
The Nest Nursery School

Family Handbook
2016-2017





Welcome!

Thank you for choosing The Nest Nursery School. We are committed to providing a caring, enriching, and safe environment for your child. We recognize the trust that parents place in us when they give us the opportunity to care for and educate their children. We appreciate your trust.

The Nest is envisioned as an exceptional, high-quality school for the youngest child. It is our intent to create a place that feels loving and warm to everyone who enters our doors.

A mission of The Nest is to create an exceptional experience for young children and their families. We believe that children thrive in a caring and enriching environment that supports them in feeling comfortable, confident, and safe. We also believe that the basic building blocks of learning are play, curiosity, creativity, questioning, and imagination, and we believe that schools which embrace this theory of learning have the best influence on children's positive social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

The Family Handbook should answer most of the questions that you may have about The Nest. However, if you have additional questions or concerns that are not addressed in the Family Handbook or if you need additional clarification about the information provided here, please do not hesitate to let us know. We are convinced that a cornerstone of a successful and strong program for young children is a well-informed, satisfied, happy family! Our goal is to make sure that you feel good each and every day about having your child at The Nest.

Thank you again for choosing The Nest Nursery School. We look forward to getting to know you and your child!

Sincerely,

Mandy Palmer
Co-Director

Kristi Cameron
Co-Director

Section 1: About Us

The Nest Nursery School is located in the Grant Park community in southeast Atlanta at 1040 Grant Street. The school is open year-round, Monday through Friday, from 7:30am-6:00pm. The Nest serves children ages 12 weeks-5 years. There are 64 children enrolled at The Nest, and the school employees twenty-three people, including classrooms teachers, a cook, auxiliary educators, and administrative staff.

The school is composed of four classrooms, a dining room, a teacher workspace and office, a fully-functioning kitchen, and a central piazza and studio space. In addition, an adjacent 2600sf playscape allows for plenty of outdoor space for active play. Proximity to Zoo Atlanta, Grant Park, and the Atlanta Beltline are exciting features of the school's new location.

Our Mission

The Nest Nursery School is a not-for-profit organization located in Southeast Atlanta dedicated to the education and care of infants and toddlers. With a foundation built upon a strong and uniquely progressive educational philosophy, The Nest Nursery School upholds an image of the child as a powerful, competent, capable, and integral member of the community. The Nest Nursery School envisions each family as unique, deserving of respect, and the center of the child's life. The school fosters interpersonal relationships among children and adults in order to provide an educational experience of the highest quality built upon the belief that children have a natural disposition for learning and an innate curiosity that, when intentionally and carefully nurtured, blossoms into a life-long love of learning.

Our Vision

The Nest Nursery School embraces childhood as a magical time. The school is designed to feel like a home away from home for children and their families. The Nest is a place where parents can feel confident that their children are receiving the very best care and education.

The Nest Nursery School strives for excellence in its approach to education, which influences the daily life within the school. Of particular inspiration for the school are the experiences and underlying philosophies of the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

The Nest Nursery School provides children with a safe, loving, engaging, interesting, respectful and nurturing environment in which to grow and develop. All who are involved with the school – families, children and educators – are responsible for creating and maintaining the school environment in a way that supports the mission of the school. The school nurtures the child physically, socially and intellectually by providing high-quality and nutritious meals, small group interactions, and an intriguing, interesting and clean environment in which to explore.

The Nest Nursery School sees itself as a part of a larger community and authentic connections to the community are a vital part of the educational philosophy of the school. Because daily exposure to the natural environment is essential for the healthy development of children, experiences in and around nature are a key component of the school's educational beliefs. The school recognizes the role that families play in creating deep and meaningful experiences for children. With this in mind, The Nest Nursery School is always open to the unique perspective

and points of view of parents and other important caregivers in the lives of the children. The school offers a full-day program of a quality that is not currently available in the Southeast Atlanta area.

The founders and educators continually respond to the demanding standards to which they hold themselves. Every decision related to the educational policies of the school is made in collaboration and with highest regard to the mission, vision, and values of the school.

Our Beliefs and Values

At The Nest we believe...

- children are born with a natural ability to learn from their surroundings and experiences.
- all children have the right to a safe, loving and nurturing environment in which to grow and explore the world.
- in the collaboration between children, teachers, parents and community.
- the educator's job is to support and deepen the innate affinity towards learning.
- open and honest communication and dialogue among educators and families is a cornerstone to positive experiences for children.
- all individuals are unique in their perspective and have the right to share their ideas in a respectful environment.
- in a high level of accountability of all to support the school environment.
- the school creates an organic, dynamic and changing culture and an infrastructure in which to navigate and grow.
- a school is connected to a larger community and as such the school has a responsibility to enter into intentional and purposeful exchange with the community.

At The Nest, we value...

- each child as a capable individual full of ideas and knowledge.
- the education of children at every age.
- the reciprocal learning of children and adults.
- life-long learning for all individuals.
- time as a necessity for exploration and learning.
- simplicity in form, function, process and policy.
- complexity in thinking processes, research and stages of development.
- Above all, we value the joy, inquisitiveness and sanctity of childhood.

Our History

The Nest Nursery School was co-founded by Mandy Palmer, Kristi Cameron, and Teresa Cole, and opened in the fall of 2011 in the Ormewood Park neighborhood. Mandy, Kristi, and Teresa are local mothers and educators who have long envisioned a high-quality childcare center and school in the Southeast Atlanta Community for the very youngest children. The Nest was created by this group of women with an abundance of collective energy and like-mindedness.

The school provides a unique early childhood education program, which is influenced by the educational experiences in the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The

co-founders of the school have made several trips to Reggio to study the approach, and have participated for 10 years in a local professional development collaborative called Project Infinity which is devoted to supporting conversation and exchange among schools who share an interest in Reggio.

A primary mission of the school is to promote a rich, meaningful early childhood experience for all children. The Nest is borne out of a dedication to challenge the status quo for early childhood education, and it is built on the belief that schools have a responsibility to strengthen family and community advocacy for education.

Co-founders of The Nest intentionally chose to open the school in a small house as they embrace the idea of creating a special home-like environment for children to spend their time away from their parents. The Nest is built upon the idea that the environment should function as a “third teacher” and the design of the school is prepared accordingly. The environment is rich with engaging materials that offer limitless possibilities for young children. The school has a fully-functioning kitchen that is attached to a dining room in which children and adults enjoy meals together. The outdoor space of the school embraces the natural world as a key element of the environment.

In February 2015, Teresa resigned from her position with The Nest. Kristi and Mandy remain at The Nest, serving in the capacity of co-directors of the program.

For the 2016-2017 school year, The Nest relocated from Ormewood Park to nearby Grant Park. In its new larger facility at 1040 Grant Street, the school is able to accommodate 64 children in four classrooms. The relocation and expansion represents a strong moment of evolution for the school.

The Nest Nursery School's Founding Educators

Kristi Cameron

I grew up in Rome, Georgia, and graduated with a degree in English and Secondary Education in 1992 from Berry College. After graduation, I moved to Athens, Georgia where I briefly taught English as a Second Language to middle school children. However, even as I worked with adolescents, my curiosity and professional passion was more evoked by the experiences of the very youngest children. In 1993, I was accepted into graduate school at the University of Georgia where I began studying in the department of Child and Family Development and first encountered the Reggio Emilia approach to education. Eventually, I transferred into the Education department where I received my M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education in 1997. After graduation, I moved to Atlanta where I have worked in several capacities in the early childhood education field – teacher, college instructor, consultant, stay-at-home mom. Throughout my education and my career, I have been strongly influenced by the experiences of the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy and have been fortunate to participate in several study tours to Reggio Emilia. I am married to David, and we are the proud parents of two sons (Will and Eli). We live in the East Atlanta neighborhood and are actively involved in our children's charter elementary school in Grant Park. In my free time, I enjoy camping, reading, and traveling.

Mandy Palmer

While attending Auburn University, I took a part time job at a child care center and almost immediately knew that that was what I wanted to do with my life—nurture and support the very youngest people in our world. I believe it is a person's childhood that shapes who they are and that one of the most important factors in a child's life is their family dynamic. For this reason I chose to get my degree in Family and Child Development.

The summer after I graduated, I moved to Atlanta in search of a school that gave more respect to children and their families. At Clifton Child Care Center I was introduced to the Reggio Emilia Approach. I was so excited to find this approach that embraced children as they did and understood their capabilities. I also enjoyed the camaraderie and collaboration involved in this approach—getting different perspectives from each other and working together towards a common goal.

A couple of years later I discovered the Grant Park Cooperative Preschool and worked there for ten years. During this time I had the opportunity to take on many different leadership roles and attend three study tours in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

When I'm not working I enjoy being with my husband James and my son Leo. I also love camping, traveling, reading and gathering with friends and family.

Curriculum & Philosophy

As educators, our vision of the possibilities for schools has been strongly influenced by the experiences of the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. As we look to the example of education in Reggio Emilia, we see a strong expression of how families and educators can create schools for young children that reflect the values of the community. To be

a “Reggio-inspired” school means having a vision of children and families as strong, competent, and capable members of the community with inherent rights.

Our beliefs and values are rooted in the conviction that as citizens of a community, children and their families have a right to high-quality educational programs. A child enters the world as a curious, capable human being who seeks relationships and connection with others. Schools should be places where the innate strengths of young children are nurtured. Schools should be places where children are supported in growing to their full potential within an environment that is interesting, engaging, and responsive. Schools should be places where professional educators are happy, receive satisfaction from their jobs, and are viewed as valuable contributing members of the community in which they work. Schools should be places where families feel welcomed, involved, and respected for their individuality and unique points of view.

Learning Environment

Our learning environment reflects our belief that children are inherently curious, seek relationships with others, and construct their knowledge and understanding of the world through their active engagement and experiences with their environment and the people, materials, and experiences within it.

As a reflection of our educational philosophy, we provide a learning environment rich in materials and possibilities. Of the utmost importance are children’s active explorations in the environment. Children’s formation of ideas through experiences and processes of inquiry are of utmost importance. Rich and varied materials are provided for the purpose of experimentation and creative expression. Children are challenged to research their theories of how things work and are encouraged to engage in a wide variety of experiences. Children are engaged in small group interactions where each voice can be heard and each idea explored and results negotiated. Each child builds skills not only in traditional cognitive, gross motor and social categories, but, more importantly, in the areas of problem solving, original ideas and strength of conviction.

A primary task of the educator is to provide an environment that is filled with unlimited possibilities – possibilities that encourage children to make discoveries, to experiment with their own ideas, and to interact in meaningful ways with other people. Educators are constantly engaged in a process of observation and documentation in order to develop the best possible educational environment for children. The environment is intended to be responsive to the interests and needs of children while simultaneously encouraging children to develop in ways that are projected by educators.

Each classroom, as well as the school as a whole, acts as a democratic model where all participants interact with one another in a spirit of mutual respect and an attitude of care.

Project Infinity

The Nest Nursery School is pleased to be a part of a very special educational project called Project Infinity, which is an initiative of a local non-profit organization called Inspired Practices in Early Education. Project Infinity supports connections between schools in Georgia and South Carolina that are interested in knowing more about the infant/toddler centers and preschools or Reggio Emilia, Italy. Through participation in the project, schools engage in ongoing dialogue and reflection about their own contexts and experiences with the goal of supporting the thinking and action of educators.

The Nest is one of only seven schools in the southern United States that has been selected to participate in Project Infinity and the only school to begin in the project from the school's inception. Dr. Margie Cooper, the President and founder of Inspired Practices, has dedicated her professional life to expanding interest in and conversation about the experiences of Reggio Emilia. Margie is a wonderful resource for our program and The Nest's participation in Project Infinity is an important strategy in creating the best possible school for young children.

Professional Development

Professional development is an important effort to maintain the highest quality early childhood education at The Nest Nursery School. All employees of the school are expected to participate in professional development opportunities provided by the school as well as those required by the State of Georgia's Bright From the Start licensing entity, including first aid and CPR.

As members of Project Infinity the school will have scheduled professional development days in which the school will be closed and the entire staff will attend as a group. In addition, there may be conferences and other opportunities to participate in outside of working hours. While the school respects personal time, these opportunities will be scheduled well in advance and we expect all employees to participate to the extent possible.

Section 2: General Policies and Procedures

Admission & Enrollment

The school year runs year-round from the first Monday in August through the next-to-the-last week of July. The school is open from 7:30 am – 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday except for scheduled school closings as noted on the school calendar. The school accepts students from 12 weeks to 5 years of age.

Registration for the school year begins in January of each year for the following August. The Registration Fee (\$300) must be paid at the time of registration in order to secure a spot for the upcoming fall. After acceptance by the family of enrollment and the payment of the registration fee, the school will hold placement for the child and the policies of this handbook apply to any changes in enrollment status or other situations that may arise from the time of enrollment until the new school year begins.

All families must sign the "Enrollment & Acknowledgment Agreement" as well as the "New Family Memorandum of Agreement", which will outline their responsibilities to the school and the school's responsibilities to the family. All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and accounts must be current prior to your child's first day of attendance and/or the first day of the new school year. Families are expected to keep all information updated during your child's time at The Nest.

Currently enrolled children and their siblings will have first priority for available spots. New families needing 5-day care will have priority for any additional spots available. The school retains the right to make decisions regarding enrollment and classroom makeup and placement based on the needs of individual children and/or the larger school community.

options allow the school to plan for staffing during the summer when some families may not need childcare. We ask that each family choose carefully and give at least 30 days notice if they need to make changes.

Payment

Payment is always due in advance on the first business day of each month with no deduction for absences, family vacations, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond the school's control. Payment is due as outlined in the Enrollment & Acknowledgment Agreement.

Late Payment Charges

Tuition payments are due on the first business day of each month. If payment is not received on the day that it is due, a late fee of \$10 will be added for each day that it is late. If your account has not been paid in full within 5 business days, your child may not attend school until the account has been brought current. After 15 days enrollment may be forfeited.

The school retains the right to take measures to collect unpaid balances either through small claims or collections. If these measure become necessary the family is responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions are charged a fee of \$35. This charge may be collected electronically.

Late Pick-up Fees

Because late pick-up negatively impacts the children and staff, it is heavily fined. The school closes at 6:00 p.m. If you realize you are unable to pick up your child by 6:00 p.m., please contact the school as soon as possible to alert us. A late fee of \$10 plus \$1 per minute is assessed for each minute between 6:00 p.m. and 6:15 p.m. A late fee of \$5 per minute is assessed for each minute late after 6:15 pm. Late pick-up fees are due and collected at the time of pick-up.

Withdrawal

If a family decides to withdraw from the school for any reason, 30 days written notice is required. All tuition and fees owed to the school during the 30 days following date of the written notice must be paid whether or not the child attends school.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records are transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

Photographic Release

Photographs of children enrolled at the school may be used on promotional materials for The Nest Nursery School as well as affiliated organization including Inspired Practices in Early Education, Inc. and the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA). Photographs are not used for any such purpose without the express written consent of a child's parent or guardian.

Outings & Field Trips

Field trips provide unique opportunities for learning and are scheduled frequently. Generally, field trips are taken with small groups of children to strengthen and deepen both the experience and the relationships among participants. These trips may include walks in the neighborhood, trips to parks and other natural areas, visits to nearby restaurants and shops, and outings to various sites around the City of Atlanta such as Zoo Atlanta, The Atlanta Botanical Gardens, etc.

Children are supervised closely and accounted for at all times during field trips. Classroom educators communicate with families regarding details of upcoming trips. **A permission slip must be signed by a parent for children to participate.** Parents are encouraged and welcome to attend field trips with their children.

Teachers and/or parents will provide transportation for field trips in their own personal vehicles, which have been previously determined to have appropriate authorization, documentation and equipment to transport children.

Inserimento

Translated from the Italian, inserimento literally means "insertion" and is a concept of introducing children to the school environment and the initial process of the child's adjustment into a new community.

Upon enrollment, a child and his/her family are invited to spend some time with the teachers in the classroom. Depending on the needs of the child and the family, these visits generally last from 30 minutes to 1 hour. This is an opportunity for conversation between parents, teachers and the child within the context of the school environment.

Children's response to separation varies dramatically. We ask that parents be flexible during the first few weeks of school and plan to spend extra time at school with their child if needed in order to ease the anxiety of separation. Separation anxiety is a healthy, normal developmental stage, which we believe deserves time and appropriate attention. We feel that by easing into the

transition and gradually lessening the time of “goodbye”, children develop confidence that their parents will indeed return and that educators can be trusted to provide a warm and nurturing environment while parents are away. As a child becomes more comfortable at school, a parent’s short, predictable and loving “goodbye” is often all that is necessary as the child is dropped off at school.

Inserimento is an important time for children as they develop new relationships with other children, adults, and the new environment. We believe that the process of relationship building is most important for young children; because of this, we treasure this time of inserimento.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Our educators are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. When hiring educators we take a variety of traits into consideration such as educational background, experience, dedication to the profession and willingness to participate in the mission, vision and values of the school.

We believe that a unique aspect of The Nest Nursery School is the strength and commitment of the educational professionals who choose to work at the school. In order to support educators at The Nest Nursery School in their continuing evolution as professionals, we make a strong commitment to ongoing professional development for all of our staff, professional development that exceeds the minimum requirements of Bright from the Start. Please be aware that this type of professional development requires occasional absences of educators from the classrooms. In all cases, well-trained substitute educators work in the absence of your child’s regular classroom teacher. We hope that the strength and nature of the experiences for you child and you while at the school is evidence of the power of our strong commitment to regular professional development.

Child to Staff Ratios

The Nest Nursery School provides student/teacher ratios well below those allowed by the State of Georgia.

Child-to-Adult Ratios

Infant Class	4:1
One Year Old Class	5.3:1
Two Year Old Class	5.3:1
Multiage Class	6.7:1

Maximum staff/child ratios for the State of Georgia can be found in the in the Childcare Learning Center Rules and Regulations at <http://decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CCLCRulesandRegulations.pdf>.

Personal Belongings

Please label *all* items brought from home with your child's name to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or misdirected items that are not properly labeled.

What to Bring for Infants (12 weeks to 12 months)

- Enough bottles of breast milk or formula for one day's feedings should be brought already prepared to school each day. **Bottles should be clearly marked with the child's name and date.** Empty bottles are returned to the family each day.
- Food
- A supply of diapers and wipes.
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes.
- Any comfort items that your child needs such as pacifiers, blankies, lovies, etc.

What to Bring for Children Ages One and Older:

- A sippy cup for water or water bottle, which should be brought home each day and returned full of water the next day.
- If your child is a young toddler (under 18 months) and still needs a bottle during the school day, we will work with you during the transition to a cup.
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes (more if your child is potty training).
- A crib sheet and blanket for their sleeping mat-to be taken home each Friday to wash.
- Any comfort items that your child needs for naptime such as pacifiers, blankies, lovies, etc.

Absence

If your child will be absent from school, please call or email the school by 9:00 a.m. so we that we can plan accordingly.

Year-Round Calendar and School Closings

The Nest Nursery School provides full-day, year-round care; however, the school is closed periodically for traditional school holidays and to provide professional development opportunities for the entire school staff.

Families should consult the school calendar for dates when the school is closed. Since tuition is based on a yearly budget, there are no discounts for school closings. Families may opt for a 10-month or a 12-month enrollment at the school; tuition rates will reflect the enrollment type that is chosen.

Holiday Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and the beliefs of children, families, staff and community. While the school does not promote

specific holidays, we welcome and encourage families to share important traditions with their child's classroom, keeping in mind the cultural and traditional aspects of the celebration instead of the material and commercial aspects.

Birthdays

Within the classroom, we plan a small celebration for each child on his/her birthday. Parents are welcome to celebrate birthdays at school with their child, but the school requests that party elements such as sugary treats, balloons or other decorations or gifts not be brought to school.

Rest Time

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs until they are able to roll over on their own.

After lunch, one and two year olds and multi-age children participate in a quiet rest time. Children rest for at least 30 minutes and if they do not fall asleep may be given quiet activities. Children older than 12 months sleep on mats with a sheet and blanket and any comfort item sent from home.

Diapering

Diapering is an important process in the daily life in the infant and toddler classrooms. Diapering is a time for one-on-one interaction between the child and teacher. The process of changing diapers is always done in a comfortable and respectful manner. The Nest Nursery School will follow all guidelines for cleanliness and hygiene as outlined by Bright from the Start. Diapering procedures are posted above each changing area within the classrooms.

Toilet Training

An important factor in making the toilet learning experience at school as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. Teachers will work with parents to create a toilet training plan when the parents feel their child is ready.

Philosophy of Guidance and Discipline

At The Nest, we have a fundamental belief that children are powerful, competent, and capable. We also believe that children grow and develop through rich and meaningful relationships with others. We embrace respect as one of our core values. Our philosophy of guidance reflects these beliefs.

We believe that children are born with the desire and ability to be in relation with others. The adults in a child's life – especially family members and educators – have a responsibility to support children in developing positive social skills.

At The Nest Nursery School, we employ several strategies of guidance, including effective communication, acknowledgment of children's feelings, praise for positive behaviors and interactions, redirection from challenging situations, and natural consequences. We create with children "calming spaces" in each classroom that are designed to give children a place to go to be quiet and find calm when necessary.

Under no circumstances will any of the following methods of discipline be allowed at The Nest Nursery School:

- Corporal punishment, including spanking, shaking, jerking, squeezing, or physically indicating disapproval
- Shaming, humiliating, or other verbal abuse
- Withholding food as punishment
- Retaliating, or doing to the child what he/she did to someone else
- Labeling the child (i.e., indicating a child is a "bad" boy or girl)

Communication & Family Partnership

Communication Between School and Home

The Nest values the communication between school life and home life. In an effort to reduce paper waste, most communication will be sent through email and our website. The school will provide information about the children's experiences at school in the following ways:

- Each child will have an individual portfolio. The portfolio will contain individual work of the child, photos and/or videos that show the child's work processes, notes made by teachers and other documentation about the child's experiences at school. The portfolio will be a living and ongoing body of work that will follow the child throughout their matriculation through the school. Parents are encouraged to look at and contribute to the portfolio often.
- The infant class will have individual daily report sheets on which the teachers will make note of the sleeping, eating and diapering of their child each day. The teachers may also make notes regarding activities, general mood of the child, or upcoming events.
- On most days, a "Classroom Diary" will be posted on each classroom's blog as well as in the classroom on the classroom's communication board. Daily diaries are a snapshot of the day's work with children and are not meant to be an all-encompassing document.
- Once per month, newsletters from each class will be posted to the classroom blog. The newsletters will describe in more detail the work and projects going on in the classroom as well as upcoming events and classroom needs.
- Two school-wide parent meetings will be scheduled per year. These meetings will be exchanges of documentation of work and dialogues around children's experiences at home and school.
- Parent/Teacher conferences will be held by request. We will not have a scheduled time for parent/teacher conferences. However, if a parent has concerns or wants more

information about their child's experiences at school they may request a meeting with teachers at any time during the year.

- During teachers' week of preplanning in advance of the first day of the new school year, each and his/her family will be invited for a Classroom Visit. This is envisioned as a time for children, teachers, and parents to meet, encounter the classroom environment together, and exchange information about families' interests and special needs.

Family Participation

The Nest Nursery School does not have mandatory volunteer requirements. However, we strongly believe that parent participation in the child's educational life strengthens the child's education experience. Parents are welcome and shall have access to the center at any time in which children are in the care of the school. We strongly encourage family participation and involvement in the daily life of the school. Because we value the unique contributions that parents can make to their children's experiences and to our community as a whole, we encourage involvement in the school as much as schedules allow.

There are diverse opportunities to volunteer. Possible opportunities for family participation in the daily life of the school include the following:

- Visiting your child's classroom,
- Chaperoning field trips,
- Nursing or having lunch with your child,
- Participating in a weekend workday,
- Share a special talent or skill with the school (music, photography, art, yoga, etc.)
- Read a book to the class
- Organize fundraising events.

The opportunities for family participation are endless so use your imagination! When you participate in the daily life of the school, you enrich your child's experience at the school while developing a stronger connection with the rest of the school community.

Class Parents

Each class will have one or more class parents. The class parent will organize events and communications for the class including, but not limited to:

- Coordinate class socials
- Organize meal brigades for families with new babies or death in the family
- Coordinate with other parents holiday and birthday gifts for teachers
- Organize teacher appreciation week events

Parent Participation on a School Committee

The school has several school wide committees that are made up of parents and are an effort to improve specific aspects of daily life at the school. In the 2014-2015 school year, parents have the opportunity to participate in three School Committees:

- Fundraising (research fundraising opportunities; plan and organize fundraising events, etc.)
- Diversity and Community (participate in efforts to increase school diversity and build connections with community organizations and entities, etc.)
- Social Networking Committee (plan and organize social events for families and staff; manage the Nest Parent Facebook page, etc.)

Parent’s Role in the Organization of and Participation in Fundraising and Community Events

As a non-profit organization, The Nest Nursery School is supported not only by tuition but also by a variety of fundraising and community-building efforts. As parents at the school, you will have an opportunity to support The Nest through participation in a variety of initiatives, including the following:

- East Atlanta Strut in September
- Grant Park Farmer’s Market
- Dine-Outs
- The Nest Fest Benefit Concert and Silent Auction
- Grant-writing

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Procedure

The school opens at 7:30 AM. Drop-off before this time is not allowed even if staff is present. Children and parents arriving between 7:30 – 8:00 will remain with the early care educator(s) until the arrival of their classroom teachers. Please allow time for you and your child to wash his/her hands and to settle your child in accordingly.

The school closes at 6:00 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. Late pick-up penalties are severe and are collected.

Parents shall escort their children into and out of the building during drop off and pick up. Parents also sign their children in and out each day.

Visitors will enter and exit through the school’s main entrance in the rear of the building. When parents park in the school’s parking lot at the back of the building, they should proceed up the ramp and enter through the school’s main entrance in the rear of the building.

Parents should proceed with their children to their classroom, where they will sign children in each day on the sign-in sheet.

Pick-up procedures at the end of the day will be similar to drop-off procedures. Parents will enter the school through the main entrance of the school and ensure they sign-out their children each day.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child is released only to you or to those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child is required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

If a child is not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts are made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions are made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after two hours we are not able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are important times of communication between the school and home. In order to make the best use of these opportunities and to meet your child's needs during these times of transition, we ask that you not use your cell phone at anytime while inside the center.

Health Policies

The Nest Nursery School does not provide sick childcare.

If your child exhibits any symptoms below he/she should not be brought to school:

Fever	If the child has a fever for any reason s/he cannot attend school. The child should be fever-free for 24 hours <u>without medication</u> before returning to school. If the child develops a fever of 101 or higher during the school day, parents will be contacted and the child will need to be picked up immediately. If the child is sent home with fever during the school day they cannot attend school the following day.
Pinkeye	The child should be on medication for 48 hours and be clearly responding to the treatment before returning to school.
Strep Throat	The child should return only after 36 hours on medication. The child must be showing signs of improvement and be willing to eat and drink.
Diarrhea and/or vomiting	The child should not come to school until he/she is deemed non-contagious by a physician or has had no diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours.
Chicken Pox	The child should not return to school until all pox are scabbed over.
Runny noses/ Coughs	If your child's runny nose will require frequent attention from the teacher or if the child is irritable or running a fever or if mucus is any color other than clear he/she should not be in school.
Head Lice	The child may return to school when free of ALL nits. In order to remove nits, it is usually necessary for the child's hair to be well combed with a special nit removal comb after treatment with the medicated shampoo. Guidelines for treatment of head lice are available from the Director or from your county health department.

By keeping children home when they are ill, the spread of illness among our school community is greatly reduced. This means fewer illnesses for children, teachers, parents, and other family members, fewer visits to the doctor, and fewer days lost from work for parents.

If your child becomes sick while at school you will be called to take him/her home. Sick children should be picked up no later than 1 hour after notification by the school that the child is sick. If the parent notified cannot be at the school by the end of 1 hour, other arrangements should be made for the child's pick up. If we cannot reach a parent, we will notify the emergency contact person(s) listed on your enrollment application.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We take care to notify families via email and/or printed letter about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism

- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness

Medications

It is the general policy of the school not to dispense medicine except in life-threatening situations. In these circumstances the following guidelines must be met:

Prescription Drugs:

1. Before any prescription medicine is dispensed, a written and signed authorization that includes date, name of child, name of medicine, prescription number if any, dosage, date, and time of day medication is given must be provided.
2. Teachers will also record any adverse reactions that your child may have to the medication. If there are any noticeable adverse reactions we will contact the parent immediately and assess whether the child needs to go home or not.
3. Medicine must be in its original container labeled with the child's name.
4. Parents must provide and label any necessary equipment for the dispensing of the medicine.

Non-prescription medications

Before dispensing non-prescription medications the school requires a note and direction signed by the child's pediatrician. Non-prescription medication shall not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.

Non-prescription topical ointments

The Enrollment & Acknowledgement Agreement includes a section for the authorization of the administration of non-prescription topical ointments, such as diaper cream, sunscreen and insect repellent. The school will not administer these items unless this authorized by the parent on the Agreement.

Emergency Procedures For Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather (i.e. tornado, hurricane) the following procedures would be followed:

- Director will notify the teachers to prepare for severe weather or alarm will sound.
- Teachers will bring the classroom sign-in sheet and direct children to the basement of the school and away from windows and doors.
- One teacher from each classroom will double check sign-in sheet to make sure all children are accounted for.
- Director will collect emergency information from the office.
- All children and staff will remain in emergency shelter until severe weather advisory has passed.
- Director will report injuries and/or damage to authorities by calling 911.
- Parents are notified by telephone and/or email of the situation.
- Emergency plans have been developed and are posted for parent viewing.

Evacuation of School

In the event of an emergency at the school, such as fire, gas leak, power failure that affects climate control or structural damage, or other emergency requiring evacuation of the premises, evacuation of students and staff would occur in the following manner:

- Director gives evacuation order or alarm is sounded.
- Director contacts authorities by calling 911.
- Teachers in each class will bring the classroom sign-in sheet and evacuate students from building according to procedures practiced in monthly drills.
- Teachers proceed away from the building down the sidewalk toward Grant Street to a safe distance from the building and take a head count.
- Director takes contact information from the school files.
- If possible, Director places message on school number indicating evacuation and location of evacuation.
- Director calls each family and/or emergency contacts to let them know of the situation and the location of the evacuation.
- Children are kept at the evacuation site until an adult from their contact list picks them up.
- Their classroom teacher checks off children when they are picked up.
- All staff members will remain until all students in their class have been collected.

In such cases that the physical building is still inhabitable but school may not continue including, loss of heating or cooling, water, or electricity parents and/or emergency contacts will be called to pick up children as soon as possible. Staff will remain with their class until all children have been picked up.

Serious Injury of Child

- If the child is unconscious, not breathing, or otherwise severely incapacitated, the Director will call 911 immediately.
- The parent/guardian and/or emergency contact should be called and informed of the situation.
- The child will be taken to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.
- The Director or Teacher should remain with the child (either in the ambulance or hospital) until a parent/guardian arrives.
- If the injury is not serious enough to warrant emergency transport to a hospital, the parent/guardian and/or emergency contact should be called to pick up the child.
- Fill out incident report.
- Report incident to Bright from the Start.

Illness or Minor Injury of Child

- The parent/guardian is called to pick up the child at school.
- If a parent/guardian is not available, the person designated as emergency backup will be called.
- Incident report will be filled out.
- If injury requires medical attention Bright from the Start will be notified.

Safety Policies

Clothing

Dress your child for school in clothing that is washable and allows for freedom of movement. Children in diapers should wear clothing that is easily removed for changing. **Please do not send children to school in clothing that you would not want to get soiled or stained as your child will be engaged in “messy” activities such as painting, outdoor play, sand, water play, clay, gardening, etc.** Outfits that the child can manage alone will make the day go more smoothly. Heavy leather boots, complicated belts, and buttons often pose problems for children at school.

Children should wear shoes to school that facilitate climbing and running and other such activities. **Children should not wear flip-flops or other backless shoes.** Supportive shoes will help eliminate injuries during the school day.

Safe Sleeping Policy

- Infants will be placed on their backs in a crib to sleep unless a physician’s written statement authorizing another sleep position for that infant is provided. The written statement must include how the infant shall be placed to sleep and a time frame that the instructions are to be followed.
- Cribs shall be in compliance with CPCS and ASTM safety standards. They will be maintained in good repair and free from hazards.
- No objects will be placed in or on the crib with an infant. This includes, but is not limited to, covers, blankets, toys, pillows, quilts, comforters, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed toys, or other soft items.
- No objects will be attached to a crib with a sleeping infant, such as, but not limited to, crib gyms, toys, mirrors and mobiles.
- Only sleepers, sleep sacks and wearable blankets provided by the parent/guardian and that fit according to the commercial manufacturer’s guidelines and will not slip up around the infant’s face may be worn for the comfort of the sleeping infant.
- Individual crib bedding will be changed daily, or more often as needed, according to the rules. Bedding for cots/mats will be laundered daily or marked for individual use. If marked for individual use, the sheets/covers must be laundered weekly or more frequently if needed. At The Nest, bedding for infants will be laundered onsite as needed. For children who are no longer sleeping in cribs, bedding will be sent home weekly or as needed for laundering.
- Infants who arrive at the center asleep or fall asleep in other equipment, on the floor or elsewhere, will be moved to a safety-approved crib for sleep.
- Swaddling will not be permitted, unless a physician’s written statement authorizing it for a particular infant is provided. The written statement must include instructions and a time frame for swaddling the infant.
- Wedges, other infant positioning devices and monitors will not be permitted unless a physician’s written statement authorizing its use for a particular infant is provided. The written statement must include instructions on how to use the device and a time frame for using it.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play does not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 99°F or less than 32°F degrees. Additionally, outdoor play is canceled if the air quality rating is 100 or below.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

In case of extreme weather, the school follows Atlanta Public Schools with regard to school closings. In the case of severe weather (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes) please listen to the local news and/or radio station.

If Atlanta Public Schools are closed The Nest Nursery School will also be closed. For the safety of school employees, many of whom live some distance from the school, there will be no exceptions to this policy.

Closing Due to Physical Plant Defects

In the event of loss of power, loss of water, or other physical plant defect that prevents the school from opening on time or at all, or necessitating early closure, families are contacted by text, telephone and/or email. If any of these conditions happen during the school day and are deemed to persist for longer than one hour and in the case where proper care of the children beyond that time will not be possible, parents and/or emergency contacts will be called to pick up children as soon as possible. Appropriate staff will remain at the center until all children are picked up. The school will maintain emergency supplies order to provide basic necessary care for at least 4 hours.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid is administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you are contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, 911 will be contacted at once and the child will be transported immediately by ambulance to Children's HealthCare at Egleston. Parents and/or emergency contacts will be notified at once. If an authorized person cannot be contacted or arrive before the ambulance a proper escort from the school will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance is called for transportation. A proper escort from the school accompanies and remains with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

A Special Note about Biting: As upsetting as it can be for children and adults, biting is a normal stage of development that is common among young children. Most young children bite and/or are bitten by another child at least once when they are in group care settings. Often, whether their child was the child who bit or the child who was bitten, parents experience strong emotional reactions to biting.

Why do children bite? Again, please be assured that biting is normal developmentally in children who are experiencing discomfort due to teething, do not have the verbal skills to communicate their frustrations, and are unable to exhibit self-control that would limit their reactions in frustrating situations.

When biting happens:

1. Our first response is to take action immediately to provide appropriate care for the child who was bitten by comforting them and cleaning the area that was bit.
2. We also respond to the child who has bitten with strategies designed to help him/her learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus is not on punishment for biting, but on developing effective behaviors that address the reasons for biting.
3. Notification of a biting incident is given in written form to both the family of the child who was bitten and the child who bit. We work together with families to keep them informed and to develop strategies to address the situation.
4. If the same child bites consistently (more than 8 times in a month) the appropriate educators will ask for a parent teacher conference to discuss further steps to take. Those steps may include talking to parents about any changes that may have happened at home recently, shadowing the child who is biting, and asking parents to bring in a “chew” necklace.
5. The educators also pay close attention to *who* is getting bit. If one child gets bit frequently (the amount will be determined on a case by case basis) by the same child, we will call a conference for both families. At school the teachers will work to empower the child who is getting bit by giving him words to use (if needed) to tell the child that “biting hurts” and support he/she in standing up for themselves.

****Please note** There are no hard and fast rules about biting. Each child and each situation is unique.**

The Research: Eight years ago, Walter Gilliam, Ph.D., director of the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University’s Child Study Center, and Golan Shahar, Ph.D., a visiting professor at Yale, published research on just how often young children were getting expelled.

In the years since, several states have committed to addressing the problem, and **the American Academy of Pediatrics and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have recommended against preschool expulsion.**

Preschools are designed to teach young children the academic, social and emotional skills they’ll need for elementary school and beyond. A child expelled for behavior problems misses out on that essential learning, and a key opportunity to correct the behavior is lost. Gilliam likens it to “kicking a person out of a hospital for being sick.”

Pizzolongo, now an associate executive director for NAEYC, which promotes excellence in early education and accredits thousands of preschools nationwide, agrees. **Nothing, he says,**

should prompt an expulsion.

For further information on our approach to biting, we recommend the excellent article entitled “Dealing with Biting Behaviors in Young Children” which is available online at <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/biting.html>

Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely even that a child becomes lost or separated from a group either at the school or on a field trip, all available staff search for the child. If the child is not located within five minutes, 911 will be called and the family will be notified.

Evacuation of School

In the event of an emergency at the school, such as fire, gas leak or other emergency requiring evacuation of the premises, evacuation of students and staff would occur in the following manner:

- Director gives evacuation order or alarm is sounded.
- Director contacts authorities by calling 911.
- Teachers in each class evacuate students from building according to procedures practiced in monthly drills.
- Teachers proceed away from the building down the sidewalk toward Gilbert Street to a safe distance from the building and take a head count.
- Director takes contact information from the school files.
- If possible, Director places message on school number indicating evacuation and location of evacuation.
- Director calls each family and/or emergency contacts to let them know of the situation and the location of the evacuation.
- Children are kept at the evacuation site until an adult from their contact list picks them up.
- Children are signed out by parents as they are picked up.
- Staff members will remain until all students in their class have been collected.

Emergency Procedures For Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather (i.e. tornado, hurricane) the following procedures would be followed:

- Director will notify the teachers to prepare for severe weather or alarm will sound.
- Teachers will direct children to the inner most areas of the school (bathroom and hall way) and away from windows and doors.
- One teacher from each classroom will double check sign-in sheet to make sure all children are accounted for.
- Director will collect emergency information from the office.
- All children and staff will remain in emergency shelter until severe weather advisory has passed.
- Director will report injuries and/or damage to authorities by calling 911.
- Parents are notified by telephone and/or email of the situation.

Suspected Child Abuse (Physical, Sexual, Emotional, and Neglect)

Nest employees are required by law to report all observations of suspected child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency determines appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with all fire safety equipment required by Bright from the Start – Georgia Department of Early Learning and the City of Atlanta Fire Department, including hard-wired fire alarms, pull stations, emergency lighting and an evacuation crib for the infant room. The School conducts a monthly fire drill and reviews fire evacuation plans with children and staff on a monthly basis.

Nutrition Policies

The Nest Nursery School offers a full food program of quality meals and snacks for children 12 months and older. Food prepared at the center meets or exceeds guidelines described in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service. Meals are prepared fresh daily and, to the extent feasible, include fresh, whole and organic ingredients. Meals are largely, but not strictly, vegetarian utilizing protein sources other than meat and poultry for the majority of meals.

The school's food program includes the following:

- **Lunch** – Lunch is served in the dining room at approximately 11:30 a.m. to children in the toddler class and children in the infant class who are 12 months and older. Lunch is served at approximately 12:15 p.m. to children in the multiage class. The school works with each child to introduce new foods and to ensure nutritious and pleasant dining.
- **Snacks** – Provided mid-morning and again after naptime in the dining room. Snacks include fruit/vegetables, grains and proteins.

Infant Feeding Plans

Families of infants (children between 3 and 12 months) are responsible for bringing breast milk, formula and appropriate food for their child. The educators work closely with each family to create and maintain an infant feeding plan and introduce new foods according to each child's development. "Baby" food may be store bought or prepared at home. All bottles and baby food jars and/or containers must be clearly marked with the child's name and date.

A signed written feeding plan for children less than one (1) year of age shall be obtained from Parent(s). Instructions from the Parent(s) shall be updated regularly as new foods are added or other dietary changes are made. The feeding plan shall be posted in the child's assigned room and must include the child's feeding schedule, the amount of formula or breast milk to be given, instructions for the introduction of solid foods, the amount of food to be given and notation of any type(s) of commercially premixed formula which may not be used in an emergency because of food allergies.

Center Personnel shall hold and feed infants less than six (6) months of age and older children who cannot hold their own bottles or sit alone. Baby bottles shall never be propped; the infant's head shall be elevated while feeding.

As soon as the feeding plan indicates that a child is ready for solid foods, the child shall be fed from individual spoons and individual containers or dishes. A child shall not be fed directly from the original baby food container if the contents are to be fed to the child at more than one (1) meal or to more than one (1) child.

As soon as the child exhibits a desire to feed him/herself, the child shall be assisted and encouraged to use their fingers for self-feeding, eat with a spoon, and to drink from individual cups.

The Center shall encourage and support breastfeeding. Centers shall have a designated area set aside for breastfeeding mothers to breastfeed.

Baby Bottles and Formula. All baby bottles shall be clearly labeled with the individual child's name. Formula or breast milk shall be supplied by the parent daily in bottles. Only the current day's formula or breast milk shall be served. Bottles shall be refrigerated at a temperature of forty (40) degrees Fahrenheit or less. If formula must be provided by the Center, only commercially prepared, ready-to-feed formula shall be used. Refrigerated or frozen breast milk shall only be heated or thawed under warm running water or in a container of warm water.

A feeding chair or similar equipment designed for feeding children shall be provided for the use of each child being fed who is capable of sitting up but who is unable to sit unassisted at a table. The chair or similar equipment must be cleaned with a disinfectant. Such chair or similar equipment shall have a broad base to prevent tipping; a surface that the child cannot raise; a strap or other device, which prevents the child from sliding out of the chair; and a feeding surface free of cracks.

Honey shall not be served to children less than one (1) year of age.

Meal Time

Meals at the school are served “family-style” in the dining room and include the participation of the children. At meal time, the table is set with plates and flatware. The food is placed in serving bowls from which the children can help themselves. Children are encouraged to serve themselves. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Meals at The Nest are vegetarian and we serve very little in the way of processed foods. Weekly menus are posted on the school bulletin board and online at our website for viewing by families.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually. Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

Severe Food Allergies or Special Diets

In order to ensure the safety of children with severe food allergies (extreme and rapid reactions, allergic to many foods, etc.) or those requiring a highly specialized diet (gluten free, strictly vegan, kosher, etc.), the school reserves the right to request that families bring their child's food that has been prepared according to individual needs.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

The handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are completed.

Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received and reviewed The Nest Nursery School Family Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management any questions I may have regarding any policy, procedure or information contained in The Nest Nursery School Handbook.

Name of Child(ren)

Recipient Signature

Date

The Nest Nursery School Staff Signature

Date