After-school child care will be provided Monday through Friday, with after-school care operating from 11:30am to 6:00pm on school days. On school holidays, and during our summer program our operating hours will be from 8:00am to 6:00pm.

Kids Choice is a private company, owned and operated by Lorene Scatena (Ms. Lorene) and Nery Barrios (Mr. Nery). Kids Choice provides quality school age care. The heart and soul of our program is a commitment to relationships—those we build with the children who attend the after school care program and their families and the larger Nixon community. At Kids Choice we believe it is not just about accommodating a child, but about the ability to embrace every child and the importance of developing healthy emotional children.

Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives

Our philosophy at Kids Choice reflects this often-referenced quote: “Childhood should be a journey, not a race” (author unknown). Kids Choice offers a stimulating environment designed to promote social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. Through our program, we will provide a variety of learning experiences that foster the development of a positive self-image while making the learning process enjoyable. We respect each child as an individual with unique qualities of personality, intelligence, and creativity. Our goals are to provide affordable quality child care; a caring and competent staff; a warm, inviting, trusting, supportive, and safe environment; an open and inviting line of communication between parents and staff; and a rich curriculum that will meet each child’s developmental needs. The program objectives are to provide age-appropriate, hands-on curriculum that will also meet the developmental needs of each child. The curriculum focuses on various areas of learning for the children’s growth and enjoyment, which include manipulatives, reading, math, creative arts, physical development, science, social development, cooking, homework skills, and the value of children learning through play. We are committed to providing a high quality program, aligning with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) quality standards.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed with opportunities for the children to work in groups or individually, with hands-on activities that reflect the interests of the children and allow them to be creative, enjoy the use of a variety of mediums, and give them opportunities to be children.

Our curriculum is staff-directed and child-directed, making sure that we are capturing the interests of the specific children we are serving. Our age-appropriate activities are designed to foster children’s creativity while allowing them to learn and grow through each experience. It has been our experience that the younger children grasp concepts easier with hands-on, tactile projects, including through the use of materials such as kinetic sand and molding clay, where they

can enjoy the process rather than work always with a specific purpose in mind. The older children, even though they enjoy tactile projects, prefer more challenging activities that take time and planning, such as woodworking, creating individual haunted houses for Halloween, and black and white pastel pictures.

In our daily schedule, we offer a balance of indoor/outdoor activities; large/small group activities; and social/quiet time. Additionally, our homework/reading/quiet time is an integral part of our program because it gives the children a chance to complete school assignments (leaving more time for family time) and to develop good study habits and allows for one-on-one support by staff.

On Fridays, the fifth graders have the opportunity to plan and implement an activity, called Fifth Grade Friday. The fifth graders learn to work as a team, be good listeners to one another, and negotiate what activity they will facilitate for the second through fourth graders.

Kids Choice will not provide any optional services at our center; however, on school local holidays, and during our summer program (please see summer program information on our website under the “Our Program” tab), Kids Choice will participate in field trips as a part of and to enhance our curriculum. Transportation for our field trips will be by walking, the local bus service, or by a chartered bus in which a parent consent form must be filed out prior to participation in any field trip. Additionally, nap time is not included in our curriculum and daily schedule.

Supervision Plan

The Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division requires specific ratios for Extended Child Care programs (school age): 1 teacher to 14 children and 1 teacher and 1 aide to 28 children.

To maintain an effective supervision plan as mandated by the Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing, “The person who brings the child to, and removes the child from, the center shall sign the child in/out. As well as “The person who signs the child in/out shall use his/her full legal signature and shall record the time of day.

Additionally, we created a system called the “roamer” to support our supervision plan. Under this system, at least one staff member is designated as the “roamer” at any given time (depending on the number of children). The staff rotate the assignment of the job of the “roamer” throughout the different activities of the day. The “roamer’s” primary responsibility is to continually walk around the room, briefly assisting the children as needed but otherwise overseeing the whole classroom and the surrounding environment (inside or outside). The other staff at this time might be facilitating a project or playing a game with some of the children. The “roamer” creates an added safety feature where something unsafe might be missed if every staff member in the room is engaged with small groups of children.

A “checks and balances” system is another safeguard we use to account for the children arriving from school to our center. The teacher or teacher’s aide signs in the children as they arrive at the center from school and takes a head count. Directly after the teacher or teacher’s aide has completed the sign-in process, the head teacher double checks that all expected children have

been accounted for and a head count is taken to ensure the safety of each child. Particularly since Nixon Elementary School has a large number of after school enrichment classes in which the children attending the after care program participate, it is important to take extra precaution with the comings and goings of the children.

Emotional/Social Skills

Kids Choice invests a lot of effort in developing emotionally-healthy children. We pride ourselves on staying attuned to each child's social and emotional development and needs, taking the time to ask each child how they are doing and allowing them to open up about their thoughts, observations, and fears. We strive to create a setting in which the staff spend quality time and build trust with the children, notice behavioral changes, not trivialize how a child is feeling, and be sensitive. If a child is showing unusual emotional stress, we work with the child's parents to get the help they need and develop individualized plans for their time in our program. Part of developing emotionally-healthy children is to teach socialization skills. We teach the children how to control their anger in an appropriate manner, talk issues out by telling their side of the story and listening to the other child's point of view, and problem solve together.

Inclusion

Inclusion is core to our belief that every child should have the opportunity to be happy and successful as they grow and mature. We understand that some children have special needs resulting from learning difficulties, physical disability, intellectual difficulties, emotional problems, medical conditions, and behavioral problems. We will proactively address these needs in a way that respects, honors, and celebrates each child, fostering a climate of inclusion.

Through our years of experience, we have worked with children with a wide range of challenges. We work directly with school administration, teachers, and parents to develop strategies for these children's needs. Our goal is to help children develop tools to flourish. Examples of strategies include giving the child an opportunity to run outside with a staff person or kicking a ball hard to release aggression or anxiety as they calm themselves; sitting one-on-one with the child either playing a game or just letting them vent while we as staff are actively listening; utilizing extrinsic motivation to help them engage with other children; providing a tactile activity; using an airplane pillow to help the child understand how their body is moving and how to stay in control; and giving the child a private but visible place (for example, the director's office) to get away and have time to him/herself until they are ready to rejoin the group.

At Kids Choice, we believe inclusion is not just about accommodating a child, but about accepting who the child is and helping them to comfortably integrate and blossom.

Behavior Management Philosophy

Our goal is to provide children with communication skills that enable them to effectively resolve conflict, make friendships, and get their needs met. We encourage conflict resolution where children positively communicate their feelings and issues with each other. The teachers' role is to help facilitate a resolution among the children. In the resolution process, we use behavior modifications such as redirection, appropriate expressions of feelings, and reward systems. All of these behavior modifications become advantageous in encouraging a positive self-worth/self-esteem and promote intrinsic motivation in children.

Our environment and staffing are set up in such a way that deters the children from inappropriate behavior. We also use positive language with the children by telling them what is appropriate to do, not what inappropriate behavior they shouldn't do. It is also very important to explain to children why they can or cannot do something so that they understand what is inappropriate and can incorporate appropriate behavior. Children need constant reminding and gentle encouragement. They need to know that it is okay to be angry, but that how the anger is displayed is very important. If a child is reminded several times regarding their inappropriate behavior or is having trouble controlling their emotions, then we give them the opportunity to vent their feelings appropriately, such as running outside or kicking a ball to help them internally calm themselves. If inappropriate behavior continues, we will request a conference with the parents in order to work together to make a plan to modify the inappropriate behavior.

Kids Choice does not believe in nor will ever use as mandated by Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing, "Corporal or unusual punishment, infliction of pain, humiliation, intimidation, ridicule, coercion, threat, mental abuse or other actions of a punitive nature including but not limited to: interference with functions of daily living including eating, sleeping or toileting; or withholding of shelter, clothing, medication or aids to physical functioning."

Healthy Living/Healthy Snack Provision

Kids Choice is at the forefront of the movement to create and sustain a healthy environment for children in an after school care setting. Our program is committed to providing an environment that is environmentally-safe, where non-toxic furniture, supplies, and cleaning products will be used, in addition to organic, nutritious snacks served. We utilize the resources of the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN), such as the Eco-Healthy Child Care Checklists, to ensure that our child care center is environmentally-safe for the children. Kids Choice provides an afternoon snack for the children and a morning and afternoon snack for school local holidays, and during the summer program. Our snacks will consist of 90% organic foods for the children to enjoy. The monthly snack calendar is posted on the parent board for your convenience. If your child has a specific diet, or does not choose to eat the provided snack, please pack a snack for your child. In addition, we do not allow hard candy such as mints, lollipops, cough drops for safety reasons.

Building a Connected Community

An integral part of running a quality child care program depends on the interactions between all of the people involved in the day-to-day life of the center. Developing close relationships with each of the children, parents, and staff builds trust and gives children the opportunity to grow and develop in a supportive environment. It first starts with a cohesive staff that can, among other things, connect, support each other, and engage in productive brainstorming sessions regarding curriculum or specific children that may need extra support from us. A strongly-connected staff transfers into strong connections with parents and children, where staff are continually interacting with the children and talking to them at their level with respect and responsiveness and wonderful dialog takes place between the staff and parents at pick up about everything from their child's day to the family's wellbeing in another area of their life. At Kids Choice, we support and care for the children and the family as a whole. In continuing to build a connected community, the Kids Choice director and staff will work closely with the Nixon Elementary School administrators and staff to ensure that we, as the on-site child care program, are meeting the needs of the families that attend the school. We will participate in and support

their emergency drills, Halloween Parade, annual book fair, develop uniform plans for children with special needs, and provide child care for the PTA meetings, among other things.

Parent Involvement/Parent Input

Parents will enjoy involvement in an annual Halloween Festival where we will have goodies, games, prizes, and a haunted house.

Parent input and involvement are critical to the quality of our program. It is extremely important that parents feel comfortable with their child's care, safety, and participation in our program. We not only accept parent feedback, we strongly encourage all parents to continually review and critique our program. On a formal basis, we will annually provide parents with an evaluation form that provides an anonymous, confidential method to provide feedback regarding our program.

If a parent has a specific complaint that needs addressing, the procedure for handling complaints is as follows:

- 1-Hold an initial meeting with the parents to openly discuss their complaint and work toward a comfortable and mutually-agreeable solution.
- 2-Hold a second meeting to check in and see how the parents are feeling about the resolution of their complaint, as well as to discuss if there are any other strategies to use or adjustments needed to the original resolution.
- 3-If the above two strategies do not resolve the complaint, establish a Parent Advisory Committee to help resolve the parent concern.
- 4-If the above three strategies do not resolve the complaint, meet with the principal of Nixon Elementary School for guidance in resolving the issue.
- 5-If the above four strategies do not resolve the complaint, seek guidance from the City of Palo Alto, Human Services Manager.

Health and Safety Standards

We request that parents observe their child for signs of illness before sending them to school. We require that they keep them home until any contagious conditions have been treated and for at least 24 hours after symptoms of illness and/or fever. If a child becomes ill at the center, we will notify a parent to pick up their child as soon as possible. We will move the child to our supervised, isolation area where a mat is available for the child to use until a parent arrives.

In case of a serious medical or dental issue, we notify the parent immediately and require immediate pick up of their child. While we wait for the parent to arrive, we make the child as comfortable as possible. If necessary we may need to hold pressure on a bleeding wound or provide a cold compact, or obtain emergency medical treatment when the parent/authorized representative cannot be reached immediately, or if the nature of the child's illness or injury requires absolutely no delay in getting medical treatment as per a signed Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment form. Please also see Kids Choice Plan of Operation for details of Incidental Medical Services provided.

For minor injuries, such as scraped knees, small bumps, or scratches, we will treat the incident, and notify the parent at pick up.

Kids Choice will administer over-the-counter or prescription medicine to the children under the following conditions: all medication must come in its original container, labeled with the name of the child, dosage, and expiration date; no medication can be administered until a “Parent Consent for Administration of Medications and Medication Chart (LIC 9221)” is filled out and signed by the parent.

Plan of Operation: Incidental Medical Services

Kids Choice will provide the following types of incidental medical services: administer inhaled medication, administer ADD/ADHD medicine, and administer epinephrine injections. If a child requires any of the above listed incidental medical services, each parent/authorized representative will comply with the following:

1-A Parent Consent for Administration of Medications and Medication Chart form must be filled out prior to administering medicine or epinephrine injections and to administer inhaled medication a Nebulizer Care Consent/Verification form must be filled out prior to administering as well as any specific instructions on these consent forms must be met prior to administering medicine.

2-All medicine must be hand delivered to the Director along with the required consent forms and any doctors instructions.

3-All medicine will be inaccessible to children and in a locked container in our emergency backpack or in a locked box for refrigerated medicine.

4-A minimum of two staff will be trained on administering the above listed medications and trained by medical professionals. These staff will wash their hands before and after administering medication and/or wear gloves for the administration of medicine.

5-Medication and consent forms will be transported by and administered by the Director who will carry our emergency backpack inclusive of the locked container when going on a field trip or in the event of a disaster.

6-Parents/Authorized Representative will be notified in writing at pick up of each occurrence of incidental medical service to their child with the exception of the administration of an epinephrine injection. If an epinephrine injection is administered, parent/authorized representative is notified immediately and 911 is called.

Additionally, Kids Choice will report to the Department of Social Services a serious incident either the same day of the incident or the next working day by telephone. Then a written report of the serious incident will be submitted within the following 7 days of the incident.

Parents/Authorized Representative will be notified of any changes in our Plan of Operation: Incidental Medical Services immediately. Department of Social Services will be notified within 10 days of the change(s).

Emergency Preparedness

Kids Choice is committed to being prepared for all emergency situations. We will prepare both the staff and the children for an emergency by practicing monthly emergency drills, as well as participate in the Palo Alto City emergency drills twice a year. We will also participate in the emergency drills of Nixon Elementary School and support their procedures. In the event of a major earthquake or other catastrophe we will remain at the center (or outside) until all parents or authorized adult are able to pick up the child. In the event of an emergency, you can contact

us at 650.656.8170. Annually, parents will be informed of our program's Emergency Preparedness Policies and Procedures.

Enrollment Policies

1-First, please check for available space with Kids Choice before filling out the required forms.

2-Once you have checked for available space, enrolling in Kids Choice requires submitting all forms prior to attending our program.

3-Please visit our website at www.kidschoiceafterschoolcare.org for information about our program and to access the required enrollment forms under the "Forms and Tuition" tab. The required enrollment forms are mandated by Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division and include: Enrollment Application, Consent for Medical Treatment, Child's PreAdmission Health History, Notification of Parents' Rights, Personal Rights, and Admission Agreement.

4-Once all forms are filled out, please schedule a time to come by the center to turn in your enrollment paperwork since we are mandated to have original signatures. As well as visit the center, meet the staff, discuss your child's health (physical & emotional development) to ensure our program can meet the needs of your child, learn about our policies and procedures by reviewing our Admission Agreement and Parent Handbook, and get all your questions answered.

Priority Enrollment/Waitlist Policy

Our priority enrollment is as follows: currently enrolled families, followed by siblings of currently enrolled families, then incoming Kindergartners for the upcoming school year.

Therefore, any remaining space(s) for the upcoming school year or any space(s) that become available during the school year, Kids Choice will use the waitlist based on first come, first serve unless the space is unavailable in the room your child would be enrolled.

Reasons for Termination

Kids Choice reserves the right to disenroll your child for the following reasons:

1-If you fail to pick up your child/ren daily by 6:00pm.

2.-If you fail to pay your tuition by the due date each month and for nonpayment of one month.

3- If there is a disciplinary problem with your child/ren that puts other children at physical risk, emotional risk or does not enable Kids Choice to properly serve the families.