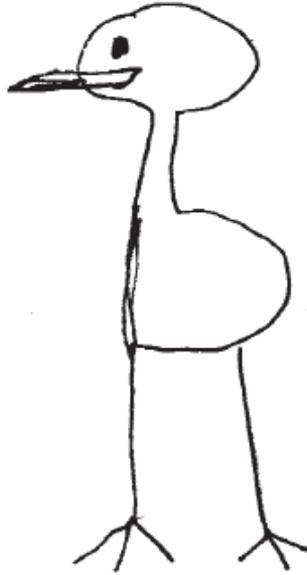


# Parent Handbook



## The Duck Pond

3947 Park Boulevard  
Oakland, California 94602  
(510) 530-0851

# INTRODUCTION

*The Duck Pond* is a small, full-day preschool in the Glenview district of Oakland. It is licensed for twenty-five children, accommodates thirty families and offers a four- or five-day program.

# PHILOSOPHY

At *The Duck Pond*, our work with children is rooted in the belief that the most important experience of early childhood is the development of a strong and positive self-concept, both as an individual and as a member of a social group. We rely on the following principles to fulfill this goal:

- We view children as capable, intelligent beings worthy of respect.
- We focus on meeting the physical and emotional needs of each child on an individual basis.
- We create an environment that fosters curiosity and the ability to grow through access to stimulating materials and learning experiences.
- We feel that **play** is the most valuable vehicle for learning.

- We integrate **Art, Language Arts, Science, Mathematics,** and **Music** into our daily life.
- We actively adopt a Project Approach and concepts from Reggio Emilia into our developmental approach to early childhood education.
- We conscientiously adhere to the ethics and standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of the Young Children.
- We encourage children to respect their own and others' limits, to participate in decisions that affect them and to resolve conflicts that arise amongst themselves.
- We pursue long-term relationships with each other in the belief that a strong community of teachers, parents, and children is a necessary component of early growth and development.
- We believe that each child grows at his or her own pace. We respect and support that pace, and do not push toward a prescribed end.
- We encourage honest communication between staff and parents about each family's preschool experience.

# GUIDANCE

Although often considered synonymous with punishment, the word "discipline" comes from the Latin root *disciplina*, meaning instruction or tuition. We use this interpretation of discipline as guidance to define our approach to conflict resolution and behavior modification. We do not use any form of corporal punishment.

Our goal is to create an environment in which each child is sufficiently stimulated and engaged, thus reducing the frustration that can occur in group settings. We model respectful and nurturing behavior as another means of preventing conflict.

Small children are still very egocentric and often not yet capable of understanding the concepts of sharing or taking turns. Therefore, redirecting children to other activities when conflict occurs is often the most effective disciplinary technique. As the children develop, we increasingly involve them in conflict resolution. Negotiation and mediation are an integral part of our curriculum.

When prevention, redirection and negotiation are not sufficient to deter inappropriate behavior, we work

with the children to set limits. Any consequences are non-punitive, respectful, and reasonable.

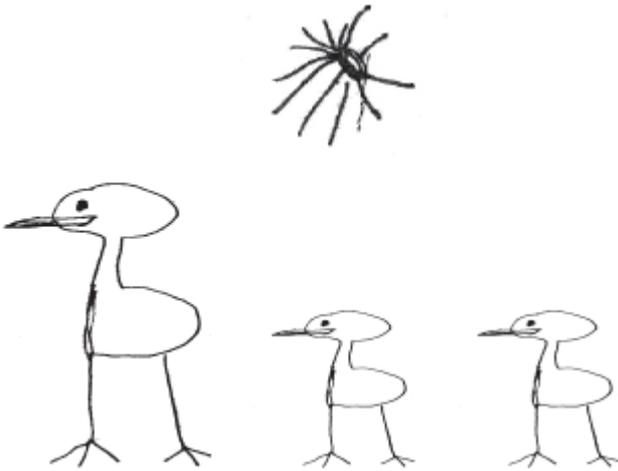
## **STAFFING & RATIOS**

*The Duck Pond* is committed to excellence in early childhood education. We encourage our teachers to complete higher education courses, pursue advanced degrees, and attend early childhood education conferences, courses, and workshops throughout the year. We credit our low teacher turnover to careful selection of staff, excellent working conditions, and a commitment to respectful compensation and benefits.

*The Duck Pond* maintains a 9:1 and often a 6:1 child-to-adult ratio. Every teacher has current CPR and Pediatric First Aid certificates.

Owner and director **Lois Cottrell** has extensive experience, education, and training in early childhood development and education. For over twenty years her academic and professional focus has been on families and children. She received her Masters in Education from Mills College and has traveled abroad for a closer examination of the work in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The children love Lois's sense of humor and contagious enthusiasm.

*The Duck Pond* is committed to hiring staff and other service providers who reflect the rich and diverse Oakland community.



# ***THE DUCK POND COMMUNITY***

## **Children in Community**

The idea of community is central to *The Duck Pond* philosophy, and children are at the center of our community. The teachers guide the children in developing a strong sense of themselves both as individuals and in relation to other children at the school. The children understand that they are members of a social group and that they have responsibilities to that group. The children are respected, and are encouraged to show respect to others at school. Independence and individual opinions are encouraged, and at the same time, children see that their own needs, thoughts, and opinions are sometimes but not always the same as those of other children or those of the group as a whole. The children are encouraged to use their words to express themselves. The teachers respect, take care of and support the children and thereby become models for the children to treat others similarly, regardless of personality, age, or individual opinions.

## **Program**

At *The Duck Pond*, children learn primarily through play with each other. Mornings tend to be a more structured time of day, with circle time, enrichment activities, and art activities in addition to free play. In the afternoon, free play predominates. In the backyard, children climb the play structure, ride bikes, dig in the sandbox, run, or play ball. Indoor play may involve art, reading, or dress-up imaginative play.

## **Age Groups**

### **Ducklings (2-3 yrs.)**

Our Ducklings (**children must be two before September 1<sup>st</sup> to join this group**) are able to grow, develop, and bond in a space designed just for toddlers. Teachers use a more hands-on style with these 2-3 year-olds, whether it is concerning guidance and redirection, comfort, or assistance with skills. The Ducklings' teachers take care of all their needs, including diapering, napping, and potty training. The Ducklings have a circle time in the morning, which involves board books, music, movement, and snacks instead of longer discussion which may be part of the older children's circle time.

The Raccoon and Froggie children have more developed verbal and physical skills. Teachers use observation, modeling, and discussion more with this age group to introduce concepts, lead activities, and resolve conflict. At certain times, the Raccoon and Froggie children are grouped by age (3-4 and 4-5 year olds). This enables them to foster a bond with their peer group and the teachers to offer age-appropriate activities.

### **Froggies (3-4 yrs.)**

The Froggies (**children must be three before September 1<sup>st</sup> to join this group**) are leaving toddlerhood and entering the world of preschoolers. For the first time they are joining in on daily jobs, learning the skills of mediation, taking care of personal needs, and becoming aware of the feelings of others.

### **Raccoons (4-5 yrs.) and Dragonflies (5-6 yrs.)**

This is a pre-kindergarten group (**children must be four before September 1<sup>st</sup> to join this group**). This group has some planned academic activities to prepare for kindergarten. Writing journals are a daily part of this group's activities, along with math games, alphabet games, story dictation and book publishing.

## Daily Jobs

The children's sense of community is enhanced by the daily assignment of jobs. The jobs rotate daily, and children can get help in completing them from a teacher or another child. Examples of jobs include collecting the mail, feeding the animals, pairing and organizing the shoes, watering the garden, setting out lunch, and acting as supervisor (making sure all the jobs are done), mediator (helping to resolve conflict between children by modeling the teachers' conflict resolution techniques) or caregiver (taking an ice pack or giving a hug to a child who needs it).

## Enrichment

*The Duck Pond* enhances its program by bringing in outside teachers to share their skills as well as by taking the children out of school on field trips. All outside teachers are supervised while at *The Duck Pond*. Field trips and enrichment classes are planned with consideration of the children's ages and interests. Ducklings may take a field trip to the Little Farm, while Raccoons may go to the Alameda County Food Bank for a tour.

*The Duck Pond's* enrichment activities are supported primarily through the proceeds of our annual

fundraising auction. All programs, with the exception of gymnastics classes, are included in the tuition.

The following enrichment activities are currently offered at *The Duck Pond*:

- gymnastics by Fitness In Transit (fee for service)
- yoga
- storytelling by Mary Ellen Hill
- cooking with Chef Lisa
- art and science with Eileen Shapiro
- field trips including: Tilden Park Little Farm, Tilden Park Steam Trains, Piedmont Fire Station, Oakland Zoo, Lawrence Hall of Science, Ardenwood Historic Farm, San Francisco Symphony Children's Performance (Raccoons only), Alameda County Food Bank (Raccoons only), Lindsay Wildlife Museum, Marine Mammal Rescue Center, Bay Area Discovery Museum, and others.

### ***Families in Community***

Family involvement in *The Duck Pond* community is welcome and encouraged. Family involvement contributes to the success of a small school. More importantly, family involvement extends the school community and engenders excitement and pride in the

children. Examples of organized family events at *The Duck Pond* are:

- Back-to-School Potluck
- Duck Pond Day at an Oakland A's Game
- Halloween "Spooky Walk" through Glenview
- Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer Parties
- Thanksgiving Friendship Feast
- Holiday Party
- Tea Party
- Fundraising Auction
- Summer Camping Trip
- Graduation

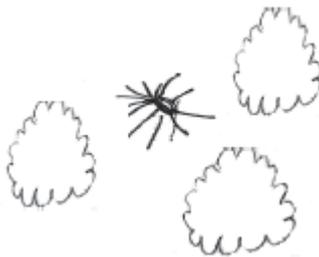
Every two-parent family is required to participate in 20 hours of school activities, and every single-parent family is required to participate in 10 hours of school activities per year. Attending meetings and social gatherings, driving on field trips, and contributing to the maintenance of the building or other materials all count toward this requirement. Active parent committees (that also count toward annual hours) include Library, Building Maintenance, e-Scrip, Auction Planning, and Community Support. In addition, parents are encouraged to join school activities, share their talents and traditions, or volunteer time in other ways.

Families who cannot participate, or who do not complete their hours by June 30th, will be assessed a fee of \$15 per hour missed.

State law requires all on-site volunteers to have a tuberculosis clearance from their physician and a criminal record clearance. These are relatively easy to obtain. Copies of driver's licenses and evidence of auto insurance must be on file for anyone driving on field trips.

### ***Our Neighborhood***

*The Duck Pond* children sometimes venture out in the neighborhood on walks to the park for a picnic lunch or to help clean up on Earth Day, to the library for story hour, to Glenview Elementary for their annual Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical, or to the Glenview business district to buy something at the hardware store. In these ways, the children begin to understand how a community and neighborhood work.



## ***Social Responsibility***

*The Duck Pond* teachers encourage children to take the caregiving they provide to each other and apply it to the neighborhood, to living things, and to our world. Circle time often includes discussion of how to show respect for and take care of animals, nature, and other people. The work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, among others, is highlighted each year in discussion and song. Each year, the Raccoons raise money and donate food for the Alameda County Food Bank.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### ***Hours***

**Our hours are Monday - Friday, 8:00am until 5:30pm.** We offer a three-, four-, or five-day (per week) toddler program for children aged 2 - 3 years, and four-day and five-day programs for preschoolers aged 3 - 5 years. We do not offer half-day care. Some families sign up for full days and choose to use only part of the day.

## ***Attendance***

Parents or caregivers are required to sign children in and out of *The Duck Pond* with a full legal signature and the time of day. The sign-in sheet is located by the front door. Children are not required to attend or arrive at a prescribed time. However, we do require a call if a child will not be attending when normally scheduled or will be arriving after 9:00 AM. This courtesy helps us to plan our day and may allow another family to add extra care.



## ***Daily Schedule***

We keep our daily schedule fluid enough to respond to the children's changing needs. However, we strive to maintain familiarity, as children seek security in a predictable routine. The general schedule is as follows:

8:00-10:00	Arrivals, Greeting Free play (Inside/Outside) Morning projects or enrichment Snack Available
10:00-10:30	Circle
10:30-11:30	Outside free time
11:30-11:45	Lunch set up by the Chef
11:45-12:30	Lunch
12:30-2:00	Nap time for Froggies
12:30-1:30	Story time and quiet play for Raccoons
1:30-2:00	Rest/nap time for Raccoons
2:30-3:00	Snack
3:00-5:00	Free play (Inside/Outside)
5:00	Story time/Departure
5:30	Close

## ***Holidays & Breaks***

*The Duck Pond* calendar of holidays and breaks is distributed at the beginning of each new school year.

*The Duck Pond* will generally be closed on the following days, with variations depending on calendar dates and days.

- Labor Day and the day following
- Columbus Day
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day following
- *Winter Break*: Two weeks, coordinated with the Oakland Unified School District calendar
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
- Presidents' Day
- *Spring Break*: One week, coordinated with the Oakland Unified School District calendar
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- *Summer Break*: One week preceding Labor Day

**One or two Staff Development Days and parent/teacher conferences, both of which require closing the school, will be scheduled and announced at the beginning of the school year in September.** Additional holidays may also be announced at this time.

## ***Health Policy***

No child will be accepted into care with a contagious illness. If a child is determined to have contracted an illness during the school day, the parents will be contacted and expected to pick up the child within a reasonable amount of time. In case of emergency, we will call **911**.

If your child has any of the following symptoms, we ask that you keep her/him home for 24 hours after the symptom has disappeared: diarrhea, vomiting, elevated temperature (100° F or higher), discharge from eyes, rash, prolonged discomfort, lethargy, or any other signs of communicable disease.

It is to everyone's benefit to reduce exposure to contagious illness among the children. For this reason, **PLEASE USE CAUTION** in deciding whether your child is healthy enough for school. We are not licensed to provide care to sick children. We appreciate your cooperation.

## **Medication**

We only administer doctor-prescribed medication in its original packaging, providing the required permission form is on file. This form must be updated

and initiated each day the medication is needed. If your child requires medication for any type of communicable infection, PLEASE keep him/her at home for 24 hours following the first dose.

### **Sick Child Care**

We recommend that you make back-up arrangements NOW for alternative care. It is stressful for everyone, especially your child, when no back-up plans have been made.

On days that you plan to be somewhere other than home or work, please leave us a telephone number where you can be reached in case of illness or other emergencies.



## ***Tuition***

### **Toddler Program (Ducklings, Ages 2 - 3)**

***Full Time:***

5 days = \_\_\_\_\_

***Part Time:***

4 days = \_\_\_\_\_

3 days = \_\_\_\_\_

### **Preschoolers (Raccoons and Froggies, Ages 3 - 5)**

***Full Time:***

5 days = \_\_\_\_\_

***Part Time:***

4 days = \_\_\_\_\_

## **Payment**

Tuition is due in full by the 25th of each month. Checks are payable to *The Duck Pond*. The following fees will also be collected if applicable:

**Late Payment:** \$10.00 per day after the 2nd of the month.

**Returned Check:** \$25.00

## ***Admissions Policy***

Admission to *The Duck Pond* is determined by the status of openings. We try to balance the program for gender, age, ethnic and family-life diversity. We are licensed to care for children ages 2 and up.

Steps in the admission process are as follows:

- 1) Download and read this parent handbook.
- 2) Complete the application form and mail it to The Duck Pond, along with a \$30.00 **non-refundable** application fee. Applications should be submitted no later than November 15th to be considered for the following school year.
- 3) Parent Tour - A representative of The Duck Pond will contact you to schedule a parent/guardian tour of the school site (adults only please). Tours typically occur between September 1st and the first week in December. After that, tours will only be held as needed to fill available spots (this is not typical).
- 4) Child Visit - A representative of The Duck Pond will contact you to schedule a time for your child to visit the school, accompanied by a parent. These morning visits typically last 30 minutes.

5) A. Receive notice of acceptance.

**OR**

B. Be placed on a waiting list until a space that accommodates your schedule and the needs of currently enrolled families becomes available.

6) Sign contract and pay registration fee. A **non-refundable** registration fee of \$500.00 is due at the time of acceptance into the program.

7) Payment of additional fees is due two months prior to start date.

8) Submit necessary information and health forms for your child prior to first day of attendance.

## ***Summary of Fees***

### **Application Fee**

This \$30.00 fee is non-refundable and does not guarantee a space in the program.

### **Non-Refundable Registration Fee**

This \$500.00 fee is due when a child is accepted into the program.

### **Last Month's Deposit**

A non-refundable fee equal to half of your monthly tuition, which is applied to your last month's tuition.

**Canvas Bag\***

This bag is \$5.00 and is for storing extra clothing.

**Nap Quilt\***

This quilt is \$25.00 and is for naptime.

**Earthquake Backpack\***

This backpack is \$30.00 and is in case of emergency.

**Additional Care Hours**

Extra care hours can be used when available.

Advance notice is required. This time will be charged as follows:

Full day:       \$85.00

Half day:       \$50.00

These charges must be paid on the day that the care is provided.

**Late Pick Up**

Early arrival or late pick up will be charged at the rate of \$1.00 per minute. This fee is due at time of occurrence and paid directly to attending teacher.

Repeated late pick up will result in termination of care.

## ***Contracts***

Each family will be required to sign a contract stipulating schedule, fees, and other policy agreements.

\*Canvas bag, nap quilt, and earthquake backpack will go home with child upon graduation from *The Duck Pond*.

## **Schedule**

Families are expected to adhere to their contracted schedules. Any schedule changes, including additional care hours, must be made in consultation with the director. PLEASE do not attempt to make any alternate arrangements for trades, etc. with other families. No credit is given for time not used due to illness or vacation. Additional care is available on an add-on basis and will be billed when rendered.

## **Notice of Change or Termination**

If it becomes necessary for a family to drop a portion or all of their scheduled time, one month's notice shall be given and payment made. Families are expected to fulfill their contract and complete the school year at *The Duck Pond* (through the summer) if notice is not given prior to the 60th calendar day of attendance. An exception may be made if a

"replacement" is available, subject to the director's approval, from the current waiting list.

For example:

Jennifer Smith starts attending *The Duck Pond* on September 1st. Mrs. Smith decides it would be more convenient for Jennifer to attend a school nearer to her office. If the Smiths give 30 days' notice before October 31st, they will only be held accountable for tuition through November. If the Smiths give notice November 1st or later, they will be held to their contract through August of the following year.

## **MISCELLANEOUS DETAILS**

### ***What to Bring***

- A complete change of clothes, LABELED, including extra underwear, socks, and a sweater or sweatshirt, a hat, and rain boots.
- "Home diapers," labeled, if your child is not yet potty-trained. Please bring at least 4 for each day.

- Comfort item/"lovey" (small stuffed animal, blanket, etc.), if needed
- Pacifier and/or bottle, if needed. (Please provide milk or formula for bottles daily or weekly as required.)

**Please LABEL absolutely everything!**

### ***Lunches, Food Safety and Restrictions***

Each child brings a lunch each day, to be stored in the child's cubby (with icepack) or in our refrigerator. Lunches are heated in our microwave, if necessary. We use glassware ONLY to heat food, and transfer the food back to the child's container once heated. We serve two nutritious snacks, in the morning and in the afternoon, and provide drinks (water and/or milk) throughout the day. Water is available at all times. A snack menu is posted daily.

Be sure to let us know if your child has any special dietary needs or allergies. We will attempt to provide alternate snacks when possible. If a child has an extreme allergy to a food, such as peanut butter, then that food may be banned from *The Duck Pond*.

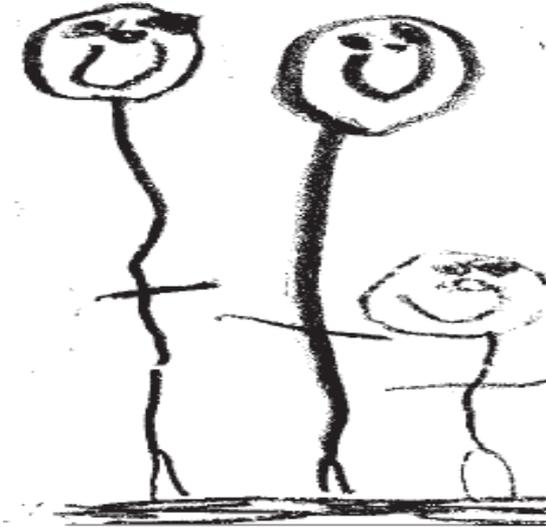
In addition, the school provides a list of foods that are choking hazards. Some foods are not allowed at

school at all, such as chocolate, whereas some foods are allowed if cut in half, such as grapes and hotdogs.

Each day, careful attention is paid to the contents of each child's lunch, and children are closely supervised while they are eating.

## ***Birthdays***

We love celebrating birthdays *at The Duck Pond!* We usually celebrate after nap (3:00PM). If you would like to provide a treat, please make sure it is a low sugar snack. Involve your child in the decision, and it is certain to be enthusiastically received. Families are welcome to join the celebration.



Thank you for your interest in *The Duck Pond*. If you decide to apply to *The Duck Pond*, we will be happy to answer all your questions during your parent tour.

**Lois Cottrell, Director**