**Wildflowers Preschool
4520 SE Center St, Portland OR 97206
503-774-1207**

**http://www.wildflowerspreschool.com**

 **Wildflowers 2023/2024 Community Handbook**

**About Wildflowers**

Wildflowers Preschool is a home based preschool in SE Portland.  Heidi Donahue, M.S. in Environmental Ed, established Wildflowers in 2006 and has been the director and lead teacher of Wildflowers ever since.  With 20+ years of experience in education, Heidi has been able to incorporate her strong passion toward environmental education into the curriculum.  She feels alive when around young children and has a passion to teach children about the natural world. Holly Graf, AAS in Early Childhood Education, has been teaching at Wildflowers since 2012. Holly brings her creativity and love of projects into her work with children. She is passionate about a whole-child approach and social justice learning, and loves to share with families the serious work of learning to play and playing to learn.

At Wildflowers Preschool we believe that learning how to interact with other children and adults is one of the most important parts of early childhood learning.  We teach the children to respect each other and treat one another with compassion. We welcome children of all abilities and honor diversities, and continually look for ways to grow in this area both personally and as a community.  Our main goal is to provide a safe, respectful, and loving environment where children look forward to spending time and where they can grow to be caring members of a community.

Wildflowers Preschool's teaching philosophy is a unique mix of Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Environmental Education. All three approaches to early childhood education give children some control over the direction of their learning and highlight the importance of using all senses to learn and honor the endless range of ways children express their thoughts and feelings. We provide an environment where children feel important and part of a community working together to meet the needs of each child. Our days include circle times, literacy lessons, music and movement, science experiences, art activities and lots of exploration of the natural world. We believe that children learn best when they are allowed to follow their natural curiosities about the world.  It is not our intent to push children in a rigorous academic program, but to use their natural creativity to learn as they participate in rich activities and observations about the environment around them.

**Enrollment Process**To enroll your child in Wildflowers Preschool, you will need to fill out the *contract* and *application form*.  You must have taken a private tour or attended an open house before you can submit the enrolment forms.  The forms are found at www.wildflowerspreschool.com.  Official enrollment opens up in January for the following fall session. You will also need to submit a non-refundable enrollment fee. The initial enrollment fee is $250.  For subsequent years, the enrollment fee will be $200 due with renewal contracts in the spring.

**Pre-enrollment and Wait-list**Prior to enrollment opening up for the fall session, families are encouraged to fill out a pre-enrollment form.  Families with these forms submitted will be invited to an open house in January which signifies the start of fall enrollment.  These families will also be given priority as we do enrollment on a first come first serve basis (as well as taking into consideration desired schedule).  If you have a pre-enrollment form submitted, then you attend the open house/tour and you are welcome to enroll.  If there are no current openings, your child/ren will be placed on our wait list until a spot opens or the end date listed on the form has passed.  Wait list forms can be downloaded from our website.

**Rate Schedule and Payment Information**

Full Day (8:30-4:30)

1600.00\_\_ per month (5 days a week)
 1350.00\_\_\_ per month (4 days a week)

Drop in care may be available for current families at a rate of 70.00 per full day and 50.00 per half day (8:30-12:30). This is dependent on student to teacher ratio and availability.  Payments for drop in days can be made with the regular bill if they are scheduled in advance.  If they are scheduled after that month’s bill was due, then payment should be brought in on the day of the drop in.

Monthly payments are due by the 25th of the month prior to care.  Example: Care for March will be due by February 25th.  If payments are not received **BEFORE** March 1st then a 30.00 late fee is applied.  Checks will not be deposited until the 1st.  Monthly receipts will be provided for all payments.  If needed, year-end reports for taxes can be provided. Payments may be made in full at the start of the contract year if preferred.  As of now, we do not have a system in place for online payments, but multiple checks may be submitted and post-dated if that is helpful for your family.

**Daily Schedule**

8:30 AM Outdoor Drop Off

9:30 AM Morning Circle Time

10:00 AM Indoor Play and Morning Snack

11:00 AM Outside Time

12:00 PM Lunch and Story Time

1:00 PM Nap/Rest time

2:00PM Quiet Activities

3:00 PM Outside Play and Afternoon Snack

\* Our schedule is open to shift with the seasons and needs of our group of kids.

***Drop off and Pick up Procedures***

Drop off: School officially opens at 8:30. If you arrive early, you are welcome to wait on the front porch. At 8:30, please bring your child and their backpack/lunch to the backyard and sign them in. Afternoon play shifts indoors as the weather turns colder, but drop off and pick up typically stay outdoors. Teachers are available for a quick chat, but keep in mind we are also helping children transition into their day at this time.

Pick up: As it is also a family home, school is closed promptly at 4:30. We would prefer you to arrive a few minutes early in order to give your child a chance to transition out of their play and teachers a chance to check in with you about their day, but we can find other ways to check in if your schedule is tight. At a minimum, we need you to sign your child out and make quick contact with a teacher before picking up your child so we know they are safely in your care. Backpacks and lunchboxes will be out on the steps or the back porch, depending on weather. If you pick up your child late (any time after 4:30) you will be charged a flat rate of 30.00.

Late drop offs and early pickups are part of life, we understand- just please let us know what time to expect you (texting works great). Please try to keep your typical arrival time before 9am so your child gets a chance to settle into the day’s schedule and doesn’t miss out on group activities. If you have a choice between scheduling morning or afternoon appointments, it is easier

**Snacks and Lunch**

Children bring their own snacks and lunches from home. Meals are a fun way for the kids to share a bit of their own individual home cultures, and we love to share lunch ideas with our community as the year goes on!

Healthy eating is important, especially for growing children. Please follow these guidelines as you prepare food for your children:

Pack a lunch that meets nutritious and food safety standards including the following:

* Make sure there is enough food for two snacks and a lunch
* Please limit sugar and treats, avoid chocolate bars or cookies
* Prepare foods to prevent choking hazards (Visit <http://choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/food-safety/choking-hazards.html> for more information.  Grapes need to be cut in half and hot dogs cut lengthwise!)
* Include an ice pack
* Please pack warm items in a thermos as we do not heat items at school
* Water bottles will be provided as usual, no need to pack a drink. Organic milk will be offered at lunch time as this is a state requirement.

**Clothing**

Send your child in seasonally appropriate clothing and shoes that allow for the greatest level of independence possible. Ideally, clothing should be fairly easy for your child to get on and off (including shoes). Please do not send kids in anything that you would mind them getting dirty.  We explore with all sorts of art media and do so much outdoor play that stains are inevitable!

We ask that you bring at least 2 extra full sets of clothing each day to school, and an extra pair of shoes. This can stay in your child’s cubby or their backpack. We will put wet or dirty clothes in a plastic bag in their backpacks to take home and replace, and let you know verbally. In the winter, kids need to have rain boots and a raincoat each day as we value our outside time and make sure to get out even in the wettest time of the year!  Rain pants, and reusable wet bags are a bonus to have at school as well during the wet season. Umbrellas can be fun, but they tend to limit children’s play and often get broken.

We know that children this age are experiencing and asserting independence in all sorts of ways, and often this affects what they will wear to school. No problem! Just send whatever they might need that day in their backpack, as they may change their minds once they’re here.

At Wildflowers, we believe in children’s autonomy and the value of experiencing natural consequences (ie: they don’t wear a coat and they feel cold). This means we might suggest they wear something, but won’t require them to unless it presents a health and safety risk. This is also an area that we recognize many families have different approaches and strong feelings around. Please reach out to us if you have strong preferences and we will try to accommodate them, but at the end of the day, we teach children that they are in control of their own bodies and choices. (One exception here is that we don’t allow nudity in school.)

**Eco-healthy School**

As a certified eco-healthy preschool, we agree to a certain set of conditions that aim at being environmentally friendly.  Two of these conditions apply directly to parents: **cars should not remain idling at pick up or drop off and shoes will not be worn in the school.**  For more details on eco-healthy schools, please visit http://www.ecohealthychildcare.org.

**School Closures**

*Planned:* At the start of every school year, a school calendar will be emailed out to all families under contract. This calendar will have planned school holidays, closures and conferences.

*Unexpected:* If for any reason Wildflowers Preschool will not be able to stay open on a particular day, families will be notified as soon as possible.  Unexpected closures would be for only extreme situations out of the school's control such as extreme weather or staffing shortages.  Snow days would fall into this category—please note if Portland Public Schools closes the district due to inclement weather, then Wildflowers Preschool will be closed as well.

**Field Trip Policies**

Throughout the year we take the opportunity to connect to our local community and reinforce themes discussed by taking scheduled field trips.  Parents are strongly encouraged to join us on our trips, and occasionally are necessary to fill transportation needs.  There is occasionally a small fee to cover the cost of the trip.  Permission slips will be posted by the sign in sheet the week of the trip.  Both permission slips and the fee need to be addressed prior to the date of the field trip.  (edit: We have sadly been taking a hiatus from field trips during covid)

**Positive Behavior Support**At Wildflowers Preschool, we believe in positive discipline for children rather than punishment. We try to recognize children when they are behaving well.  For example: “I see Keenan is ready for story time” or “I noticed you were being a really great friend to Amelia when you helped her find her lost doll”.  Getting positive attention and specific feedback for desired behaviors gives the children motivation to model these behaviors and hopefully, as an end result, to feel internal satisfaction from making good choices.

We practice a conflict mediation approach that honors the feelings of both children involved and seeks to mend the relationship. We will never shame children or force them to apologize, but instead seek to nourish developing empathy and practice appropriate ways to express feelings and needs.

All feelings are welcome at school, and we respect that as whole persons, children have a full range. We teach grounding and breathing strategies to help children regain equilibrium when they feel out of control, and “taking some space” is always an option, but we do not use “time outs”.

We work in partnership with families in the case of ongoing behavior struggles, as these often translate to home as well, and we can support them (and each other) best when we are working as a team. This often looks like chatting at pickup or scheduling a time to meet in person or virtually to share information and make a game plan together.

**Communication between Provider and Parents/Guardians***Phone Calls and Texts:* It is extremely important that we are able to reach you at all times. If you will be away from your office or home, make sure we have a cell number where we can reach you.  We will attempt first contact, then move down the list until we are able to make contact. Please let us know if you strongly prefer calls or texts. If you attempt to contact us during the school day, we may not be able to answer as we are busy with the children.  We are able to respond to texts during the day quicker than phone calls.  We will get back to you as soon as we can but ask that you respect that our focus is on the children. We have found it very helpful if you text both Heidi and Holly at the same time, as one of them may be out or busy, and it keeps both teachers “in the loop”.

Heidi (503) 774-1207

Holly (503) 975-4948

*Wildflowers Families Facebook Group:* To share a window into your child’s day with you, we post to our private Wildflowers Families Facebook page most days. This is a closed group where we share pictures and quotes from the day, as well as information and ideas. Families are also welcome to post on this page, but we ask that they keep content relevant and appropriate to our community. For pictures, we only post those with signed consent forms saying it is okay to take pictures.  We ask that you keep the pictures we post private and do not repost on your Facebook page or tag children without permission from the other children’s parents. Extended family members and close friends are welcome to join this group, but please let us know who they are, as we only approve parents/guardians and those with their consent. Please do not add people to this group yourselves.

*Email Lists*: Another significant source of communication is in our school wide emails.  Information offered in these emails include upcoming field trips, need for volunteers, show and tell themes, and other upcoming events.  Please make sure you have a current email address in your contract and let us know if your primary email changes so we can update the list.  You can contact us at wildflowerspreschool@hotmail.com. Email is the best contact method for non-time sensitive or longer/more detailed questions.

*Remind.com*: This is a group texting service that allows teachers to send text reminders for things such as field trips, weather closures, or tuition reminders.  It’s a great way for teachers to get information to families that may be needed the same day.

*C****o****mmunity Board:* On the front porch, you’ll find our community board by the sign-in sheet, artwork folders, and lost and found. We use the community board to post our most recent newsletters, parenting articles we have found interesting/helpful, fun ideas, community events, and sign up sheets, among other things.

*Monthly Newsletter:* Our monthly newsletter will have announcements and upcoming date reminders, as well as fun ideas for family activities and community events, but the main purpose of the newsletter is to share with you what we have been learning and doing at school. You can expect updates on current projects, photos and anecdotes from our days, and highlighted accomplishments and experiences. We are inspired by the Reggio Emilia practice of documenting children’s play in a way that shares the significance of the learning happening, and this is our guiding goal for the newsletter.

*Parent/Teacher Meetings:* We do encourage families to communicate current children’s interests at home as well as any learning and development progress observed. We also want families to feel comfortable sharing any questions or concerns they have regarding their child. Drop off and pick up are both excellent times for a quick chat, and we are available and happy to schedule a time to sit down for a more focused, uninterrupted talk (in person or online) when needed.  We will hold two conferences each school year to discuss student progress and goals, one in the fall and one in the spring.  We will make sure to connect families with any community resources that may be of interest or of necessity.  We want to make sure all families feel included and we can access translation services when necessary.

*Parent Involvement:* We have an open door policy and invite you to stop by anytime to visit. We also encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom, whether to share something of yourselves with our community (talent, interest, occupation, experience, etc) or simply to spend some time playing and learning with us.  We love the home-school connection as well as the home culture sharing that this brings with it, and will occasionally solicit parent involvement throughout the year. If you have something specific you would like to share with us, please let us know!

*Parent Advisory Meetings*: We also have the opportunity for families to join our Parent Advisory Meetings. We meet a few times a year to discuss program policies and to gather input from families to make changes for the continued improvement of our program.  These meetings also offer parents a great networking opportunity to develop relationships and foster outside of school relationships for their children.  For families that are not able to attend the meetings, we will send the agenda prior to the meeting for added agenda topics and by sending the meeting notes post meeting.

**Wellness Policy**
Whenever your child has experienced any of the following symptoms **within the previous 24-36 hours**, you will be expected to make other child care arrangements for the comfort and wellbeing of the other children at school as well as for your child:

* Fever-defined as being at or above 99 under the arm, 100 oral or 100.4 for rectal, ear or temporal. Children with a fever may not return to school until they have been fever free (without fever medication) for a full 24-hour period.
* Diarrhea- If your child has more than 1 watery stool (even without any other signs of illness) close together
* Vomiting
* Complaints of severe pain
* Sore throat with swollen glands in the neck
* Difficulty breathing or abnormal wheezing
* Pronounced or persistent coughing (a good rule of thumb when deciding on this is if your child is coughing 3 or more times in a 20 min period)
* Lethargy-assess if whether your child has energy to take part in our regular school day activities, if not it is best to keep them home
* A contagious condition of any kind, including but not limited to:  infectious rash, flu, strep, respiratory infection, conjunctivitis (pink eye), chicken pox, measles, thrush, hepatitis, mumps, lice, fifths disease, etc.  (In the case of lice, the child must be free of all nits as well as any live lice)
* Any kind of undiagnosed rash

NOTE:  If your child will not be coming for the day, please try to notify us in the morning.

If your child has a communicable disease, we are required to post this for the community so please make sure to inform us as soon as you know of the disease, even if your child isn’t in school on the day they present symptoms.

**Medication**
The parent must sign a medical consent form before we are permitted to administer prescription or non-prescription medications to your child. This is in accordance with state regulations. The parent/guardian is required to provide written authorization with instructions for administering the medication; the medication in the original container clearly labeled with the child's name and drug name, dosage and time(s) to be given. The "Administration of Medication" form will need to be completed prior to administration.

**Accident Reports and Emergencies**
If a child is injured while at school, we will provide a detailed report. The parent will be required to sign the report. We will keep the signed copy in the parent or guardian child’s file.
If your child is injured we will provide First Aid treatment. All staff are first aid and CPR certified. In the case of an emergency requiring medical or dental attention, the child's parents will be notified immediately. If we are unable to contact a parent, your alternative contact person and/or family physician will be called. In the case of emergency transport, we will call an ambulance, which will bring your child to the nearest emergency facility where you or another guardian will meet the child. Any expenses incurred in this situation will be the parent/guardian's responsibility.

**Birthdays**

At Wildflowers, we celebrate children’s birthdays with a few special rituals.  First, we invite the birthday child to hold a small earth in their hands while walking around the “sun” and having a special song sung to them. We then ask parents to share the story of the day their child was born-it’s always fun to include photos or clothes from when your child was a baby.  Finally, we make mini cupcakes at school to share, treats from home are ok too as long as you check in regarding dietary restrictions prior to bringing. We welcome any family members or special people you would like to bring to celebrate with us!

**Evacuation Protocol**

In the case of an extreme emergency that would require us to evacuate school, we will take the children to Creston Elementary School located at 4701 SE Bush St, Portland Or 97206.  We would either plan to have the children inside the school or on the grounds behind (north) the school in the open field (depending on the place we determine to be the safest).

If there is a large scale disaster that backs up cell phone communication, we will be calling outside the state to a phone number that parents can then call for information.  The phone number belongs to Janet Evans (Heidi’s mom): 715-210-6699.

**Safety**Wildflowers Preschool is a certified family childcare and we have high standards of safety and health for all children. The following is a list of specific standards that we uphold:

1. Smoke alarms are located in each room of the home and are tested once per month.            There are fire extinguishers located on all levels of the home.
2. All poisons and medicines are kept out of the reach of children.
3. First aid kit is kept in the home.
4. The outside play area is fenced in and free of any garbage, poisons, or other hazards.
5. Emergency numbers (police, fire, poison control, 911) along with all parent numbers will be clearly posted on each school phone.
6. We will only release your child to you or someone else you designate on your registration form. If someone else is to pick up your child, please notify us ahead of time. We will not let a child leave without a parent’s verbal permission even if that person is listed as one of your designated pickup people. If the person is NOT on that list, we MUST have written permission to release your child. Photo identification is required of all emergency contacts/people designated to pick up your child if we do not know them.

**Changes in Vital Information**
To ensure the safety of the child(ren), any changes in address, telephone numbers (home, work, and out-of-state contact) should be given to the provider, in writing, and as soon as possible by the parent or guardian. To ensure all names and telephone numbers on the parents’ child’s emergency forms are kept current, all updates of information must be provided in writing no later than seven days following the change.

**Accommodations**

Wildflowers Preschool welcomes children of all abilities and diversities.  If your child has a special need, we will do everything we can to accommodate them.  We are more than willing to make exceptions for special health needs whether they are temporary or ongoing.  We will work with both your family and health care (or related service) professionals to help meet the specific needs of your child.

After enrollment, parents will be asked to fill out an approved screening for early learners called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire.  While this screening is optional, it will allow us to identify any children that may need specialized assessment.  If the screenings indicate the need for specialized assessment, we will inform families and refer them to the appropriate professionals.

**Certified Center**Wildflowers Preschool is a certified family daycare, which means it meets a number of qualifications set by the state.  If you would like to see the rules for certified homes, feel free to inquire and we can provide a copy to you.  Also, if you have any official complaints they can be filed with the Child Care Division.  The phone number to call to report a complaint is 503-731-3386.

**Covid-19 Considerations**Wildflowers Preschool follows all requirements of the CDC and ELD (Early Learning Division), including covid-19 protocols. As of now (Winter 2022), they require that all adults and children over 5 be masked inside unless eating. We will also support family preferences whenever possible. We have installed weatherproofing and heaters on the back porch to extend an outdoor eating option for families who prefer to have their child masked inside for as long as possible in the year, but we do eat inside when it is physically uncomfortable to be out. We have also put in 2 HEPA air filtration machines in addition to running the central air constantly and changing filters monthly with covid-effective grade filters. We have high ceilings and many windows, which give us a lot of physical space and fresh air inside. Any other covid-specific protocols, including wellness policies, tend to be ever changing and we will stay in communication with you as they shift. As of now (Winter 2022), all community members that are eligible are vaccinated.

**Note from Teachers**

We welcome you to our community and are excited to have your child and family join our Wildflowers crew!  We love getting to know our new children and discovering all the wonderful parts of their personalities that make them unique.  We hope to become partners with you in a positive influence on the growth and development of your child.  Please always feel free to let us know your thoughts about how school is going for your child.  As they say “It takes a village to raise a child” …. so, welcome to our village!