

Roosevelt Island Day Nursery

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PARENT HANDBOOK 2008-09

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WELCOME to the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery! We hope that this handbook will provide most of the practical information that you will need and we urge you to read it carefully. If you have additional questions, please ask!

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

The RI Day Nursery was started by a group of Island parents in 1975 and incorporated as a not-for-profit educational corporation in 1979. The school's population reflects the rich ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity of the Roosevelt Island community. The RI Day Nursery is run by a Parent Board of Directors with an all-professional teaching staff. The school meets all licensing requirements of the City and State and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The goal of the RI Day Nursery is to help children grow emotionally, socially, and cognitively by providing young children with a warm and supportive environment and well supervised work and play experiences within a community of their peers. The program promotes emotional growth — helping children separate from their parents and learn to be independent, to make choices, and to take increasing responsibility for themselves. The program promotes social growth — helping children learn to work productively with a group of children and to relate to new adults. The curriculum promotes cognitive growth by providing a wealth of firsthand experiences with a wide variety of materials that will encourage discovery, exploration, and learning.

The curriculum is designed to respond to the needs and interests of the children, to reflect each child's stage of development and to provide experiences that stimulate and promote growth. Our goal is to teach children how to learn, make choices, ask questions, solve problems, and seek help. Language activities that prepare children for reading and writing are incorporated into the program, along with math, science, social studies, art, music, and physical education. Ultimately, the curriculum supports the development of the concepts and skills that underpin formal learning. (Please see the RI Day Nursery's *Educational Philosophy and Curriculum* for a fuller discussion.)

The ongoing assessment of each child is invaluable as we work to meet the developmental needs of all children in our program. To support us in this endeavor the RI Day Nursery works with a consultant with qualifications as both a social worker and a special educator, who assists the directors and teachers in observing the children's behavior and developing strategies to best support them. Our consultant is available to parents as well to answer questions or discuss any concerns about the children.

The assessment of each child is a confidential process and all related documents are maintained in a file accessible only to parents and the professional staff members who are directly involved in the child's education. Please note that the ISAAGNY School Report Form, submitted by the RI Day Nursery to independent schools on behalf of children who are engaged in the ongoing schools admissions process, is strictly confidential and requires parent authorization for its release. The document is accessible only to the professional staff of the RI Day Nursery and the admissions office staff members of ongoing schools.

Children with special needs can be accommodated in our programs if, with appropriate supports, they can function successfully in a mainstream classroom. The RI Day Nursery must be informed of medical or other information in the possession of the parent when such information is necessary to assist the school in dealing with the special needs of the child. Further, the school will assist parents in accessing an evaluation and appropriate services when intervention is necessary to help the child function productively in school. The RI Day Nursery is wheelchair accessible and built in compliance with the regulations in the Americans with

Disabilities Act.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We want to encourage an active dialogue with parents. The **enrollment questionnaire** gives you the opportunity to share basic information with the teachers that will help them get to know your child. Since children are continuously growing and changing, it is important for you to take the time **each** year to fill it out as completely as possible.

During the year, we encourage you to let us know about any events, changes, or activities at home that may affect behavior at school. The more we can understand what a child is experiencing and how a child is feeling, the more supportive and helpful we can be. If you have any concerns about your child, please talk with us as soon as possible.

Parents have the right to see their child in the classroom at any time. More importantly, we want you to feel welcome in the school and encourage you to visit in your child's class. The following are some of the many opportunities that you have to become involved and share in your child's school experience.

Parent Board of Directors:

The Roosevelt Island Day Nursery is a nonprofit child care facility run by a Parent Board of Directors. The Board is elected each school year by the current parent body and is responsible for ensuring that the school is being run in an orderly and financially proper manner. The Board acts as a liaison between the staff and the parents. In addition, the Board runs fundraising events to support the scholarship fund and other school programs. The Board meets monthly and the first General Parent Meeting is held early in the school year. Parents are encouraged to participate actively in the school by becoming members of the Parent Board or by becoming class parents and helping with fundraising activities, or by volunteering to help in the classrooms.

Parents are urged to discuss with the directors any difficulties or differences that may arise that cannot be resolved directly with the teachers. If a resolution cannot be found, the matter may be brought to the Liaison Committee of the Board of Directors.

Class Meetings and Coffee Hours:

Class meetings are held in each classroom early in the school year. This is the time for parents to visit in the classroom, meet the other parents, see a slide show of the children at work and hear the teachers talk about the curriculum and the programs and plans for the year. In addition to these formal meetings, coffee hours will be scheduled during the year to provide an informal opportunity for the sharing of information about issues related to children's development, classroom activities, and any other matters of curiosity or concern.

Family and Parent-Teacher Conferences:

At the RI Day Nursery, we provide opportunities for regular meetings with parents through Parent-Teacher Conferences and Family Conferences. Formal conferences are scheduled three times a year with additional conferences scheduled as needed. Parent-Teacher Conferences give parents and teachers the opportunity to get to know each other and learn more about the child. Family Conferences provide the opportunity for the family, parents and child, to meet with the teachers in the child's classroom. Family conferences are one of the special things we do at the RI Day Nursery because we strongly support the idea of the family and school working together to promote the child's development in all areas. In addition, teachers are always available throughout the year to answer questions and parents should

never hesitate to set up additional meetings as needed.

Holidays and Classroom Celebrations:

One of the advantages of our international school population is the wealth of holidays that are celebrated by our families. We are eager to share these holidays with all the children. We celebrate holidays by emphasizing the aspects that are most meaningful for the children. We sing songs, make arts and crafts, and cook special foods. Parents are invited to help plan and participate in these holiday celebrations.

During the week before the Winter Vacation in December, parents are invited to Holiday Parties in the classrooms. This is an opportunity for parents to join their children for morning work time, for holiday songs and for treats prepared by the children. Invitations will be sent in early December.

Class Trips:

Trips provide the opportunity to enhance classroom curriculum. Parents are always informed, and written permission obtained, before children are taken on a trip off Roosevelt Island. On the contract, you have signed permission for your children to participate in on-island outings. Parents are invited to assist on trips. Please let the teachers know if you are available and would like to go on a class trip.

OUR DISCIPLINE METHODS

It is important for parents to understand the RI Day Nursery's discipline methods so that we can work together productively to promote your child's emotional and social growth.

First, a word about what the law states regarding both school personnel and parents:

(1) The law says that school personnel may not use corporal punishment to discipline children. That is, teachers may not discipline a child by physically hitting or striking a child in any way.

(2) And the law also addresses the issue of parents punishing their children by hitting, because hitting can become excessive or abusive. The law makes the school (director, teachers, and administrators) responsible for reporting to the authorities any incidents or suspicion that a child in its care is being physically or psychologically abused or neglected. That is, if we see indications that a child is being beaten, abused, or neglected at home, we are required to report this.

How We Handle Discipline at School:

As adults, it is our job to protect children and to help them become good, caring, responsible, and productive human beings. Our aim at the RI Day Nursery is to help children learn to share, to be considerate and respectful of others, and to use words to solve problems. Since children learn by imitating, we set the example for this behavior in the way we work with children. We do not hit or yell but talk to children and set a model for the children to follow.

In our classrooms, we set up a child-centered, safe environment, follow a regular schedule, give children simple choices, and establish reasonable and clear-cut limits and rules. We respect and accept the child's upset and angry feelings although we cannot and do not allow the child to hit or hurt another child or break things. We praise appropriate behavior when children work hard, take turns, and help. When necessary, we sometimes remove a child from a situation so that

the child can calm down and we can talk about his or her feelings and the behavior. We then help the child reengage in productive play.

ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES

Beginning the School Year:

We help introduce the children to school by planning (1) **home visits** and (2) **orientation sessions**.

(1) We plan **home visits** for all of the children. The purpose is for you and your child to meet the teachers in your own home where your child feels most comfortable. We will set up brief visits during the week before school starts. Although these visits are optional, we hope you will participate.

(2) Each September, we plan a period of adjustment, which we call **orientation**, to help the children settle into school. These orientation sessions at the beginning of the school year give all of the children the opportunity to meet their teachers and to be in their rooms for a short time with a small group of children. Even children who have been to school before must adjust to new classrooms, teachers, and classmates. By the first full session of school, the children should feel more comfortable, secure, and ready to say good-bye to their parents.

Please be sure that your child attends his/her orientation hours. Plan to be available while your child is at orientation. It is important for your child to know you are there if needed. We want to work together to insure a happy start for your child at the RI Day Nursery.

*If a family enrolls after this orientation period, the Directors will customize an orientation that meets the family's and school's needs.

Arrivals and Departures:

The school program starts at 9:00 a.m. but we urge you to bring your child any time after 8:30. Children of parents who must leave the Island early may be dropped off as early as 8:00 to our early morning room. All classrooms open for the day at 8:30.

Please bring your child to school on time. The most productive time of our day is the early morning when children have the opportunity to settle into their classrooms and get to work with their friends. Children who miss this early morning time are missing out on an important component of their school experience.

Dismissal is at 12:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m., depending on your child's program. Please pick your child up promptly. Even a short delay can seem endless to a child who is waiting.

No child may enter or leave the school unescorted. Each child is to be brought directly to his or her classroom. The parent or escort is responsible for helping with the removal of outside clothing and boots and the putting on of school shoes if necessary. If someone other than the parent is escorting the child to or from school regularly (baby-sitter, grandparents or a sibling), **an escort form** must be completed and retained in the office. For irregular arrangements, a written note or a phone call from the parent is required on each occasion. The school does not assume responsibility or liability for children traveling to and from school.

For playdates and occasional pickups, teachers must be informed verbally at drop-off, in writing or by phone that your child will be picked up by another adult. We encourage playdates but sometimes children tell us they have an arrangement with a friend and

we do not know if there is an actual plan or if it is just the child's wish. Even if your regular caregiver arranges the playdate, we must be informed by a parent.

If you will be late to pick up your child, you must call the school office, even if finding a telephone may delay you further. (Please carry the school's telephone number with you or program it into your cell phone.) If you are sending someone other than the regular pickup person, you must call the office to inform us. We will not release your child to someone who is not authorized by you to pick up your child. If a child is not picked up and we cannot locate the people designated on the emergency card, we will be obliged to call Roosevelt Island Public Safety to help us deal with the problem.

Keeping Information Current:

It is most important that the office is notified of any changes in address, phone numbers (at home or at work), caregivers, and emergency phone numbers. If both parents will be away on business or vacation, the school must be given, in writing, the name(s) and contact numbers of the person(s) responsible for the care of your child as well as any changes in pickup arrangements.

Health Regulations:

Each child is required by the New York City Department of Health to have a complete medical examination before the beginning of the school year, and no child can be accepted without a complete immunization record and medical history. The school provides the medical form. If your child's annual checkup is done at the time of his or her birthday, you must submit a current medical form in September and remember to update it at the time of the child's next physical exam.

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THE OFFICE AND TEACHERS ARE INFORMED OF ANY KNOWN ALLERGIES.

Children with signs of contagious illness — fever, sore throat, earache, cough, running nose, red or crusted eyes, diarrhea, vomiting, rash or suspicious skin sores — should be kept at home and the doctor called, if necessary.

Children showing signs of contagious illness during the school day will be separated from their classmates and the parents will be called to take the child home. Absences should be telephoned into the office. The school must be notified immediately in the case of a communicable disease.

Children should be kept at home until their temperature has been normal for 24 hours.

The Board of Health does not allow the school to give children prescribed or over-the-counter medication. If necessary, a parent or other caregiver can come to school to administer medication or else the child should be kept at home while treatment is necessary.

We are trying hard to keep the children healthy so that they can be at school regularly. Please help us — you don't want your child to pick up an illness from a sick child either!

Rest Period:

The Board of Health requires that each child attending a full day preschool program has a rest period. The school provides each child with a cot. In addition, each child will need a flat sheet or towel and a small blanket labeled with his/her name. Children may bring a special stuffed animal or similar toy from home to be kept in his or her cubby for rest time. The Board of Health will not permit the use of pillows.

Clothing:

Children should be dressed appropriately so that they can participate fully in all activities. Comfortable, washable clothes are best for school. Even though we provide smocks, children will inevitably get some stains on their clothes.

We recommend long pants for both boys and girls so that they can play outside without getting cold or skinning their knees. Pants with elastic waistbands are easy for young children to pull up and down and when worn support a child's independence while dressing and toileting. Overalls, suspenders, and belts are difficult for young children to manage.

Dress your children in warm and comfortable clothes but please avoid overdressing. The children are quite active and may get overheated if too warmly dressed. They do not need long underwear in school because we do not take them outside to play if the temperature is below freezing. Let your child wear an extra sweater or sweatshirt (or leave one in the cubby) so that if the child is cold it can be put on.

Children should be dressed so that they can go outside to play year round. Unless it is raining or freezing cold, we like to take them outdoors for a little while. THEY NEED CLOSED SHOES OR SNEAKERS (NO PARTY SHOES), LONG PANTS, HATS AND GLOVES OR MITTENS. Let them wear BOOTS if it has been raining or snowing so that we can take them for walks (but please send shoes to wear in the classroom).

You are welcome to bring a pair of SCHOOL SHOES or SLIPPERS for your child that can be left in school to wear inside the classroom and playroom. Since young children sit and play on the floors, this policy is good for the children's health and also protects our classroom floors and playroom mats.

We suggest that the school shoes be either a pair of sneakers or pair of rubber-soled (or non-slip bottom) slippers. To make it easy for the children to take on and off (as well as for parents and teachers), we would also suggest that the shoes or slippers have velcro closures or zippers rather than laces. In the morning when you remove your child's coat, please put on these school shoes or slippers. When we take the children outside, we will help them change back into their outdoor shoes.

Each child should have a complete set of back-up clothes in the school at all times. Including a top, bottom, underwear, and socks, labeled with the child's name.

Toilet Training, Bottles, Pacifiers, and Strollers:

At the RI Day Nursery our aim is to help children become independent and self-sufficient. That is why we ask that children be toilet-trained and weaned from their bottles and pacifiers (at least during the day) when they enter the program. Once they are able to take these steps, they are ready to enter preschool and to begin to function independently without their parents.

All children are expected to be toilet-trained before they start school. Please do not send your child in diapers or pull-ups. We take the children to the bathroom frequently and help them learn to use the bathroom independently. We expect that young children will have accidents occasionally and that is one reason why we ask for a change of clothes to be left in school.

A related note about bottles, pacifiers, and strollers... We know that some children may still be using bottles and pacifiers and riding to school in their strollers when they first enter the program. It makes it harder for the children to do the tasks that being independent in school require (such as drinking from a cup or taking a nap at rest-time or taking a walk with the class) if they are dependent on their bottles, pacifiers or strollers. Children are ready by preschool age to give these up. Ask your child's teachers for some help or suggestions if you are having trouble.

Toys from Home:

We discourage the children from bringing toys from home because we want the children to use the carefully selected materials in the classrooms. If, however, a toy from home makes the transition easier, bring it and after it has been shown to teachers and classmates, we will help your child put it in his or her cubby for the remainder of the day.

The one exception to this rule is a soft toy such as a stuffed animal to be used at rest time. Teachers will also sometimes ask children to bring special things from home which relate to the curriculum and will send home suggestions and guidelines.

Morning Snack:

All children participate in the snack program. Each family will be asked to provide a wholesome midmorning snack for the child's class on a rotating basis (approximately once a month). The teachers will send home a snack schedule.

The snack program allows us to give each class an interesting and varied snack each day. It also gives children the pride of serving their classmates what they have helped to plan and prepare. The school will provide water and juice.

We have made the school a **PEANUT (AND NUT) SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENT**. There is the potential for serious allergic reactions to peanuts and other nuts which we do not want to expose the children to. Therefore, we are asking you **not** to send any food containing peanuts or other nuts for **snack**.* This will mean no foods containing peanut butter or cookies, granola bars, bread or cake containing peanuts or other nuts. Many food items are made with peanut oil and often nuts and nut oils are hidden ingredients in food. Please read the list of ingredients on the foods you buy for snack. If there are any other food allergies in the class, we will let you know.

Some Snack Ideas

Cheese and crackers
Fresh fruit of any kind
Applesauce
Cutup raw vegetables

Non-sweet cereals
Banana bread or other quick breads
Flavored yogurt
Muffins or biscuits

[*You may choose to include peanuts, peanut butter or other nut products in your child's **lunch** as you see fit if no known nut allergies have been identified among your child's classmates. **You must let us know if your child is allergic to peanuts or other nut products because** while we encourage the children to eat their own lunches your child **may be minimally exposed** to such food items at lunch time even if you do not include them in his or her lunch.]

Please also note that the following foods represent a choking hazard for children younger than 4 years old but items that can be chopped may be served if **chopped completely**, e.g.:

Hot dogs
Chunks of meat or cheese
Popcorn
Raw carrots
Whole grapes

We ask you to please follow the above guidelines and refrain from sending in the above items without chopping them for group snack. However, we will leave the decision about what items to include in your child's lunch up to you with the exception of nuts if

necessary based on the needs of your child's classmates. If you have any questions about the policy please feel free to ask.

Lunch:

Full day children (9-3) bring their own lunch to school in a labeled lunch box or bag. In addition, all foods and beverages brought from home must be labeled with the child's name and date. We suggest that lunch consist of nutritious foods that you know your child likes to eat. Please also send milk, pure fruit juice or water to drink, and fruit or other nutritious treats for dessert. We would like to encourage the children to eat a healthy lunch and they often pass over the nutritious food in their hurry to get to dessert comprised of cookies or cake. Cold lunches will be refrigerated until lunchtime.

If you want your child to have a hot lunch, please put the cooked food in a labeled thermal container (thermos). Then put the thermos separately on the lunch cart shelf marked for hot lunches and put the rest of the lunch box on the cold lunch shelf to be refrigerated.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends the following procedures for keeping hot food safe to eat:

Keep foods hot by using an insulated container. Fill the container with boiling water, let stand for a few minutes, empty, and then put in the hot food. Keep the insulated container closed until lunch time to keep the heat in.

The teachers will help the children transfer their food to a paper plate and, as they always do, sit with the children and encourage them to eat.

Birthdays:

We enjoy celebrating the children's birthdays in school and usually reserve snack time on your child's birthday for a party. Parents should make a plan with the teachers. If you are having a party at home, it is our policy to distribute invitations at school only if they are going to all the children in the class. We do not want any child to feel left out. Please do not send goodie bags with candy, toys or balloons to school parties.

Please also consider donating a children's book to the school library in honor of your child's birthday. We will put a label with your child's name and birthday in the book.

EMERGENCY PLANS

These are the plans which the RI Day Nursery will follow in the event of an emergency. These are in addition to the regular fire drills which are held to practice with the children how to evacuate the building quickly and safely in case of a fire. After 9/11, we extended our emergency plans in cooperation with the Roosevelt Island Public Safety Department and we want you to know what we will do in case there is an emergency in New York City.

1 - We will remain in our school building and wait with the children until all are picked up by their parents, unless informed otherwise by Public Safety, the Police Department or the Fire Department.

2 - If we must vacate our building (on instructions from Public Safety, the Police Department or the Fire Department), we will go to P.S. 217 or to the Manhattan Park Theater Club. Public Safety has advised that our first choice should be P.S. 217 if

possible so that all of the Island children are together in one space.

3 - Any further evacuation of Roosevelt Island would be done only under instructions from the NYC Police or Fire Department which will be operating under orders from the Office of Emergency Management.

Copies of the children's **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER** forms will be in classroom backpacks that the teachers will take with them if we have to leave the building. **Make sure that all the information on your card is up to date. If we must leave the school or if school is closed for any reason, the school's answering machine will have a message of instruction to parents.**

PROGRAMS AND FINANCIAL POLICIES

School Year Programs:

The RI Day Nursery offers the programs described in the school's brochure. To accommodate parents who must leave the Island early, the school opens at 8 a.m. The regular school year runs from early September until the middle of June.

Registration Information:

Registration for the next school year opens in mid-March. All places are filled on a first-come, first-served basis and parents are urged to reenroll their children promptly.

Summer Program:

The RI Day Nursery runs a summer program for eight weeks in July and August. It is open to all children currently attending the school. The program emphasizes outdoor activities and water play. Tuition information and registration information are sent to parents in April.

Financial Policies:

The RI Day Nursery's financial policies are as follows:

1. Payments may be made on a 3-payment or 8-payment schedule, as indicated on the school contract.
2. **Registration deposits are nonrefundable**, even if the child is withdrawn prior to the beginning of the school year. The registration deposit will be applied to tuition for the month of June.
3. The September payment will include the tuition for the month of May.
4. **ALL PLACES ARE TAKEN FOR THE ENTIRE SCHOOL YEAR** (September through June). No refund or reductions will be made for withdrawal, absence, illness, suspension, or dismissal of your child for any reason, whenever occurring.
5. All payments are due on the indicated dates. Payments made after the 10th day of the month are subject to a \$10.00 late fee.
6. There will be a charge of \$15.00 for any checks returned by the bank for insufficient or uncollected funds.
7. There will be a penalty charge of \$10.00 for children who are picked up after the agreed-upon pickup time, i.e. 12:00, 3:00 or 6:00 p.m.

8. Some incidental fees for special student activities, books and magazines are not included in the tuition.

9. The school reserves the right to cancel a program before the start of any quarter should there be insufficient interest for the class to be financially viable. In this event, the registration fee would be refunded if the children affected could not be accommodated elsewhere in the school.

10. The school reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment in the school at any time if, in its judgment, special circumstances or failure to make tuition payments warrant this action.

Universal PreK Policies:

Universal PreK funding is available for full day programs for four year olds from the NYC Department of Education. In order to qualify for the reduced PreK tuition subsidy for the 2009-10 school year, children must be born in 2005 and must be enrolled before October 31, 2009. Parents must complete all NYC Department of Education registration forms in order for the funding to be made available for their child.

Financial Aid:

Financial aid is available to families who qualify from either the New York City Agency for Child Development (ACD) or from the RI Day Nursery's Scholarship Fund. ACD funds are limited and are made available by New York City on a first-come first-served basis. The RI Day Nursery's Scholarship Fund is also limited as these funds are generated by fundraising events sponsored by the Parent Board of Directors.

Any family interested in requesting need-based financial assistance must submit a financial aid application and tax-related documentation for review by the Finance Committee of the Parent Board of Directors. Families that do not file United States income tax returns must submit equivalent supporting documentation such as a form or letter from an employer. For the 2009-2010 school year, any family demonstrating a combined income of \$75,000 or less will be considered for assistance. Families needing financial assistance should see either director for further information about qualifications and application procedures.

School Calendar:

PLEASE CHECK THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR ALL SCHEDULED HOLIDAY CLOSINGS, HALF DAYS, AND CONFERENCE DAYS. We suggest that you post this school calendar for easy reference at home.

In case of snow, the RI Day Nursery will be closed whenever the New York City Public Schools or the District 2 and Region 9 Public Schools are closed. If there is snow, please check the local news for information about closures.