



# Spuyten Duyvil

## P R E S C H O O L

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# PARENT HANDBOOK

## 2018-2019

### STAFF:

Judith Menken ..... Director  
  
Grazia La Rocca .....  
Head Teacher, UPK room 2N  
Dayana Gonzalez .....  
Ass't Teacher UPK room 2N  
Kate Ofori .....  
Head Teacher Nursery  
Martha Castillo .....  
Ass't. Teacher, Nursery  
Michelle Aguilar .....  
Ass't Teacher Nursery

### Afterschool Music Program:

Janet Rose Lucy ..... Suzuki Violin  
Shelley Monroe Huang ..... Recorder

Alda Homan .....  
Head Teacher, UPK Annex  
Vlora Celaj .....  
Ass't. Teacher UPK Annex  
Margaret Murphy .....  
Head Teacher, UPK room 2S  
Barbara Pitkowsky .....  
Ass't Teacher, UPK room 2S  
Oscar Rios ..... Educational Assist  
  
Melissa Andujar... Lunch Bunch/Extended Day  
  
Yasmin Ramales-Flores ....  
Lunch Bunch/Extended Day

### CONSULTANTS:

Nancy Ortiz-Surun ..... Farm & Garden Studies  
Janet Winston ..... Music  
Alex Frankel ..... Chess@3 Instructor

### Contact your teachers by email:

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## P R E S C H O O L

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Spuyten Duyvil Preschool, established in 1928, is continuing its long tradition of operation as a progressive nursery school. At Spuyten Duyvil we believe that children are intrinsically natural learners. We provide a setting which is child-centered: an environment in which the role of the teacher is to guide the class or individual as needed to reach their fullest potential in all areas of development. It is important for children to be given responsibility for choosing from a variety of activities, making decisions, and solving problems. We believe that young children need an environment in which they can respond to materials around them and freely explore their uses. Children learn through play. We provide materials for children to manipulate that are simple and open-ended to insure the greatest possible usage, thus extending the possibilities for creativity and inventiveness.

We believe that children are naturally sociable and learn from each other. At Spuyten Duyvil children are active contributors and participators. Group experiences and activities are a very important part of classroom life. We believe in education the whole child. This means working with the emotional, social, intellectual and physical aspects of each child. We help children grow in all areas so that they can become competent, healthy, and productive citizens.

Keeping with the cooperative history of the school, we are committed to including families in every part of school life. Our Board of Trustees is largely made up of current and former parents, parents volunteer in classes and work on maintaining and improving our historic little building and grounds. Teachers and Director works alongside families as needed to secure services and provide support in any way that will benefit their children. It is only through close partnership with families that we can ensure each child will be given every opportunity to find success in school and life.

### **GOVERNANCE**

Spuyten Duyvil Preschool is a not-for-profit organization. We are licensed by the NYC Dept of Health and Mental Hygiene, as well as a contracted vendor the NYC Dept. of Education for our Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program. Head Teachers and Director are state certified early childhood teachers; all staff are fingerprinted and cleared through State Registry for Child Abuse. All staff is encouraged to continue with their professional training. They are continually adding levels of certification on their own, as well as attending conferences and workshop either provided the NYC or that we support during the school year.

#### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The Spuyten Duyvil Preschool admits students of any race, color, national origin, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, instruction, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

## **ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE**

Children must be escorted into and out of the school by adults. To ensure the safety of our children and the security of our school, every child *must* be signed in and out of the classroom or playground every day. All pick-up arrangements should be known to staff. Children will not be released to unfamiliar people. Be sure that all adults picking up your child are listed on the emergency form you have been asked to complete. If a new person will be picking up your child, please write a note and leave it with the teacher so that this person may be added to your child's file in the office. *No one not listed on the emergency form will be allowed to pick up your child without explicit instruction from the parent in advance.*

If you need to double-park for drop-off or pick-up, leave your hazard lights on and we can give you a courtesy card for your dashboard to alert traffic officials you are only stopping for a few minutes. However, families who need to double park in front of the school do so at their own risk.

If you bring other children with you when dropping off or picking up the Spuyten Duyvil student, be sure to keep them with you. Other children may not use the climbing equipment. This interferes with our ability to properly supervise our students. Younger children can also be hurt around materials that are not designed for their age.

Once you have signed your child out, unless you are meeting with teacher or Director, we ask that you leave the premises. Teachers are responsible for supervision of the rest of the children in their care, either in the classroom or in the play yard. It needs to be clear to everyone who the authority adult is at all times. You are welcome to use the front yard or Porch after school hours with your child. This can be a very nice time for them to share what they have learned outdoors and to explore together. Remember that there is no picking of *anything* (other than carefully directed weeding). We need to be consistent in the message of respect for living things – plants included.

We ask that caregivers are not on a cell phone while bringing in or picking up children. Your child needs your full attention to properly say goodbye before s/he starts their time at school. At the other end of their day your child needs to see your smiling face eagerly waiting to welcome them back and hear about their time at school.

## **EARLY DROP-OFF and LATE PICK-UP**

As part of our private program, the school offers an optional 7:30 to 8:40 am drop-off for children in UPK or 7:30-9 am for AM Nursery program. An early arrival for the afternoon Nursery group is also available at 12:00. Lunch Bunch (AM Nursery children staying past noon) runs until 2:30 pm; Extended Day can be added up to 6:00. These extra hours need to be arranged by contract. Speak to the Director about cost. If you need to use these services on a per diem basis, parents must call ahead to make sure space is available. This service should only be used in emergencies; the cost is \$25/hour.



## **SECURITY**

Children are with at least one teacher at all times in our care. UPK children are walked downstairs to the bathroom when they need it. Visitors all enter the building through the playground entrance. This door should always be closed; it is locked when no class is in the playground. There is a camera and buzzer in place. Visitors are buzzed in after a staff member has seen them on the office monitor. Please stand with your child at the door when you buzz to come in as well will not buzz in a child standing alone. Please also monitor your child using the buzzer. Repeat buzzing can damage the system and has led to costly repairs in the past. It is also very annoying to the office and classrooms at work inside.

There are 3 latched gates at the side of the school. Please be sure to close them all as you go in and out. Please also be sure that the back door closes behind after you are buzzed in or leaving the building. These are additional measures to make sure all children remain safely within the school boundaries. In addition to the back entrance, there are 3 other fire exits- the front door, the glass doors to the Annex and another side door through the nursery classroom. We hold monthly fire drills with the children so that they are prepared for this emergency procedure as well.

## **LUNCHES and SNACKS**

**SPUYTEN DUYVIL IS A NUT-FREE SCHOOL. We do not serve, nor may children or adults bring in, peanut butter or other nut product.**

The school recommends that parents of Lunch Bunch children pack simple, healthy lunches. Gum and candy is not allowed in school. Simple desserts are fine when they are accompanied by a balanced meal. Please include milk, juice or water (no sodas or fruit punch); we will also serve milk and water to your child. Label your child's lunch box or bag with your child's name and place it in the refrigerator downstairs at arrival. Please write your child's name on each container so we can be sure each child is eating their own food. No glass containers please.

The school provides snacks each day which consist of crackers, pretzels, fruit, cheese, veggies or a snack the children have prepared themselves (pasta, pancakes, baked goods). The schools always supplies milk or water to drink. We are following the Department of Health guidelines for snacks. (copies available.) Please discuss any allergies or dietary needs with your child's teacher. They will be honored.

Dept of Education contract requires us to provide lunch for UPK students. We use *Red Rabbit* as our vendor. They are NY State approved. The food is cooked fresh in small batches daily and delivered to us each morning. The Menu for the coming week is posted on the downstairs bulletin board. Accommodations are also made for allergies and other food requirements, just let us know in advance and *Red Rabbit* will send the appropriate meals. There are always questions about how we handle "picky eaters." We do not want lunches to come from home, but rather encourage family style meals. We have been very successful in widening children's eating habits, or rather the modeling of classmates enjoying their lunch has been very effective in that area.

Families are invited to send in fresh fruit or other appropriate snacks as long as there is enough for all the children in the class. Children are not allowed to eat their own snack unless prior arrangement has been made with the teachers due to dietary or health needs of your child.



## **CLOTHING**

Sturdy, comfortable, washable clothes are best for school. Please send your child in sneakers or non-skid shoes. Children need to be able to run and climb safely, therefore no flip-flops, Crocs or slip-on shoes, Uggs, sandals or boots are allowed. Smocks are provided for painting and messy activities, but a certain amount of staining is inevitable so be sure your child is dressed for “work” every day. In keeping with the wholesome, non-violent, non-racist or sexist environment of the school, children should not wear clothing with pictures or wording not in line with these goals.

All children should be dressed so that they can enjoy a period of outdoor play every day. Boots and snow pants are a necessity as they children play outdoors all winter long. Please remember that gloves are not as warm as mitten and are more difficult to put on without assistance. Hats make a big difference in keeping your child warm as well. These smaller pieces of clothing will get misplaced so check the Lost and Found box downstairs regularly. As much as possible, write your child’s name in their outer clothing as well.

An extra set of clothing is needed at school. Please bring an extra shirt, pants, underpants, socks, shoes, and an extra sweater in a shoebox to be kept in your child’s cubby. Check your child’s cubby periodically to be sure there is clothing that still fits and is appropriate to the season. If your child does need to use spare clothing, be sure to send in another set the next day. If we need to use our spare school clothing in an emergency be sure to wash that and return it as well so it is available for another child another day. *ALL CLOTHING SHOULD BE MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD’S NAME.*

If your child wears pull-ups please leave a supply with your teacher as well.

## **POLICY ON TOYS**

Children sometimes need objects for toys from home to help with the transition from home to school. We ask that these toys or objects be left in the cubby or with you when the child arrives at school. Teachers cannot be responsible for keeping track of toys brought from home. They cause distraction for all the children and invariably lead to frustration and tears. We have adequate supplies of appropriate toys and materials for all the children to use. Home toys brought into the classroom will be removed. The only exception is a soft cuddly that your child may want to sleep for Lunch Bunchers. There are to be no electronic toys or cell phones in school at all. Children should also not have any money in school.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Children are expected to attend school every day they are registered for, arriving promptly at 8:40 am for morning UPK, 9 am for AM Nursery programs, and at 1 pm for PM Nursery, unless you have contracted for other hours privately. Teachers carefully plan for each child, as well as the development and progress of your child being connected to his/her work within the group. Latecomers disrupt the group; your child also loses out on the instruction that is planned for this first whole group meeting of the day. There is a planned rhythm for the class. Your child deserves to be a full participant.

If your child is ill, or family situation doesn’t allow attending on a specific day, the parent is expected to call the school in the morning and let us know. Prolonged or frequent undocumented absences may result in removal from the UPK. If we are concerned about the well-being of your child we are required to notify child protection agencies, so please keep us informed of any situation that interferes with your



child's regular attendance. In extreme situations we may have to notify child protective services, so please let us know in advance when absence is necessary. Speak to the teachers or Director if there is a family situation that makes regular attendance difficult; we will do our best to help you.

UPK children absent more than 3 consecutive days need to bring a doctor's note upon return.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Learning social and physical boundaries is one of the core goals of a preschool program. Guiding children to successful relationships with peers is as much a part of the expected curriculum as writing ones name or counting children for snack each day. Young children cannot always call up the words they need to resolve conflicts or make their immediate needs known, so strong actions, harsh words and tears will pop up. There will be no "punishment" or time-out as a consequence, however, children are never allowed to hit or in any way hurt another person in action or words. When an incident does occur, the child(ren) will be taken aside, first to calm down, then to share what happened, how they felt at the time and how else the situation could have been handled. If the teacher feels there is a pattern of behavior that requires more attention, she may turn to the parent for support. This is not to report "bad behavior" but to bring the family in to help guide us in keeping your child safe and happy.

Parents are asked not to contact another family directly over an incident with another child at school. Always speak to the head teacher first and let her respond to the situation. If you have further concerns, always speak to the Director as well.

### **HEALTH and MEDICAL**

1. Your child must have a completed medical and up-to-date immunizations to be enrolled in the school. In addition, children cannot be allowed to stay at school without fully completed Emergency and Medical Release Forms.
2. You must call the school in the morning to notify the school that your child will not be attending that day for any reason. If your child remains out for a prolonged period due to illness or family emergency, please keep in touch with the school to update us on your child's return. A note from parent or doctor is required upon return after a 3 day absence.
3. Do not send your child to school with a fever hoping it will get better during the day. You will be called to pick your child up. Sick children can be difficult for working parents, but the priority must be the safety of all the children in the school, yours included. Your child must be free from fever for 24 hours before s/he returns to school after an illness.
4. Communicable diseases: Parents are required to notify the school if your child develops a contagious disease. The school will inform the rest of the parent body, without naming the sick child. This is so families can prevent further spread by being on the look-out for symptoms. *A doctor's note is required confirming that the child may return to school for all contagious conditions.*



- a. Chicken Pox- child must stay home until scabs have fallen off.
  - b. Undiagnosed diarrhea, rashes (e.g. ringworms) or red/oozing eyes (conjunctivitis “pink eye”) - child must stay home.
  - c. Intestinal parasites (e.g. pin worms) – child may not return until the medication has taken effect.
  - d. Strep throat and scarlet fever – child may return to school after having received medication for 24 hours. If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, it is important that the entire bottle be finished. Have your child re-tested for strep after the bottle is finished.
  - e. Lice- we ask that the child stays home until hair is clear of nits. Family must use specialized shampoo to treat condition and take necessary precautions with washing bed linens at home.
5. As is required by Dept. of Health regulations, staff members have been trained in CPR and First Aid, as well as have received Medication Administration Training (MAT). However, we do not stock over-the-counter medications. If your child is receiving Tylenol, for example for a low grade fever, s/he should not be in school.
  6. Be sure that you inform the Director and your child’s teacher if your child has any other chronic condition (such as asthma or allergies) that may need attention. If that condition requires all prescription medication to be given at school, or even kept on hand (nebulizer, Epi-pen, insulin) we will give you forms for you and your doctor to complete. Verbal approval to give such medication is only allowed for 1 day.
  7. If your child is injured during the day you will be notified, either by phone or when you pick up your child. If s/he is running a fever or otherwise not able to participate due to a persistent medical situation, you will be called to pick him/her up. This is why it is so important that you leave working numbers for neighborhood friends or relatives we can call if you are unavailable. In an emergency we will call 911 for immediate medical attention.
  8. CHILD ABUSE: All staff are mandated reporters to NY State of any suspected child abuse or neglect. That means that even though the teacher may be sure that the child is in a loving home, if there is a pattern of behavior or physical marks on the child, all staff is required to notify the abuse hotline. This is not a personal judgment on any family; it is the law.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

As part of the initial registration all families signed permission slips for neighborhood walks. These can include walks to the park for fall leaves, to the supermarket or fire station as part of larger studies, or just a walk around the block to observe neighborhood objects. Children walk in two’s holding hands with a partner. Additional parent chaperones are invited on these outings to ensure adequate supervision. Siblings are not allowed to come along; chaperones must be at least 18 years old.

Out-of-area trips are not a viable option for preschools. We would be required to use car seats on the buses which is not possible. Young children do not get much out of such large outings anyway. Going to a museum or park with their family is the best way to use the wonderful resources of NYC to enrich your child’s world.



Should there be an extraordinary event that we feel worth the cost and time, you would always be informed well in advance with a separate permission slip.

### **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

In keeping with the family nature of our school, parents and caregivers are encouraged to connect with their child's transition and development in many ways.

1. Orientation in September. Each class will be divided into two groups, with each group of children attending for one hour for the first two days of school. Parents and family members will be asked to remain at the school with their children. Coffee, juice, and snacks will be available for parents in the foyer of the school and the director will answer questions, etc. Parents and family members will be asked to stay close by as the children are adjusting and transitioning into school the first few days. Again, they may sit in the classroom, in the foyer, in the cubby areas to be available if children need their support.
2. Early in the school year, parents will be invited to an evening meeting within their child's classroom. Parent Handbooks will be distributed and, after introducing themselves to parents, the teachers and the director will review the policies of the school and discuss the curriculum of the Universal Prekindergarten. Teachers and the director will answer questions regarding guidance strategies, problems, etc.
3. In late October, a Fall Festival is held to bring children and their families to the school on a weekend. The children and their parents will be involved in playing games, face painting, painting fall items such as squash or pumpkins, as well as a food or baked goods table.
4. So many cultures have special holidays of light in December. At Spuyten Duyvil we do not celebrate any commercial or religious holidays, but the good will that comes from spending time with family and friends is very much in keeping with our values. In mid December each class holds a Family Breakfast/Lunch to share food, read to children and wish each other well.
5. In December and April/May the teachers will schedule family conferences to discuss the children's adjustment to school and progress thus far in the year. (Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed throughout the year.) Children are invited to attend with their parents and caregivers. Children come to appreciate their parents' values on education and interest in their well-being by being an active participant in their own learning. They greatly enjoy sharing their special place and activities with the adults most important to them.
6. Spring is welcomed with a Family Potluck Brunch and Garden Party, generally held on a Sunday marking the beginning of the new season. In addition to sharing pancakes, bagels and other brunch foods donated by attending families, the parents work together on the school grounds to prepare the garden and schoolyard for the warm weather ahead.
7. Parent meetings/workshops will be scheduled on an annual basis depending on the needs of the families. Depending on the needs and interests of our families these workshops can include a child psychologist, social worker, pediatrician or other resource on child development, nutritionist, information on yoga, music, sign language or other enrichments for your child. Parent input into this planning is encouraged.
8. The children produce a great variety of artwork in a range of media throughout the year. This work is presented to families at our Art Gallery and Mini-Mall held at the end of May. Families view their child's



work displayed gallery style around the building and may purchase hand-made items also made by the children (sand-art, magnets, picture frames, papier mache bowls, etc.)

9. The end of year celebration will be a simple event to provide closure for the year. Each class will sing 2-3 songs for the parents that they have been working on during the year. The children sit on the carpet with parents and families sitting/standing around the edge of the room. The children will be given the portfolio of their work and photos of their entire year. A short snack and celebration will be held in the front yard of the school (weather permitting). This is held the last day of school, a half day for all children.
10. Open door policy. Parents are always invited to visit their child's room, participate in birthday celebrations, spend time reading or completing a game or puzzle with their child, or sharing a skill or hobby with the class such as cooking, singing or other interest. Teachers and director will make time to meet with any parent as needed. It is always best to make an appointment in advance to be sure that school personnel is available.
11. Volunteers are always welcome, especially when you can come in on a regular basis. Teachers have different ways of incorporating families- Mystery Readers, for example. We would like to be able to bake regularly with the children, but that certainly needs an extra set of hands. If you would like to take part in your child's class, just let us know. You may not think you have a particular specialty to offer, but we will find ways to make your time well spent.
12. GARDEN/FARM Volunteers – As everyone notices on their very first visit to our school, we are so fortunate to have so much outdoor space for the children to use as an extended classroom. In addition, to the back play space, the front yard has a Looking Garden, the Field, the Orchard and the Farm, as well as the large Porch. Exploration of the the natural environment is an important part of our on-going curriculum, but it does demand a good amount of adult support. **Weeders are always needed.** No experience is necessary, just an hour or so of free time. Not only will you be providing essential help to the school, but will get a strong feeling of accomplishment and calm yourself. No need to plan in advance; just let Judi or Nancy know and you will be handed a trowel.

## COMMUNICATION

It is important that there be an open line of communication between home and school. Families are encouraged to keep the teachers up-to-date on any significant changes at home. New pregnancy, illness or absence of a family member, any strain between parents or other family members, these private events all affect your child and those feelings will show themselves at school. The more the teachers know what is going on behind the behaviors we see, the better we can help your child work them through. All information is held in confidence.

You can reach your teachers either by written note or email if you do not come to the school yourselves or by calling the office. Do not use class email to notify your teachers of a change of plan for the same day; they do not check it during the school day. Those messages should be left on the office phone.

There are monthly Family Letters from the Director to keep you informed about upcoming school events and areas of interest to families- events for children in the city, articles on child development, information on kindergarten transitions, etc. Teachers all send home monthly class updates as well.



Each family will also be given a School Directory so you can connect with classmates outside of school hours. Play-dates are a wonderful extension to your child's day and further build a strong bridge between home and school. Families may also want to carpool or share pick-up times. However, always be sure to respect the privacy of other families and do not overuse the privilege or call too early or late in the day.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Spuyten Duyvil is open to all children that are eligible by to age. Children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or other physical or health conditions are welcome as long as we have the facilities to safely accommodate those needs. Our building is old and therefore not handicap accessible for wheelchairs or walkers. However, as much as possible, we will work with interested families to support the inclusion and growth of every child at our school. We can only do this if families share complete medical and psychological histories with us. We have on-going relationships with several high quality referral agencies and service providers that we will use to arrange whatever supports your child is entitled to.

When there are concerns about a child's development, either by the teachers or parents, we will work together to plan modifications and engage outside agencies to guide us in getting more information about your child. These discussions are always held in confidence between teachers, Director and parents.

### **PARTIES and CELEBRATIONS**

Please talk to your child's teachers to arrange for birthday parties. We ask that you keep your child's party at school simple. All you will need: cupcakes or cake, napkins, cups, and milk or juice. We have children with food allergies and other dietary restrictions; speak with your teachers about appropriate birthday snack to share beforehand. **Please do not bring goody bags, fruit punch, or assorted chips, candies, etc. They will not be given out to the children.** The school celebration is a time for your child to share a special event with his/her classmates; it is not meant to replace whatever larger celebration families may choose to have at home.

In respect for the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs of our families, the school does not celebrate any commercial or religious holidays in school. Children should not wear costumes or masks at Halloween. Not to sound like too much of a Grinch, but we prefer that children do not give out Valentine cards at school either. Again, these are a commercialization of a religious holiday. We encourage children to share good wishes with their friends, but cards should be exchanged outside of school. Please also do not ask the teachers to give out invitations to children in the class. It is not fair to make them responsible for social events outside of school. Everyone will have a School Directory so you can contact classmates directly.

We try very hard to build community within our school and between school and all our families in many ways specific to the Spuyten Duyvil community. The family events throughout the year allow the children to create celebrations of their own that recognize their shared work in school.



## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

During serious weather conditions, we will follow the decision made by the NYC Dept. of Education concerning school closings. Please listen to the radio or television for the decision. If an unusual condition exists, staff and parents will call each family and notify you of how to proceed.

As long as it is not raining and there are no large puddles or ice in the backyard, every effort is made to give the children outdoor time every day. Be sure to always dress your child appropriately. Even if you need to wear rain boots to school, leave a pair of “climbing shoes” in your cubby so if the skies clear a bit we can still play outside.

It is our goal that all children and families at Spuyten Duyvil feel welcome and safe. We hope that the policies outlined in this Parent Handbook will assist in that effort by maintaining a respectful and secure environment for us all.

Sept. 2018

