

Mary Jane's



PRE-SCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN

Parent Handbook

2902 Vessing Road

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Executive Director: Catherine Kelly

Owned & Operated by the Huff Family since 1972

Facility License: #070200511

Affiliations:

NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

PACE – Professional Association for Childhood Education

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our school family! Whether you are a new or returning family to Mary Jane's, our entire staff looks forward to sharing these very special years with you and your child. We really believe in our motto: "The Joy of Learning." With that in mind, we promise the best in early childhood education.

We anticipate a warm and open relationship with you while we work together to encourage and facilitate the natural development of your child. We provide an environment that promotes happy, self-confident, caring, inquisitive, intelligent and capable individuals.

We have prepared this handbook to acquaint you with the philosophy, programs, and the policies of our school. Since it is impossible to cover everything in this booklet, we invite you to visit Mary Jane's and see what makes our program truly unique.

Your questions, comments, suggestions, participation and support are always most welcome and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Catherine Kelly

Executive Director
& the Huff Family

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Facility License # 070200511

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About Our School

Philosophy:

At Mary Jane's Pre-School and Kindergarten, we provide an environment that promotes the development of children who are:

- Happy
- Self-Confident
- Caring
- Inquisitive
- Intelligent
- Capable

We believe the early years represent a wondrous and important time in a child's life. This age represents a time when basic patterns and attitudes of learning and living are formed and necessary skills are developed. We employ a team-teaching approach which provides us with the opportunity and joy of sharing our teachers' various talents and experience with each child, as well as with each other.

We believe by fostering a sense of self-worth in each of our students, we help them to learn to respect and care for others in their ever-expanding worlds. At Mary Jane's, we provide attention to the varied needs of the "whole" child; consequently, we provide opportunities for the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and aesthetic development of each student at his or her own pace.

We understand that nothing is more important than continuity and the faithful presence of adults in a youngster's life. Our teachers, support staff, and director love their jobs at Mary Jane's and are very dependable. Our teacher retention rate is exceptional: Mrs. Boggan has taught at our school for more than 20 years and Miss Jackie, our newest teacher, has been with us for more than five years. All of our teachers are fully qualified and certified in Early Childhood Education to meet State Licensing requirements and most far exceed the licensing requirements. All staff members are First Aid and CPR certified.

Developmental Goals:

We seek to provide an educational setting that helps our students grow **socially and emotionally**, learning along the way to:

1. Become increasingly independent
2. Use initiative in pursuing curiosities
3. Have confidence in their abilities to become problem solvers
4. Feel secure in relationships with adults
5. Enjoy playing alone and with other children
6. Appreciate different points of view by cooperating and resolving conflicts
7. Cope with fears, anxieties, and frustrations constructively
8. Demonstrate persistence in completing a task

The curriculum at Mary Jane's promotes **cognitive development** and our students gain the proficiency to:

1. Express ideas through language and symbolic representations in effective and varied ways
2. Put ideas or objects into relationships, noting similarities and differences
3. Come up with interesting and creative ideas, problems and questions

Our indoor and outdoor learning spaces offer children the chance to develop **physically**, creating the skills to:

1. Coordinate fine and gross motor skills
2. Build an awareness of one's body in space
3. Develop a sense of balance
4. Practice locomotion, from crawling to skipping, with agility and flexibility
5. Build an understanding of spatial relationships
6. Practice manipulation movement, such as: throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing, and striking
7. Develop a sense of rhythm and timing

Finally, we invite the students of Mary Jane's to explore the world around them and grow **aesthetically**, with the ability to:

1. Develop an awareness and appreciation of nature and all the gifts of the natural world and our environment
2. Discover and nurture one's innate tools and talents for creativity, utilizing them freely to express and share perceptions and feelings through art, sculpture, music, drama, and literature
3. Recognize the arts as a rich and beneficial means of genuine self-expression, inspirational creativity, and valid communication

With these goals in mind, we offer a comprehensive early childhood education program with emphasis on providing positive experiences in which each child will participate (play-learn) according to his/her own unique pattern of development. You will find more information and explanation of how we utilize and activate this philosophy in the section concerning **Curriculum**.

STAFF

All of our Teachers are certified in Early Childhood Education, most with either AA, BA, or MA degrees, and have experience working with young children. Teacher Aides also meet State requirements and are in training with us and our methods. While this education and experience is important and respected, we definitely feel that it is the natural warmth and sensitivity to young children, as well as immeasurable energy and patience, which make our teachers so special. We are proud that our staff is chosen with this emphasis in mind.

We employ a team-teaching approach for two hours of the two and one half hour session. This provides both the opportunity and joy of sharing our various talents, experience, and resources with each other as well as with the children. The resulting enthusiasm and positive energy are reflected throughout the daily program as the teaching staff performs as a supportive and professional unit.

Your child has an opportunity to participate with all the Teachers, as well as the Aide and Director for the first two hours of each session. The Group Teacher is responsible for the half hour Small Group Time. He/She also serves as the "Homeroom Teacher," providing monthly calendars, sending home special school messages/bulletins, and compiling progress data gathered by all the teachers for each child.

The school usually maintains a Teacher/Child ratio of one-to-six or seven, and we eagerly enlist the talents of additional resource personnel as they are available and desired. The Group Time ratio is usually one-to-ten since it is a more structured period. (See page 12 for the Small Group Time section.) Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in school activities, and we will occasionally ask for extra volunteers for special Art or Cooking projects. Parent participation is not a requirement.

SCHOOL POLICIES

THE SCHOOL YEAR

Mary Jane's Pre-School & Kindergarten operates its school year from the second Monday in September through the first or second week in June. In general, we follow the holiday schedule for the Mt. Diablo Unified School District, with a few exceptions determined and announced each year.

A complete schedule of holidays, parties, and other special events is provided to all families at the beginning of each school year. Monthly calendars are sent home by your child's Group Teacher. These inform you of specific happenings, themes, share days, etc.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

We offer two exciting programs for six weeks each summer. Please call the office for information about this year's schedules and unique educational opportunities.

TUITION SCHEDULES AND PROCEDURES

Tuition during the regular school year is due the first of the month. Please include your child's name on your check. Because our budget, staffing, materials, and supply requirements are based on the number of students enrolled and the tuition-based income, it is not possible to give refunds for absences due to illness, holidays, or family vacations. Make-up sessions may be arranged for Pre-School classes only. (See section concerning Make-Ups). To ensure its stability, our comprehensive program is planned and budgeted on a school year basis. Therefore, our tuition is determined for the full year and divided into 10 installments for your convenience and ease of payment.

The first installment is a non-refundable pre-payment due July 1st. Each of the remaining 9 installments is due the first of each month September 1st through May 1st. Please check the Tuition Schedule for the exact amount due for each class. The Summer School tuition schedule is announced each spring along with Summer Registration. One month's written notice is required prior to a child's withdrawal from the school or the full tuition will be due. There is a \$25.00 service charge for all returned checks.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Registration is required for each new school year and for Summer School. Families currently enrolled are given priority over new students as long as they return their re-registration forms to Mary Jane's by the returning student priority deadline. A non-refundable Registration Fee is required of all students. Waiting lists are maintained once classes are full. They are utilized as openings become available throughout the year.

The State requires several health and informational forms to be kept current and on file for each child. These forms must be completed and turned into the office before your child can begin class.

1. Identification & Emergency Information
2. Physician's Statement

3. Immunization Record
4. Registration Agreement
5. Statement of Admission
6. Parent's Rights
7. Statement of Rules of Discipline

OUR HEALTH POLICY

Each child will be greeted daily by a Staff member at the time of admittance. This allows us to share a warm welcome while making sure only well children are received. The school is responsible by State Licensing Laws for denying entrance to any child with obvious symptoms of illness including, but not limited to, fever, rash, red and/or draining eyes, or vomiting. Extreme fatigue in a child can also mean a less than successful school day. Your child can return to school when they have been free of symptoms for at least 24 hours. You can schedule a make-up session for any illness related absence. (Please refer to the make-up policy.)

Children can sometimes become ill while at school. When this happens, the child is isolated from the others as gently and comfortably as possible until the parents or authorized substitute can be called. Minor scratches, scrapes, bumps, and bruises are inevitable whenever children play, even with close and careful supervision. We treat these with whatever First Aid measure is deemed appropriate and try to relate the cause and any pertinent information to the parent with an "Ouch Note."

OUR MAKE-UP POLICY

We cannot give refunds for absences, but we do offer Pre-School make-up classes for illness-absences whenever possible. Make-ups do require prearrangement with the Director in order that we may include your child in our daily planning. We are proud of our make-up policy and realize that we are one of the very few schools offering this service. We also feel that when parents understand this offer, they will be more willing to keep a child with a suspected illness or fatigue at home, thereby reducing the chance of spreading the condition to others. Please call the office whenever your child is going to be absent. This facilitates make-up scheduling, and keeps us alert to any viruses or illnesses that are going around. One final note concerning Make-Ups: we do our best to schedule make-up classes as equitably as possible. In turn, we expect parents to accept this policy as a service and extra benefit and not an obligation of the school.

CHILDREN'S ALLERGIES

Allergies are noted on the child's file papers, but we do request an additional note which clearly defines the allergy and emergency procedures. This note is then placed on a special board which receives daily attention. If your child has numerous food allergies we may ask you to provide his/her daily snack. Special party/birthday snacks may be sent for your child and kept in our freezer.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION & PROCEDURES

It is very important that all emergency information be kept current in the child's file. If an emergency or illness occurs, you will be called first. If neither parent listed can be reached, the names listed on your Identification and Emergency Information Form will be called in the order listed.

If a parent is more than 30 minutes late at dismissal time, without notice, we must follow the same procedure of notification as for emergencies. We will do everything we can to ensure that you have sufficient names and accurate phone numbers at all times in your child's file. Your child's safety and emotional well-being are our number one priority.

CELEBRATING CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS

We enjoy celebrating your child's birthday at school! You may wish to send cookies, fruit snacks, Rice Krispy Treats, or muffins for the class. (No cake or frosted cupcakes, please!) We will sing the Birthday Song, take your child's picture with his/her teacher, and let him/her select a small gift from the birthday box. If you are planning a party at home for your child, we ask that you do not send the invitations to school with your child. We will provide you with a class list of names and addresses so that you may call or send the invitations yourself. It is a very sad experience for the children who are not included in the party invitations, and we do not wish to promote such negative experiences at school.

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Practical and comfortable clothes are desired for both boys and girls. We provide a variety of arts, crafts, and outdoor play activities and it is essential the child feels free to participate completely. Difficult straps, back buttons, and zippers should be avoided as they hamper the child's attempts to take care of their own toileting needs, especially when they must act quickly (which is often the case). Tennis Shoes are more suitable and preferred for the active play. Thongs or slippery party shoes are not acceptable or safe for active play.

Protective smocks are provided for those extra messy projects, but they cannot guarantee complete coverage. If, in spite of our best efforts, your child's clothing gets stained at school, we will apply SHOUT GEL to the spot, and send home a note.

All clothing and accessories as well as lunches and objects for sharing must be marked clearly and permanently with your child's name!

SHARING TIME AND RECOMMENDED ITEMS

Mary Jane's Pre-School & Kindergarten encourages the sharing of ideas, thoughts and special experiences, and we emphasize the language development and growth of self-confidence that is reinforced through such moments. We welcome books, records, nature specimens (all clearly labeled with your child's name), and we encourage the short prearranged visits for special or unusual pets. Please refer to your child's monthly group calendar for specific instructions relating to sharing. We do not allow guns, weapons, or "superhero" action figures at school.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

School hours are 9:00-11:30 a.m. for the morning classes and 1:00-3:30 p.m. for the afternoon classes. Each day, the parent or designated transporter must sign their child in with full signature and time of arrival. Children will then be greeted by the Gate Supervisor who will check to assure that each child is healthy. **Please note:** According to State Law, and for safety and consideration of all, we cannot admit any child who appears or acts ill. Children (and parents, if desired) will then be invited to enter the playground and/or directed to their classroom.

For dismissal, children are brought to the benches by their Group Teacher, and are instructed to stay with their group until called by the gate supervisor. After they have been signed out, children will be called individually or by car pools to the gate to be dismissed to you or your designated agent. Please notify the school if you are going to be late dropping off or picking up your child.

PARKING

The continuous safety of the children (and you, their parents) is always the foremost issue for our school. Since we are at the entrance to a busy neighborhood, it is everyone's obligation to keep the entrance and exit of Vessing Road open and clear at all times. Geary Road (school side) is recommended for all parent parking and stopping. Please observe all red "No Parking" zones, and please do not double park. **Remember that it is illegal and unsafe to make U-turns in the middle of Geary Road.** Be patient! It is best to be a few minutes late if there is a lineup of cars. The first part of our program is geared for individual timing adjustments for late arrivals.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM CURRICULUM

As stated earlier, we are most concerned with the development of the whole child. Learning “how to” learn is most important with regard to setting positive foundations for reading, writing, math, and problem-solving skills. Socially and emotionally, each child is learning to express himself, to deal comfortably with his own feelings and to get along with and enjoy others. Physically, the proper development of both large and small muscle coordination and skills is a very significant factor in the total pattern of learning capabilities. Through all these experiences, they are developing a sense of self-esteem.

OUR DAILY PROGRAM

LEARNING CENTER TIME 9:00-10:00 am

Our day begins with activities planned around our four main Learning Centers. Materials, equipment, and activities appropriate for each age and stage of development are selected and arranged to provide opportunities for exploration, manipulation, discovery, problem solving, and creative self-expression.

THE FOUR MAIN LEARNING CENTERS

1. Arts & Crafts: Our main objective of this center is to introduce the children to various arts and craft media, with the emphasis on the development and enjoyment of creative expression. Some directed activities are specifically designed to strengthen fine motor skills (pre-writing & cutting), awareness of colors and shapes, and the ability to follow directions.
2. Math and Science: This center provides concrete, hands-on math & science experiences promoting self-discovery, curiosity, and knowledge. Through free exploration, experimentation, cooking, and the manipulation of materials and living/non-living forms of nature, the children assimilate exciting facts about the world around them.
3. Large Motor and Dramatic Play: This center offers gross motor & visual motor development through directed movement activities and games, and supports creative expression through a variety of dramatic play settings.
4. Language & Manipulatives: This center is for emphasizing all language experiences and promoting fine motor development. This is accomplished by planning a variety of activities motivating oral and written communication and beginning phonics, as well as providing a variety of puzzles and small manipulatives.

MUSIC AND STORY TIME 10:00-10:30 am

We have a special daily music backed by piano and/or guitar, and selected recordings. It is a joyful experience with much singing, rhythm instruments, creative movement, and folk dancing. Our Big Books, flannel board stories, and other collections emphasize children’s classics and our monthly themes.

SNACK & OUTDOOR PLAY 10:30-11:00 am

The snack is consistent with our concern for good nutrition and promoting good social experiences. The outdoor play is enhanced by small, appropriate equipment and attentive supervision.

SMALL GROUP TIME 11:00-11:30 am

This is a special time which allows the child to participate at the most comfortable and successful level while building friendships and support with others in the group. It also allows each teacher a closer opportunity to assess the progress or special needs of the children in the group. Small Group includes reading and math readiness, language and literature, social studies, nature, and Sharing Time (Show & Tell). Group selection is determined by several criteria and consistently reevaluated. Some of these criteria are: cognitive and perceptual stages, social and emotional concerns, background of experience, and the changing needs of the children. Age is also a consideration, but only in relation to the other criteria.

AFTERNOON CLASSES 1:00-3:30 pm

The afternoon schedule includes the same activities as the morning.

PLEASE NOTE: Exact times for each activity may be modified for rainy day schedules, specials programs, or the specific needs of the children as a whole. Occasionally on a rainy day, we will read a storybook and watch a video of that story.

LUNCH PROGRAM

The LUNCH PROGRAM runs from 11:30 am-1:00 pm Monday through Friday. This program offers enrichment activities which supplement the daily school curriculum. The Lunch Program operates from 11:30 am-12:30 pm for the morning students and 11:45 am-12:45 pm for the Kindergarten students, and 11:45 am-1:00 pm for the afternoon program.

The children bring their own lunches. Our goal is to promote good nutrition at Mary Jane's. We do allow children to bring "treats" to school; however, they will be asked to eat at least half of their "main food" before they eat anything else in their lunch. The following is a list of foods that should make up the bulk of your child's lunch:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Sandwich or bagel | Tortilla with cheese |
| Cottage cheese and fruit | Cheese and crackers |
| Yogurt and crackers | Raw vegetables and dip |
| Chicken, meat, fish, or egg | |

Suggested "treats" to go along with these foods include: fruit, granola bars, pretzels, Rice Krispy Treats, graham crackers, cookies, pudding, or Jello. Please do not send: candy or soda.

Attendance in the Lunch Program is limited, so prearrangement is necessary. Fees for this special service are in addition to the regular tuition payment and are paid in advance each month. If you have any questions about the Lunch Program (or anything else!) please call the office.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM CURRICULUM

M-F 12:45-3:30 pm

We are very proud of our unique, comprehensive and proven five-day Junior Kindergarten Program. It has been designed for kindergarten eligible students who are continuing to work on kindergarten readiness skills. We also accept children with winter birthdays who show a willingness to participate in a more structured program. We provide appropriately challenging activities with an emphasis on phonics, math, music, and science. This program provides stimulating and appropriately challenging experiences, filling the gap between pre-school and traditional kindergarten.

Our program offers small class sizes (10 to 12 students). This allows for positive individual attention. A deeper scope of social experiences is also possible in the small group. This forms the basis for stronger social confidence when the classes combine to form one large class.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We promote understanding of self, family, and community, with attention to valuing cultural diversity. Special emphasis is placed on developing the sense of self-responsibility along with self-esteem.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Our program provides phonics-based reading skills, vocabulary, speaking, writing, and listening. Materials include a wide variety of children's books, as well as *ZOO PHONICS* and support materials to the *Early to Read, Write, and Listen* series by Lippincott Educational Publishers. Local academically-oriented public, private, and parochial schools have also used this program.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Students will have the opportunity to explore various arts and craft media, with emphasis on the development and enjoyment of creative expression. Fine-motor development, especially cutting, crayon and pencil control, and dexterity (for successful writing activities) are all strengthened during this beneficial program.

MUSIC & DRAMATIC ARTS

Our daily Music Program is backed by piano and/or guitar, and selected recordings. It includes singing, rhythm instruments, creative movement, and folk dancing. Our flannel and metallic board stories, poetry, and library collection emphasize award-winning children's literature. There are also many opportunities to act out different stories through drama and puppetry.

MATH & SCIENCE

We provide activities which promote logical and mathematical thinking, scientific exploration, experimentation, and discovery.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Videos, Music, Literature, and the *Let's Find Out* classroom magazine enhance the study of people from different countries and their cultures.

INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH

We introduce the Spanish Language at a very basic level. Music, Art, Literature, and the customs of the Hispanic culture and others will be included as part of our ongoing concern with broad multicultural awareness and appreciation.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Students will learn to move as well as move to learn, developing a sense of balance, rhythm, and coordination.

SEASONAL AND THEME-RELATED ACTIVITIES

We also provide cooking, dramatic play, holiday celebrations, films, and opportunities for creative experiences.

NOTE: As with our Pre-School Programs, we emphatically advocate and nurture a positive, joyful attitude towards school and life-long learning.

FOR THE PARENTS

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

You, as parents, play a very important role in Mary Jane's Pre-School & Kindergarten. While we are not a Parent Cooperative Program in which family members assist in the classroom and have other regularly scheduled responsibilities, we want each of you to feel like a welcome part of our learning environment. Also, if you have special talents or hobbies and the time to share them, we would be delighted. The success of your child's educational program at any level depends on a close, cooperative, and informed relationship between you and your school's staff. We also invite you to visit at any time during the school year. You can drop in or schedule regular visits to our school.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

We seek to keep you informed and up to date with all our activities and plans through monthly calendars and newsletters, as well as special bulletins and notes. Children will be given a Mary Jane's School Tote Bag on their first day of school to help facilitate this communication. The tote bag is meant to be your child's personal carrier for all things brought to and from school, including: lunches, Show & Tell items, school projects, and all letters, bulletins, calendars, and notes. We realize that some of the children already have backpacks for this purpose. The problem is that they are all different sizes, the child's name is hard to identify, and quite a few are duplicates. Each child will have a place in the Group Room to hang up his/her tote. For all these reasons we ask parents to have their child use the Mary Jane's tote bag to transport all items to school **every day** and to leave backpacks home.

Please check your child's bag each day for returned school work and parent communication notes.

We also have a large bulletin board (located on the school fence on the Geary Road side) posting additional information for you such as: licensing requirements, school calendars, special announcements, local areas of interest, etc. Please check this board frequently for these notices. Carpool members must accept the responsibility of passing along all such notices.

On the last Friday in January, we usually have our Mid-Year Open House. (Please check your school calendar for specific dates.) This event will give you the opportunity to tour the school, meet all the staff, and view some of your child's work. At this Open House, we also begin our Registration for Summer School and the next school year.

Twice a year you will receive detailed Progress Reports of your child's development. These reports give very specific information about your child's behavior and skills at school. Please be assured, if we ever have a concern about your child's behavior or development, we will call you as soon as possible. We are committed to working with you to facilitate your child's maximum success in all school experiences.

If you should ever need to talk to your child's Teacher or the Director, please call the office. If it is at all possible, we will have your child's Teacher take your call right away, or she will return the call as soon as she is free of her responsibilities with the children attending. Our Staff is also happy to give out their home phone numbers for evening phone conferences.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

All of us at Mary Jane's Pre-School & Kindergarten look forward to this special period of time with you and your child. There is much to be anticipated, hoped for, gained, and enjoyed - and it always goes by so quickly! Together we will savor the precious moments, be challenged by the difficult times, and never fail to be amazed at the unexpected possibilities and lasting rewards!