



# Spuyten Duyvil

## P R E S C H O O L

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# FAMILY HANDBOOK

## STAFF:

Judith Menken ..... Director

Alda Homan ..... Head Teacher, Pre-K class 2N

Michelle Aguilar ..... Asst. Teacher, Pre-K class 2N

Margaret Murphy ..... Head Tchr, Pre-K class 2S

Chassity DeJesus ..... Asst. Tchr, Pre-K class 2S

### 3K Nursery Teachers:

Brenda Caceres ..... Head Teacher

Martha Castillo ..... Asst. Teacher

Crisel Estevez ..... Educational Asst.

### Aftercare Add-ons:

Janet Rose Lucy ..... Suzuki Violin

Mary Cartales ..... Drumming Circle

Dolores Zorreguieta ..... Somos Artistas

### Aftercare/3K Asst:

Tiara Sullivan

Cathy Matos

### CONSULTANTS:

Michelle Byron ..... Nature Educator

Julia Reidbord ..... Chess@3 instructor

Mary Cartales ..... Movement

Grazia LaRocca ..... Art Club

Ted Pollen..... Creative Dance

### Contact your teachers by email:

**Alda/Michelle** [amupksdp@gmail.com](mailto:amupksdp@gmail.com)

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updated August 2025



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### **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, ethnic origin, or immigration status in administration of its educational policies, instruction, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

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## **PHILOSOPHY**

Spuyten Duyvil Preschool, established in 1928, has a long tradition of operation as a progressive nursery school. At Spuyten Duyvil we believe that children are intrinsically natural learners. We provide a setting that 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 ensure the greatest possible usage, thus extending the possibilities for creativity and inventiveness.

We believe that children are naturally social 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 educating 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 as active members of the school community. Our Board of Directors is largely made up of current and former caregivers. Caregivers volunteer in classes and work on maintaining and improving our historic building and grounds. Teachers and the Director work 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 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and we are a contracted vendor of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) for our 3K and Pre-K programs. Head Teachers and the Director are state certified early childhood teachers. All staff are fingerprinted and cleared through the State Registry for Child Abuse. All staff are encouraged to continue with their professional training. They are continually adding levels of certification on their own, as well as attending conferences and workshops either provided by the NYC DOE or DOHMH or that we support during the school year.

## **ADMISSIONS AND CLASS PLACEMENT**

Families apply to the school through the NYC DOE [3K for All](#) or [Pre-K for All](#) lottery process via the [NYC MySchools](#) website. See those resources for additional information.

Current 3K students receive priority placement in Pre-K, but the application must be submitted in the MySchools system; there is no application for admission directly to the school.

### **3K Class Placement**

There is one 3K classroom licensed for 15 students.



### Pre-K Class Placement

There are two Pre-K classrooms each licensed for 17 students. The Director and school staff work in collaboration to place returning students in their assigned class following careful consideration of the many factors that affect the social and educational development of the student. We do not accept caregiver requests for specific classroom assignments.

### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE POLICIES**

Teachers meet families at the front gate at staggered start and end times:

- 3K school hours are 8:30 a.m.–2:50 p.m.
- Pre-K school hours are 8:40 a.m.–3:00 p.m. or 8:50 a.m.–3:10 p.m., depending on the child's class.

Children must be escorted to and from the school by an adult; sibling or other caregiver must be at least 16 years old unless previously approved by the Director.

To ensure the safety of the children and the security of our school, every child *must* be signed in and out of school every day. Any changes in pick-up arrangements (e.g., early pick-up, a different caregiver picking up), should be communicated to staff in advance. Children will not be released to unfamiliar people. All adults who are authorized to pick up your child must be listed on the emergency form in the school's records. If a new person will be picking up your child, please email the director or 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 person - no matter who they are - who is not listed on the emergency form will be allowed to pick up your child without explicit instruction from the authorized caregiver(s) in advance.*

If you need to double park for drop-off or pick-up, leave your hazard lights on; 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 (e.g., siblings) with you when dropping off or picking up your Spuyten Duyvil student, be sure to keep them with you at all times. Due to safety and supervision concerns, children who are not currently enrolled as Spuyten Duyvil students may not use the climbing equipment or be unsupervised anywhere on school grounds.

We ask that caregivers are not on a cell phone while dropping off or picking up children. Your child needs your full attention to properly say goodbye before they start their school day. At the 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.

Finally, unless you have a teacher/director meeting or are volunteering in the garden (or shopping at the Mini Mall, see below in Family Involvement and School Activities), we ask that you not stay at the school for a prolonged period of time after drop-off or enter the school area ahead of the pick-up time.

### **EARLY DROP-OFF AND AFTERCARE PROGRAM**



The school offers an optional early drop-off beginning at 7:30 a.m. and aftercare can be added up to 6:00 p.m. These offerings are currently not part of the publicly funded school day. However, for the 2025-2026 school year Spuyten Duyvil is part of an additional city funded program called SDY+. If a child is enrolled for most of the additional day for at least 4 days of the week, there is no additional charge to the family. If only using part-time childcare, there is a private fee schedule. Contact the Director to arrange your particular needs.

If you need to use these services on a per diem basis, caregivers should call ahead to plan pick-up time. Per diem use of these services should only be used in emergencies; the cost is \$25/hour.

### **SECURITY**

Children are with at least one teacher at all times while in our care. Visitors enter the building through the playground entrance. This door is kept closed and locked at all times and there is a camera and buzzer. Visitors are buzzed in after a staff member has seen them on the office monitor.

If you arrive later than school drop-off time and your class is no longer at the gate, please stand with your child at the door and buzz to enter. We will not buzz in a child standing alone. Please also monitor your child using the buzzer since repeat buzzing can damage the system and has led to costly repairs in the past, and is also disruptive to the office and classrooms.

There are 3 latched gates at the side of the school. Be sure to close them all as you go in and out. Please also be sure that the back door closes behind you after you are buzzed in or when you are 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 blue door, the glass door to the Annex, and another side door through the 3K 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 products.**

The school provides a free lunch to all students. Our lunches are provided by Regina Catering, and the menus are shared regularly with families. Food is made fresh and delivered daily, always including veggies and fruit. We serve low fat milk and water with meals.

The school provides snacks each day which consist of crackers, pretzels, fruit, cheese, veggies, or a snack the children have prepared themselves as part of our educational programming (pasta, pancakes, baked goods). The school always supplies milk or water to drink. We follow the NYC DOHMH guidelines for snacks (copies available upon request). Please discuss any allergies or dietary needs with your child's teacher.



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 or lunch unless prior arrangement has been made with the teachers due to dietary or health needs of your child.

There are always questions about how we handle “picky eaters.” The children sit together and serve themselves “family-style” from large serving dishes to reflect the social experience of dining together. We have been successful in widening children’s eating habits, or rather the modeling of classmates enjoying their lunch, has been very effective in that area.

### **CLOTHING/SUPPLIES**

We strongly recommend that all belongings be labeled clearly with your child’s name or initials (permanent marker on label). Every effort is made to keep track of belongings but, even in a small school, gloves, sweaters, etc. have a way of disappearing. The following items are necessary for all children (further details described below):

- A bedroll for daily quiet/nap time
- A reusable water bottle to keep at the school for 3K or children in aftercare
- A pair of indoor shoes to keep at the school
- At least one change of clothes
- If your child wears pull-ups, bring a regular supply of pull-ups and wipes

Children should come to school wearing comfortable, washable clothes and have weather-appropriate outdoor clothes. Please send your child in sneakers or non-skid shoes suitable for outdoor play. Uggs, sandals, or boots are *not* allowed for outdoor play since they do not allow children to run or climb safely. If it is raining or snowing and your child needs to wear rain boots or snow boots to school, be sure there is also a pair of sneakers in their backpack or at school. Children without proper playground shoes will not be allowed to run or climb; this is an insurance requirement and will be enforced.

Children should keep a pair of indoor shoes at the school. Children change their shoes at their cubby upon arrival. Some examples of good indoor shoes are *Crocs*, *Toms*, or other slip-on shoes. They change back into outdoor shoes when they play outdoors. Children learn how to change their shoes quickly, along with putting on their own jackets - another set of self-care skills we practice at school.

Smocks are provided for painting and other sensory activities, but a certain amount of staining is inevitable so be sure your child is dressed for “work” every day.

While Spuyten Duyvil does not use school uniforms, we also try not to support commercial stereotypes. Please do not send your child to school with ‘pretend’ clothes (i.e., no superhero capes, tiaras, large tutus), or clothing with explicit images. Spuyten Duyvil is committed to a wholesome, non-violent, non-racist, and non-sexist environment at school. Children should not wear clothing with pictures or wording not in line with these goals. The school reserves the right to give any student a replacement shirt to wear for the day if we feel the logos are not in line with school policy. We will follow up with a call to you to discuss further.



All children must also have at least one extra set of clothing at school including an extra shirt, pants, underpants, socks, shoes, and an extra sweater to be kept in your child's cubby. Remember to update those clothes as your child grows and the seasons change. If your child needs to use their cubby clothing, be sure to send in another set the next day. If we need to use our on-site supply of school clothing, please wash that and return it so that it is available for another child another day.

All children should be dressed so that they can enjoy a period of outdoor play every day, including in the winter. Recommended winter weather gear for children includes: boots, snow pants, mittens or gloves (several pairs, and mittens are preferred), and a winter hat.

Note. If your child wears pull-ups, we ask that you provide a regular supply of gender-neutral pull-ups and wipes.

If you need any assistance in obtaining supplies, please let the Director know. We also maintain a sharing box of outgrown clothing and shoes in the lobby of the school.

### **POLICY ON TOYS**

Children sometimes need comfort objects or toys from home to help with the transition from home to school. Our teachers are not responsible for keeping track of these toys/objects, and they are often a distraction to the routine of the day. Given this, we ask that these toys or objects be left with you when the child arrives at school. If needed, a small plush transitional toy may be used for quiet/nap time and rolled in the nap mat, but discuss this in advance with your child's teacher.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Children are expected to attend school every day, arriving promptly at their class starting time. 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. Late arrivals can be disruptive to 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, and your child deserves to be a full participant. Additionally, NYC DOE requires official attendance logs for all students.

If your child is ill, or a family situation does not allow attending on a specific day, the caregiver is expected to call the school in the morning, email the Director or class teacher, or notify the teacher on Bloomz and let us know. Your child's teacher will call if your child is absent and has not notified. Children who are absent for 3 or more consecutive days due to a health condition need a doctor's note upon return. Prolonged or frequent undocumented absences may result in removal from the 3K or Pre-K program. Speak to the teachers or the Director if there is a family situation that makes regular attendance difficult; we will do our best to help you.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Learning social and physical boundaries is one of the core goals of an early childhood education program. Guiding children to successful relationships with peers is as much a part of the expected curriculum as



writing one's name or counting out the snacks 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, they may turn to the caregiver 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.

Please do not contact another family directly over an incident with another child at school. Always speak to the head teacher first and let them respond to the situation. If you have further concerns, you may speak to the Director as well.

### **HEALTH AND MEDICAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION**

Your child must have a completed medical form, from the last 12 months, showing up-to-date immunizations to be enrolled in the school. Information on required vaccines can be found on the NYC DOHMH website accessible [here](#); this includes the annual flu shot. In addition, children cannot be allowed to stay at school without fully completed Emergency and Medical Release forms.

Spuyten Duyvil follows the recommendations and guidelines from the NY State and NYC DOHMH with regard to COVID-19. If a child is fever and symptom free, they may return to school after 5 days from a positive test and/or onset of symptoms.

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 caregivers, 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.

Caregivers are required to notify the school if your child develops a contagious condition. The school will inform the rest of the families without naming the affected 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.* The following are examples of contagious conditions that are experienced in the school:

- Chicken Pox: child must stay home until scabs have fallen off.
- Undiagnosed diarrhea, rashes (e.g. ringworms) child must stay home until situation resolves
- Red/oozing eyes (conjunctivitis “pink eye”): child must stay home until medicated for 24 hours.
- Intestinal parasites (e.g. pinworms): child may not return until the medication has taken effect.
- 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 medication is finished.





- Lice: we ask that the child stays at home until hair is clear of nits. Families must use specialized shampoo to treat the condition and take necessary precautions with washing bed linens at home.
- COVID-19 following current DOHMH guidelines

As required by NYC DOHMH regulations, many staff members have been trained in CPR and First Aid, and 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, they should not be in school. The school is supplied with an Epi-Pen for emergency use. If an Epi-Pen must be administered, 911 will be called after dosing and caregivers will be notified.

Be sure that you inform the Director if your child has any other chronic condition (such as asthma or allergies) that may need attention. If that condition requires any prescription medication to be given at school, or even kept on hand (e.g., nebulizer, Epi-pen, insulin) we will give you forms for you and your child's doctor to complete. Prescription meds can be administered with written caregiver/doctor documentation only. All requests must go through the Director, as we are legally required to keep a log of medications. Only staff with MAT certification may legally administer medications.

If your child is injured during the day, you will be notified either by phone, Bloomz or when you pick up your child. If they are running a fever or otherwise not able to participate due to a persistent medical situation, you will be called to pick them up. In an emergency (or if we do not have accurate emergency contact information) we will call 911 for immediate medical attention.

Air quality and other public health issues – The DOHMH and/or DOE will notify the school with a set of guidelines in response to major public health issues; the directives and information will evolve. The Director will communicate to families via email with information about how the school is responding to the issue. For example, in unhealthy air quality conditions, the children stay indoors during school and aftercare hours. Air purifiers, which are located in every room, are turned to high, windows are closed, and air conditioning is set on low. All inner doors are kept closed, and families are given instruction on where to pick up children in order to minimize exposure.

### **MANDATED REPORTERS**

All Spuyten Duyvil staff are Mandated Reporters of child abuse and neglect, as required by NY State law. If any staff member has sufficient cause for concern about a child, they are legally required to report it. It is a felony for a staff member to not file a report when there is adequate concern. Staff are required by law to take the Mandated Reporter Training every 2 years. This training covers a wide range of topics such as recognizing normal versus suspicious bruising, concerning behaviors, and the difference between criminal neglect and issues caused by poverty.

Repeated absences without communication or documentation can be a cause of concern. If you are struggling with attendance, there are organizations that can help with transit costs and other needs.

If there is a pattern of behavior or physical marks on a child, all staff is required to file a report. This is not a personal judgement on any family; it is the law. If your child had an accident, or there is any notable situation at home, please speak to your teacher and/or Director. If your child has a bruise from home,



please point that out to your teacher at drop-off so it can be noted. All conversations are held in confidence.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

As part of the initial registration, all families sign 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 twos, holding hands with a partner. Additional caregiver chaperones may be invited on these outings to ensure adequate supervision. Siblings are not allowed to join these field trips. 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. 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 is worth the cost and time, you would always be informed well in advance with a separate permission slip.

### **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 to provide are cupcakes or cake, and juice if you want. We have children with food allergies and other dietary restrictions; speak with your teachers about appropriate birthday snacks to share beforehand. **Please do not bring goody bags, 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.

Let your teacher know a few days in advance if you plan on sending in a special birthday snack. Whether you do or not, unless you specifically say no, your child's class will note the special day as part of regular class meeting.

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, and we prefer that children not bring Valentine cards to the school. We encourage children to share good wishes with their friends, but cards should be exchanged outside of school, and any party invitations should be distributed outside of the school. Do not ask the teachers to give out invitations to children in the class. Everyone will receive a School Directory so you can contact classmates directly.

### **SCHOOL EVENTS AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

Families are provided with a school calendar at the beginning of the school year, and it can also be found on the [school website](#). The Director will communicate with families via email about any changes to the school calendar; specific dates and details of the events below are emailed to families in advance. You also



received a commitment letter via email along with the registration materials. Please reference this letter for information about school events and the significance of participating in our vibrant community.

Before the official start of the school year, we hold a 3K and Pre-K Meet N' Greet so that families can get to know each other and the space.

Classroom Orientation – Children do not attend a full day during the first two days of school. Instead, they attend for 1-1.5 hours each day to facilitate a supportive orientation and to begin establishing classroom routines. During the first two days, each class is divided into two groups so that children attend with a small group. Before school begins, families will receive information about their schedules for the first two orientation days. There is no early drop off or aftercare on the first two days of school.

The regular full day schedule begins on the 3rd day of school. Early drop off and Aftercare that your child has been contracted for also begins on the 3rd day.

Early in the school year, caregivers are brought together for an evening Back-to-School Curriculum Nite. Teachers introduce themselves to caregivers, staff review the policies of the school and discuss the curriculum and philosophy. Teachers and the Director answer questions regarding guidance strategies, problems, etc. The intent of the meeting is to meet each other and further encourage social connections between families and a trusting working relationship between teachers and caregivers.

We intentionally hold the Back-to-School Nite in mid-September because it allows us to build a classroom rhythm and get to know your child. With this information, we can have a more robust conversation and address family specific questions and concerns

Garden Area Volunteers – As everyone notices on their very first visit to our school, we are fortunate to have so much outdoor space for the children to use as an extended classroom. In addition to the backyard playground and sandbox space, the front yard has a peaceful side area Looking Garden, a large porch with planters, and a beautiful, large farm area. The children interact with the garden areas weekly and exploration of the natural environment is an important part of our philosophy and curriculum, but it does demand a good amount of adult support. **Weeders and/or planters are always needed.** No experience is necessary, just an hour or so of free time. Caregivers are welcome to volunteer in the garden after drop-off or come early before pick-up to help us maintain the beautiful outdoor space. No need to plan in advance; just let the Director or Nature Educator know.

On a Saturday in mid-October, we schedule Fall Family Garden Day. Families bring potluck dishes, choose volunteer tasks to help our outdoor spaces transition from summer to fall, and children play in the back playground. Along with being a nice fundraiser (yummy lunch foods and bake sale), Fall Family Garden Day reflects the community nature of our school.

At Spuyten Duyvil we do not celebrate 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. The day before the Thanksgiving break is our in-class Share Luncheon (Pre-K only). All Pre-K children come together in one of the classrooms to “break bread” together. Each child donates a dish made with a family member at home,



and the teachers decorate the tables and serve the kids while the children share their foods as a group (this is not a caregiver attendance event).

So many cultures have special holidays of light in December. Without designating any particular holy day, Potluck Class Family Breakfasts are held in each class during a morning in December. This is an informal event where caregivers bring a dish to share and drop-in to meet each other and spend a little time with their child in their classroom.

In November-December and April-May the teachers schedule combination Zoom/in person family conferences to discuss the children's adjustment to school and progress in the year. Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed throughout the year. Children are encouraged to attend these conferences with their caregivers.

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 caregivers work together on the school grounds to prepare the garden and schoolyard for the warm weather ahead. This is an outdoor event so a rain date is also set. Children climb and play, caregivers work, everyone eats - a perfect Sunday in April!

The children produce a great variety of artwork in a range of media throughout the year. This work is presented to families at Mini-Mall held in late May or June in a crafts fair type setting. Families are invited to purchase hand-made items also made by the children.

The end-of-year celebration (Stepping Up) ceremony is a simple event to provide closure for the year on the very last day of the school year. Each class sings 2-3 songs, photos from the year are presented, and children are given a portfolio of their work. A small snack is provided.

### **SPUYTEN DUYVIL PRESCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

We encourage caregivers to join our volunteer board. This is an opportunity to actively participate in the inner workings of your child's school and contribute to shaping its future. The board holds four to five meetings each year. The dates of meetings will be announced by the Director in the monthly newsletters, and all are welcome to participate.

To become a voting board member you must attend two consecutive meetings. For officer positions, we hold elections every fall when there are vacant positions or when board terms are coming to an end. If you are interested in joining the board or a meeting, or want to learn more about what's involved, please let the Director know or contact the board directly at [board.sdpreschool@gmail.com](mailto:board.sdpreschool@gmail.com)

### **COMMUNICATION**

The majority of communication from the Director and/or teachers comes through email or Bloomz so be sure you register at the beginning of the year and have updated email addresses on file. We may also call your on-file caregiver phone numbers. Please make sure that you are accessible via email, app, and phone in the event of any emergent communication scenarios.



There are monthly School Newsletters from the Director to keep you informed about upcoming school events and topics of interest to families, such as events for children in the city, articles on child development, information on kindergarten transitions, and more.

Teachers send home weekly class updates and photos to give you a picture of how your child has spent the previous few days in school, and give class updates. That communication system is set up during the first few weeks of school. There is not a daily report, as some families may be used to from daycare.

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 caregivers or other family members, etc. can affect your child and those feelings will show themselves at school. The more the teachers know about 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.

Open-door policy: Teachers and the Director will make time to meet with any caregiver as needed during the school year. Families simply need to reach out. 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; Bloomz is used regularly though for getting in touch with families during the school day. Those messages should be left on the office phone.

Aftercare staff should not be reporting on a child's behavior day-to-day unless specifically planned with the classroom teacher or Director. Classroom teachers cannot have detailed discussion with caregivers at drop-off either. We call these "drive by conversations" and they do not do justice to the attention we all want to give to your concerns. At the same time, please do not hesitate to contact the Director or classroom teacher on any topic, concern, or question.

Each family will also be sent 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. Families are able to opt out of being included in the School Directory. That would have been indicated in the Permission Form completed at enrollment.

### **ACCESSIBILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

Spuyten Duyvil is open to all children that are eligible by age. Children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or other physical or health needs are welcome as long as we have the facilities to safely accommodate those needs. Our building is old and therefore not 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 caregivers, 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, the Director, and caregivers.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER**

During serious weather conditions, we will follow the decisions made by the NYC DOE concerning school closings. If an unusual condition exists, staff and caregivers will call or email each family and notify you of how to proceed. *Following the policies of the NYC DOE, if/when the DOE calls a snow day, students will attend class remotely and you will be notified in advance how to connect with your class for this.*

**FUNDRAISING**

As a not-for-profit, Spuyten Duyvil is always looking for discretionary funding. Our funding comes primarily from the NYC DOE for 3K and Pre-K. Those monies mostly cover salary and mandated expenses such as insurance. Our program is known for unique and wide ranging enrichment activities, but covering those costs depends on the strength of our private programming, which is supported by small local grants and the generosity of our current and alumni families.

Fall Garden Day and Mini-Mall bring in some funds, but that is not the primary goal of these events. We do not impose on our families often for donations; our one big fundraising activity is the Double Good Popcorn Sale during November. Information about this fundraising opportunity will be provided as the event approaches.

Have an idea for an event, fundraiser, or caregiver/family workshop? Email the Director or Board of Directors if there are activities or events that you would like to help organize.

Spuyten Duyvil is a 501(c)(3) organization so donations made to the school are tax deductible. Please keep us in mind at the end of the year when you are making your annual gifts. We accept donations anytime by check or Zeffy. We will provide the appropriate tax deduction verification letter.

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

Wishing everyone a happy and productive school year.