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# The Nest Nursery School

Family Handbook  
2024-2025





Thank you for choosing The Nest Nursery School for the 2024-2025 school year! We are excited and honored that you chose our school as a place to begin your child's schooling. We recognize and appreciate the trust that you place in us when you send your child here each day.

At The Nest, we believe that a partnership between families and educators is of the utmost importance. Over the years we have seen firsthand how the old adage is true: "it takes a village." We have witnessed over and over the power of community when raising a child. It is our hope that you will leave The Nest feeling a part of this community and that you make long-lasting relationships with other families that will be supportive for you and your child.

The educators at The Nest make every effort to ensure parents are aware of the goings-on in the classroom, the whole school, and the surrounding community from week-to-week. As a Reggio-Emilia inspired school, our curriculum varies based on the interests of the children. Teachers plan enriching experiences every week and post them for families to see.

We encourage parents to communicate directly with teachers (as well as the school leadership, when appropriate) about your questions, comments, concerns, and curiosities about your child's daily life within the classroom. Our intentions are to build a school community **with** you that is rich with possibilities for children.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure that all of the children at The Nest have meaningful experiences at school.

Thank you again for choosing The Nest Nursery School!

Sincerely,

Eleanor Walsh  
Director

## **Section 1: About Us**

The Nest Nursery School is located in the Grant Park community in southeast Atlanta at 1040 Grant Street, Suite 600.

The Nest is open Monday through Friday, from 8:15am-5pm.

The Nest serves children ages 12 weeks to 5 years.

There are 53 children enrolled at The Nest. The school employs 17 people, including classroom teachers, a cook, multi-classroom educators, and administrative staff.

The school is composed of four classrooms, an art studio, a teacher workspace and office, a fully-functioning kitchen, a nature preserve, and a central piazza. In addition, an adjacent 2600sf playscape, a covered breezeway, and a covered deck 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 location.

### **Our Mission**

The Nest Nursery School is a not-for-profit organization that nurtures relationships, curiosity, critical thinking, empathy, and advocacy. We are dedicated to building an understanding of the inequities in early childhood education and to expanding the possibilities for schools.

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 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 an effort 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 that is best lived in an environment that is rich with possibilities, which is built on a strong foundation of relationships. The school is designed to feel like a home away from home for children and their families. We believe school should be a place where parents feel confident that their children are loved and respected. School should also be a place where children learn to listen by being heard, where children have access to many voices of expression through a wide variety of expressive languages, where the points of view and perspectives of others are being solicited and used to support the growth and evolution of the school community. In addition, our philosophy of education influences the way the daily life within the school is lived and how we think of our role as members of this community.

The school is inspired by the experiences and underlying philosophies of the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Through our study of the Reggio Emilia approach, we encourage educators to think deeply and widely about learning, childhood, children, families, and the role of the educator.

The Nest nurtures the child physically, socially and intellectually by providing high-quality and nutritious meals, experiences in the outdoors, individualized experiences, small group interactions, and an intriguing, interesting, well-organized, clean, aesthetically-pleasing environment in which to explore and learn. All who are involved with the school – families, children, and educators – play a vital role in creating and maintaining the school environment in a way that supports the mission of the school.

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 another 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.

Leadership and educators continually respond to the demanding standards not only of the State of Georgia's "Bright from the Start" child care licensing agency but also to the demanding standards to which we hold ourselves. 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.
- Children, teachers, parents, and community members have the right to an environment that supports collaboration.
- 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.
- A high level of responsibility from all to support the school environment is essential.
- 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, enduring values guide daily life and long-term thinking. These include...

- **RELATIONSHIPS.** Relationships are nurtured in a culture of connection, collaboration, and caring.
- **EXPERIMENTATION.** Through experimentation, we embrace creativity, inquiry and exploration as essential components of learning and teaching.
- **EMPATHY.** Empathy emerges in a culture of openness, curiosity, reflection, perspective-taking, and awareness.
- **JOY.** Joy makes living and learning more meaningful and pleasurable.

## Our History

The Nest Nursery School was co-founded by Kristi Cameron, Mandy Palmer, 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 envisioned a high-quality childcare center and school in

southeast Atlanta at a time when such services were almost non-existent. The Nest was created by this group of women with an abundance of collective energy and like-mindedness.

The Nest 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. Collectively, the co-founders of the school and several school educators have made numerous trips to Reggio to study the approach. School co-founders have also participated for over 20 years in a local professional development collaborative called Project Infinity that is devoted to supporting conversation and exchange among schools who share an interest in Reggio Emilia.

The Nest strives to promote a rich, meaningful early childhood experience for all children. The school 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.

As The Nest opened in 2011, the co-founders purposely chose to open the school in a small house, embracing the idea of creating a special home-like environment for children to spend their time away from their parents. Educators at The Nest believe the environment should function as a “third teacher”; the design of the school was prepared accordingly. The environment was rich with engaging materials that offered limitless possibilities for young children. The school had a fully-functioning kitchen that was attached to a dining room in which children and adults enjoyed meals together. The outdoor space of the school embraced the natural world as a key element of the environment.

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

In August 2017, The Nest relocated from Ormewood Park to a renovated warehouse space in nearby Grant Park. In its new larger facility, the school can accommodate up to 53 children in four classrooms. The relocation and expansion represented a strong moment of evolution for the school. Despite the larger and more “industrial” appearance of the school’s new location, The Nest has taken efforts to preserve a “home-like” feel at the school while embracing the exciting new possibilities of a larger location.

In the summer of 2023, Mandy Palmer made the decision to step down as director and go back to being a classroom teacher. She has moved into this role as way of leading and inspiring other educators from within the classroom and helping to provide the quality of care that is important for the children.

At the same time, Kristi finished a PhD program in early childhood education and philosophy. She moved on from The Nest in August 2023 to be a professor of students studying education.

Eleanor Walsh, the administrator, moved into the position of Director and running the operations of the school. Eleanor has worked in every position at The Nest, from chef to lead teacher, and she brings a deep understanding of the values of The Nest and a passion for bettering the lives of young children.

## The Nest Nursery School's Leadership

### Eleanor Walsh ~ Director



*I was born in Chicago to two educators. My mother worked for a Reggio-inspired community preschool program, so I was raised in a style reflective of the work we do here. We moved to Candler Park when I was two years old, and I have lived in Atlanta ever since.*

*When I applied to be an assistant chef at The Nest in 2016, I had no idea I would be here this long. I have worked pretty much every position at the school, moving into a part-time teacher, an assistant teacher, a lead teacher, and the administrator. Long-term teachers like to joke that it is hard to leave The Nest since Kristi and Mandy created such a positive and enriching work environment. Despite leaving the field briefly during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I found that a workplace where the educator is valued so much by leadership and community was hard to pass up. We have found time and time again that a school where the teachers are happy leads to a school full of joy for the children. My goal as the director is to continue valuing the hard work the teachers put forth in order to create an environment of laughter, inquisition, and growth for every child.*

### The Multi-Classroom Educators

The MCEs act as leaders of pedagogy at The Nest. The positions were created as an opportunity for experienced teachers to share their vision and guidance to help create a rich school environment for children and educators. MCEs support teachers in designing curriculum representative of our Reggio inspired philosophy.

### Mandy Palmer ~ Co-Founder



*While attending Auburn University, I took a part time job at a childcare 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 and understood their capabilities. I also enjoyed the camaraderie and collaboration involved in this approach—educators 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 four tours in Reggio Emilia, Italy.*

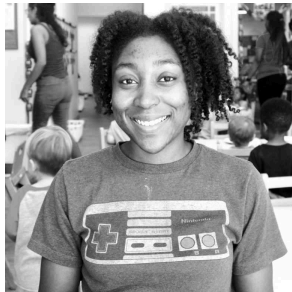
## **Mika Fengler ~ Studio Teacher**



*I started working at The Nest in 2017. I have worked in every classroom and with every age group at the school. I am often inspired by children's wonder and curiosity in relating to their environments. I take special interest in helping my students work through stressful situations and guide their emotions, so that they can use their tenacity to learn from these challenges. I believe that helping children find the tools and words to express themselves builds autonomy and confidence.*

*I have a passion for the natural world, and I have worked as a farmer locally. I also had the opportunity to be a Programs Assistant in Education at The Atlanta Botanical Gardens. I try to instill an admiration and respect for nature in the children. I also work as an artist specializing in photography, which helps deepen my materials work in the classroom. I love to meld my own interests with those of the children's to create a deeper experience for everyone.*

## **Kiah Ballard ~ Documentation Guide**



*I got my start at The Nest over ten years ago as an intern pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education. Since then I have had internship positions in many childcare settings, but The Nest always felt like home. I graduated from Georgia State University with my Bachelors Degree in Birth through Kindergarten Education in May of 2016 and was thrilled that I could become a full time teacher at The Nest. When not spending time at The Nest, I enjoy exploring new places, streaming on Twitch, and spending time with my family.*

## **Cathy Carlock ~ Naturalist**



*I am a self-proclaimed 'late bloomer'; who has dabbled in all kinds of life and career paths from yogini to bookkeeper to massage therapist and everything in between until at 46 Y.O.; I discovered my career as an educator/guide/partner-in-learning with the littlest learners. My passion for advocating for the young child has been unwavering since the launch of my career as an educator at GPCP. I went on to create a state-licensed service for infants and toddlers in my home. I decided to join the Nest in 2016 during the expansion to 1040 Grant Street.*

*I found my niche at The Nest as the Naturalist, and I love my work with the children creating the Nature Preserve. I bring a wealth of knowledge gleaned from over 15 years serving families with young children. I collaborate with the Nest leadership to provide continuous care to Parkside families when Nest children are matriculating to Elementary school.*

*I live in Grant Park with my husband of 30 years. I am most proud of my 27 year old son, David who graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. When I am not at The Nest, I am practicing yoga, dancing, singing, sewing and bicycling. I have a bachelor's*

*degree in Psychology with a minor in sociology and a Technical Certificate of Credit in Early Childhood Education.*

## **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 towards the example of early childhood care and education in Reggio Emilia, we see a strong expression of the ways in which 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 also be places where children are supported in growing to their full potential within an environment that is interesting, engaging, and responsive. For schools to function optimally, they 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 welcoming places for families where they feel 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 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, their formation of ideas through experiences, and the development of their processes of inquiry. Rich and varied materials are provided to encourage 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’s development and growth.

At both the schoolwide and the classroom level, efforts are made to act democratically, encouraging all participants to 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 an educational project called Project Infinity, 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 studying with depth the experiences of the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Through participation in the project, The Nest and its “sister 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 a handful of schools in the southern United States that participates in Project Infinity and the only school to be a part of the Project since 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 Reggio Emilia. Margie is a wonderful resource for our program. The Nest’s participation in Project Infinity is an important strategy in creating the best possible school for young children.

## **Professional Development**

Ongoing professional development is a vital effort to ensure and maintain the highest quality early childhood education at The Nest Nursery School.

All employees 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. All educators are certified in CPR and First Aid.

As members of Project Infinity, the school will participate in scheduled professional development days as well as a few teacher workdays each year.

In addition, staff may attend conferences and other professional development opportunities during and outside of working hours.

## **Section 2: General Policies and Procedures**

### **Admission & Enrollment**

The school year runs year-round from August until the final week in July.

The normal school day is from 8:15am-5:00pm Monday through Friday except for scheduled school closings as noted on the school calendar.

The school enrolls children from 12 weeks to 5 years of age.

Registration for the school year begins in January for August of the same year. The annual registration fee (\$300) must be paid at the time of enrollment to secure the child’s spot for the upcoming fall. Enrollment fees go toward start-up budgets for the classrooms.

After a family has accepted a spot in a classroom at The Nest and paid the registration fee, the school will hold a spot for the child until enrollment can begin. In some cases, families will be asked to pay tuition to hold a spot until attendance can begin. This is to ensure the necessary income to maintain teacher salaries and other expenses. Please note that 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.

Please note that families are required to give a 30-day notice in writing when they make the decision to leave The Nest. The final tuition payment will be prorated in cases where less than 30-days' notice is given, so we have time to re-fill the vacant spot.

All families must sign the “Enrollment & Acknowledgment Agreement”, which outlines family responsibilities to the school as well as 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.

Currently enrolled children and their siblings have first priority for available spots.

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 classroom/school community.

Families are expected to keep all information updated during your child’s time at The Nest. If there is a change in address, parent emails, etc, please contact us.

## **Non-Discrimination**

At The Nest Nursery School, equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws.

Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

## **Inclusion**

The Nest Nursery School believes that all children have the same right to participation, acceptance and belonging in early childhood education programs. We make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program, based on their individual capabilities and needs.

## **Certification**

The Nest Nursery School is licensed by and complies with the rules and regulations of Bright from the Start – Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

## **Monthly Tuition & Fees**

Registration Fee \$300 (due in January during registration)

As we begin the 2024-2025 school year, full-time tuition is as follows:

Yellow Room	\$2000
Green Room	\$1900
Orange Room	\$1800
Blue Room	\$1700

All tuition payments are due on the first day of each month. Families who were enrolled before August 1st, 2024 have the option of choosing a 12-month contract (year-round care) or a 10-month contract (no care needed for June and July). The monthly tuition and registration fee

are the same for either option, but these 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.

As of August 1st, 2024, The Nest will not offer 10-month enrollment to new families.

## **Payment**

Payment is due in advance on the first business day of each month. There are no deductions from the monthly tuition amount 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 of nonpayment, enrollment may be forfeited.

The school retains the right to take measures to collect unpaid balances either through small claims or collections. If these measures 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.

## **Aftercare**

The Nest teachers offer aftercare for children one year and older. This is available from 5pm-5:30pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for a fee. This system is overseen entirely by educators and does not exist as extensions of the school day. Teachers reserve the right to change this schedule as needed.

## **Late Pick-up Fees**

Late pick-up is a tremendous inconvenience to teachers, can negatively impact children, and makes it difficult to maintain legal teacher-to-child ratios. Being habitually late for pick-up or otherwise keeping the teachers at work beyond 5pm is disrespectful of their time, their personal lives, and the energy they spend caring for your child each day.

Late pick-ups are heavily fined and discouraged.

The school day ends at 5pm. We realize that emergencies happen and that in the case of an emergency, late pick-up may be necessary.

If you realize you are unable to pick up your child by 5pm, please contact your child's teacher directly via text or a prearranged method to let them know, as there is typically no one in the office to answer phone calls after 5pm.

A late fee of \$10 plus \$1 per minute is assessed for each minute between 5:01 p.m. and 5:14 p.m. A late fee of \$5 per minute is assessed for each minute late at 5:15 pm. Late pick-up fees are due and collected after notification of payment via email.

Teachers will keep record of late pick-ups and share this information with Nikki, who will contact you via email regarding the fee that is owed to the teacher. You are asked to submit this amount in cash or another teacher-approved method on the following day directly to the teacher who worked late.

Please note that you are expected to plan the pick-up of your child so that you are able to leave the building by 5pm. Until the building is clear of all children and families, teachers cannot leave. Teachers are only paid to work until 5pm. Out of respect for their time, if you have not left the building with your child by 5pm, this will be considered a late pick-up and will be fined as described above.

## **Withdrawal for Children aged 12 weeks-3 year old**

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 the date of the written notice must be paid whether or not the child attends school.

## **60-day Withdrawal Policy for The Blue Room (4- to 5-year old Children Only)**

Per Board approval, beginning August 12, 2019, children who are 4 as of September 1, 2024 and who un-enroll at the school after the start of the new school year, will be required to give 60-days notice to school leadership regarding their un-enrollment. During this 60-day period, the family will be responsible for all tuition due.

### **Why is this new policy necessary?**

In the last few years, several children who were on the waitlist for PreK at other schools were offered spots about 6 weeks into the school year. One year, three children left for PreK after the start of the school year, and it took well over 30 days to fill these openings, which meant a combined total of several thousand dollars in lost revenue, which is a challenge for a nonprofit budget.

In addition to the financial implications, this amount of “mass movement” at that point in the school year was extremely disruptive for building classroom communities and easing children through a period of transition at the beginning of the school year. As you might imagine, because the waitlist for the Blue Room is virtually non-existent at the 6 week point in a new school year, children leaving for PreK has a ripple effect throughout the school. We were required to move children from classroom to classroom, which had a negative impact on educators, children, and families.

Here are examples of the new 60-day notice of withdrawal policy, to give clarity:

- Bobby is offered a spot at a PreK program on September 1<sup>st</sup>, with a start date of September 7<sup>th</sup>. Bobby’s parents inform The Nest leadership on September 1<sup>st</sup> of his un-enrollment. They will be responsible for tuition through October 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Mary’s family finds out they will be moving on December 31<sup>st</sup>. They inform The Nest leadership on November 1<sup>st</sup> of Mary’s un-enrollment. They will be responsible for tuition through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

## 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

While at The Nest, your child’s records are transferred internally when they transition to a new classroom. If your child is transitioning to a new school, we ask that you submit a written request with instructions as to where the records should be sent.

## Photographic Release

Photographs of children enrolled at the school may be used on promotional materials for The Nest Nursery School as well as affiliated organizations 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.

At enrollment each year, you are asked to initial the following statements as part of the Enrollment Agreement:

Media Release
We regularly take photos of the children in conjunction with our classroom work at the center and for use within the center or on our website. We may also use photos during professional development initiatives in connection with Inspired Practices in Early Education and the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance. Please indicate that you authorize the use and reproduction of photographs of your child in conjunction with the program.
Occasionally we will post photos on Facebook or other social media sites. We try to reserve this practice for a specific message and/or special experiences. Please indicate that you authorize the use of photographs of your child on the school’s social media sites.

## 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 benefit 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.

We follow the rules and regulations regarding field trips as mandated by Bright From the Start.

## **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, groups of children and their families 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. In the event that your child is upset and crying when you are about to leave, it is much less stressful for the child if you say goodbye and leave quickly.

For the health and wellbeing of children, it is our policy that when a child has cried inconsolably for more than an hour, teachers may choose to contact the parent to pick their child up from 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, temperament, personality, and other factors that will contribute to 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. 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 and ensure that they receive professional development that exceeds the minimum requirements of Bright from the Start.

Please be aware that this commitment to educators’ 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 your 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 by classroom during the majority of the day

Yellow Room (infants)	4:1
Green Room (young toddlers)	6:1
Orange Room (older toddlers/3 year olds)	7:1
Blue Room (3, 4 & 5 year olds)	9:1

Maximum staff/child ratios for the State of Georgia can be found in the Childcare Learning Center Rules and Regulations at <http://dec.al.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 misplaced 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. Formula must be already mixed and prepared. **Bottles should be clearly marked with the child's name and date.** Empty bottles are returned to the family each day.
- Any solids for the child to eat at school.
- 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 school-provided crib sheet and a blanket from home 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.

## Absences

If your child will be absent from school, please contact the school by 9:00 a.m. so that we can plan accordingly. Email or Storypark are the preferable forms of contact regarding absences.

### Tips for a “Successful” Good-Bye at Drop-Off

Our first rule of thumb at The Nest: Keep goodbyes short and sweet! (For example, “Mama is going to work, and you’re going to have fun at school. I’ll be back to pick you up after nap and snack. Have a wonderful day! I love you!”)

Below are some other great suggestions (adopted from the article “Don't leave me! 6 tips for saying goodbye” available at

<https://www.firstfiveyears.org.au/child-development/separation-anxiety-6-tips-for-saying-goodbye>)

1. **Don't trick your child.** This is not okay. It might make for an easy getaway for the parent but it can be a cruel and scary realization for the child when they realize you're gone. Instead, develop a transitioning routine with your educator, or the person with whom you are leaving your child.
2. **Find a routine and stick to it.** From the moment you open your eyes in the morning, make a conscious and mindful effort to establish a good routine which factors in all of those important things which make for a great start to the day. Bath, dressing, doing hair, breakfast and packing lunch. And where you can pre-prepare, make the effort to. Iron clothes the night before, pack as much as you can in lunchboxes ahead of time. Have lunchbox staples packaged and either stowed in the cupboard or frozen and ready to just pop in. Leave home at the same time, and once you are at school or your early education center – or even at grandma's – have a routine for saying goodbye.
3. **Talk.** This is an important part of the routine. Talk to your child in calm and reassuring language and tone about where they are going for the day – and why. Younger children won't get the context at first, but let them understand why they need to learn and that mummy or daddy needs to work, study or care for someone else. The importance and practicalities of that are really important in settling nerves and easing the sense of “not fair”. The latter goes for parents too. Anything to ease that guilt and help your child see this is all part of life, then that has to be a good thing.
4. **Establish a routine and open lines of communication with your educator and caregivers.** This is critical. If you're all on the same page with how the transition from parent drop off to a day at school or in childcare should go, then it's going to be easier and less stressful. There's that consistency and continuity again, too. Predictability and routine are vital to a child's feeling safe and secure and knowing there is a wonderful group of caring people around them, all telling them it's going to be okay, is a big deal.
5. **Stay calm.** Easier said than done, no doubt about it. But if a parent can keep a lid on their emotions then the child will be reassured everything is going to be okay. Tears on the first day from mum are always a running joke – and it can be hard to turn that off when your little man or lady is trotting off into the big bad world without you. But a calm and happy disposition and not letting your own stress and angst show is a big step toward your child feeling much better about the situation.
6. **Familiarize your child with the idea of school.** A child's first day of prep should not be the first day of school. Take the child along to orientation and familiarization meetings, get to know the school environment. Take a walk through and meet the educators and



caregivers at the early learning center, stay and play a while with your child so they can understand it's a safe and fun place to be – and that you will be back.

**As with everything in dealing with children, experts are strong advocates for loving consistency, good communication and predictability**

## **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 has 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. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

## **Year-Round Calendar and School Closings**

While The Nest Nursery School provides full-day, year-round care, the school is closed periodically for traditional school holidays and to provide professional development opportunities for the entire staff. Please refer to the 2024-2025 School Calendar for these dates of closing.

Since tuition is based on a yearly budget, there are no discounts for school closings.

Families who have initially enrolled before August 1st, 2024 may opt for a 10-month or a 12-month enrollment at the school; tuition rates will reflect the enrollment type that is chosen.

For all families enrolled after August 1st, 2024, The Nest will only offer 12-month enrollment.

## **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.** Food or treats brought to school for birthdays or special occasions should follow The Nest guidelines for healthy nutrition. Please bring healthy non-sugary snacks that are vegetarian and nut-free. Snacks that are free of dyes & corn syrup ensure the whole class can participate. Possible suggestions for treats include 100% fruit popsicles, fruit, or veggie muffins.

## Napping/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, all children in the school participate in a quiet rest time. Per Bright From the Start licensing regulations, all children are to be provided a rest time. Children rest for at least 30 minutes, and if they do not fall asleep may be given quiet activities. Children who do not sleep are not required to remain lying down for more than an hour.

Children older than 1-year-old sleep on mats with a sheet and blanket and any comfort item sent from home. Children 2-years-old and younger may not use pillows for napping.

## Diapering

Diapering is an important process of 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.

Parents may send cloth diapers and wipes for their children as long as appropriate materials are provided to transport soiled diapers from school to home for laundering.

## 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 through this important developmental phase.

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 work with parents to create a toilet training plan when the parents and teachers agree the child is ready. Please keep in mind that potty training is different at school where there are so many distractions such as friends and toys.

## **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 and seek inspiration from many sources, including the Conscious Discipline and Nurtured Heart approaches to discipline. Strategies include 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)
- We do not use "timeout" as a discipline strategy at The Nest.

## **Communication & Family Partnership**

### **Communication Between School and Home**

The Nest values the communication between school life and home life. To reduce paper waste, most communication is sent through email and the app Storypark.

A few of the ways in which the classrooms/school provide information about the children's experiences may communicate information about happenings include:

- Storypark. At The Nest, we use an app called Storypark that is designed for school communication between and among educators and families. You will receive details for signing up for a Storypark account when your child begins attending The Nest.
- Individual portfolios. 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.
- "Classroom Diaries" are posted on each classroom's private, password-protected Storypark page, as well as on the classroom's communication board. Classroom Diaries are a snapshot of the day's work with children and are not meant to be an all-encompassing documentation of the day's experiences.

- At least once per month, newsletters from each class will be emailed to families and posted to the classroom blog. The letters 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.
- Scheduled time for parent/teacher conferences are dependent on the preferences of the classroom teachers. Parent/Teacher conferences are always available at the parent's request. If at any time 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 pre-planning in advance of the first day of the new school year, each child 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.
- Schoolwide and administrative issues will be conveyed in periodic letters to families, which will be emailed and posted on the parent communication board near the front entrance of the school.

## **Family Participation and School Committees**

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 and guardians are welcomed and have access to the center at any time in which children are in the care of the school. However, we ask that you communicate with your classroom teachers before coming in, as we want to make sure family member presence doesn't negatively impact daily routines such as naps and meals. We strongly encourage family participation and involvement in the daily life of the school and encourage each family to join a committee at Back To School Night. School-wide committees are made up of family members in an effort to improve specific aspects of daily life at the school. Because we value the unique contributions that families can make to their children's experiences and to our community, we encourage family participation in the school as much as a family's schedule will allow.

There are many 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,
- Having lunch with your child,
- Participating in a weekend workday,
- Sharing a special talent or skill with the school (music, photography, art, yoga, etc.)
- Reading a book to the class
- Organizing fundraising events.
- Participating in one of the schoolwide committees, including:

- o Community and Family Engagement (participate in efforts to increase and build connections within our community and with the larger community's organizations and entities, etc.)
- o Fundraising (research fundraising opportunities; plan and organize fundraising events, etc.)
  - As a non-profit organization The Nest is supported not only by tuition but also through a variety of fundraising and community efforts. As parents of the school, you will have an opportunity to support the school through participation in a variety of initiatives, including the following:
    - Grant Park Farmers Market
    - The Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser
    - Dine-Outs
    - The Nest Fest Benefit & Auction
    - Grant Writing

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

### **Cell Phone Usage**

The times you spend in the center 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 any time, during pick-up/drop-off or while inside the center.

## Health Policies

As a reminder, the Nest Nursery School does not provide sick childcare. In an effort to prevent other children and teachers from getting sick we ask that families keep children home when they are ill. Thus 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 exhibits any symptoms below he/she should not be brought to school:

<b>Fever</b>	If the child has a fever for any reason s/he cannot attend school. The child should be <b>fever-free for 24 hours <u>without medication</u></b> 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.
<b>Pinkeye</b>	The child will need to see a doctor. Typically doctors prescribe eye drops, which take 24 hours to be effective. Please refer to doctor's recommendations on returning to the program.
<b>Strep Throat</b>	The child should return only after 24 hours on medication. The child must be showing signs of improvement and be willing to eat and drink. They must also be fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours.
<b>Diarrhea and/or vomiting</b>	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.
<b>Chicken Pox</b>	The child should not return to school until all pox are scabbed over. They must also be fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours.
<b>Runny noses/ Coughs</b>	If your child's runny nose is impacting their ability to participate in the program, they should stay home. If the child's cough prevents the children from sleeping or participating in school activities, they should stay home.
<b>Head Lice</b>	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.
<b>COVID-19</b>	Children should always be tested when exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. If a child tests positive, they should stay home until they are fever-free without the use of fever-reducing drugs and have improved symptoms for 48 hours. The Nest reserves the right to require a negative test to come into school in the case of significant COVID exposure or an outbreak at the program.

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
- COVID-19
- 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 when advised by a physician. In these circumstances the following guidelines must be met:

### **Prescription Drugs:**

1. Before any prescription medicine is dispensed ask your child's teacher or admin for the "Authorization of Medical Form", 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 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 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 inner hallway of the school and away from windows and doors.
- One teacher from each classroom will double check the 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 the hallway 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 headcount.
- 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 uninhabitable or that the school experiences 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.
- Incident report will be filled out.
- Incident will be reported 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.

## **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.

## **Lost or Missing Child**

In the unlikely event 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.

## 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 minimize injuries during the school day. Teachers would be appreciative if you keep pants that need buttoning at a minimum.

### **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 in order to provide basic necessary care for at least 4 hours.

## **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.

## **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.

***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 bitten. If one child gets bitten 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 bitten 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 “Understanding and Responding to Children Who Bite” from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which is available online at <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite>

## 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. The toddlers/infants (green & yellow rooms) eat at approximately 11:45 AM, the 2 and 3 year olds (orange room) eat at 11:45 AM and the 3-5 year olds (blue room) eat at 12:00 PM. 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 classroom 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 on Storypark 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.

## **A Special Note about Treats at School**

Food or treats brought to school for birthdays or special occasions should follow The Nest guidelines for healthy nutrition. Please bring healthy non-sugary snacks that are vegetarian and nut-free. Snacks that are free of dyes & corn syrup ensure the whole class can participate. Possible suggestions for treats include 100% fruit popsicles, fruit or veggie muffins.

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# 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 with 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