

WELCOME TO THE

 **Star**

Class



**2010-2011 School Year
Classroom Handbook**

Teaching Philosophy:

It is my goal that the Star Class becomes a place where children learn to love school and are excited about coming each day. I believe that children learn best through play, so it is my job to create an environment where children can feel open to play and interact with their peers. Being hands on with materials in the classroom and interacting with other children is the best and often the most enjoyable way to learn. Teaching your child is not something that I feel Teacher Jaylene and I can do alone, it is important for us to work together as a community to help children get the most out of their experiences. It is my hope that we can work together to help your child get the most out of school by becoming a community within our class. In order to do that, we need to build relationships with our families, and hope that they build relationships with each other.

From Teacher Jo...

I am excited to be working with Teacher Jaylene this year, and we will work together to make this year a great experience for you and your children. I enjoy working with children and can't wait to get started. Watching them learn and grow during the course of the year is why I decided to start a career in teaching.

My father was in the military and I spent most of my childhood traveling the world as he was assigned to different duty posts. After my husband, Matt, and I were married we moved to Vancouver and settled down over ten years ago. I think that it is important for us to get to know the area where we live and a little about the world around us. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to share what I know with them and learn from you and your child in the coming year.

I have been working at Little Acorn for over four years but I was also a parent at Little Acorn for five years. My daughter Mardee will be in the 4th grade this year. She started at Little Acorn when she was three years old and still loves to visit whenever she can. My son, Brandon recently graduated from the Little Acorn Kindergarten class and is now a 2nd grader.

I currently hold a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and am almost finished earning my Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education from Clark College.

When I am not working, I enjoy scrapbooking, playing games, spending time with my family, and taking my children to Starbucks.

I am looking forward to wonderful year! If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns during the course of the year feel free to contact me. I can be reached via e-mail at Joanna@threepaw.com or you can call me at (360) 771-1833.

From Teacher Jaylene....

My name is Jaylene Wecks and I'm so excited to be working in the Star Class this year! I've been at Little Acorn for the past six years as a parent and substitute classroom assistant. I'm so pleased to become part of the staff and get to know your children this year.

I grew up 60 miles north of Seattle, moving to Newberg, OR, to finish college at George Fox in 1994. My best friend, Erik, and I were married in 1995. After graduating, we moved to Chicago, IL and Ithaca, NY before moving home to Vancouver in 2001.

Erik and I have been married 15 years and have 3 beautiful girls, Lily (11), Nora (8) and Anni (3 1/2). As a family, we love to play games, go camping, swimming, and work on our garden together.

Daily Schedule

The following is a schedule of our day. Even though we have attached time brackets to the activities, we will follow the lead of the children. If the circle time is going strong, and the kids want another song, that's what we'll do. We also have time scheduled for bathroom breaks, hand washing time and clean-up.

9:00 AM - 9:15AM	Welcome & Table Time Activities
9:15 AM - 9:30AM	Circle Time: Introduce Activities, Calendar, Weather and Songs
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Free play/Art Activities
10:30 AM - 10:50 AM	Snack Time/Reading Time (Silent and Teacher Lead)
10:50 AM - 11:15 AM	Outside Play
11:15 AM - 11:30 AM	Large Motor Activities
11:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Word Wall/Closing Circle

Sign In- Sign Out

There is a sign-in and sign-out sheet just outside of our door. Please sign your children in when you drop them off, and sign them out when you pick them up each day. We will only allow the people whom you have authorized to pick up your child. If someone other than the people you have listed will be picking up your child, please let us know in writing and have them bring a photo ID. We strive to keep your children as safe as possible, and this is just one way that we do that.

Our day starts at 9:00 am and we get rolling with activities right away. We ask you to please do your best to be on time to class so your child doesn't miss out on any of our activities. We will provide lots of fun opportunities for you to come and spend time in our classroom but drop off time is not the best time for that. We highly encourage you to converse with other parents in the hallway and get to know one another but for your child's most successful adjustment, please say your goodbyes at the door and confidently release your children to their classroom. At pick-up time we will open the door when class is over and release your children to you one at a time by calling their name.

Late Charge

The morning class starts at 9:00AM and ends at 11:45AM. Our pre-school asks that you please be on time when you pick up your child. As the end of their day approaches, there is anticipation among the kids to see their parents. If you are late picking up your children, and everyone else's parents have already come and gone, they feel disappointed and start worrying about you. If you know you are running late, please call Maria to let her know, so we can let your child know you are on your way!

Little Acorn has a five-minute grace period, and then there is a late fee of \$1 per minute you are late. This needs to be paid before your child attends his next class time (checks can be made out to Little Acorn Pre-School). After the 5-minute grace period, check the classroom for your child then, check in Maria's office.

Backpacks

What child doesn't love to carry a backpack to school with them? Please have your child bring in a backpack each day with extra underwear (for children who use the toilet) or diapers (for those who may need them). An extra set of clothes should also be sent in the backpack, because accidents do happen. As you well know, at this age, there are many times when the kids get too busy playing and forget to use the restroom. There may also be situations when the kids will get wet from playing in the sensory table or from juice spills at snack time.

Please make sure that you **write your child's name on everything that you send to school** with them (i.e. backpacks, coats, and other clothing). Coats and backpacks may be hung just outside our classroom's door. At the end of each day, your child may take his or her backpack home- as well as the contents of their cubbies! This will give you the opportunity to refill diapers, and to choose "extra" clothes suitable for the weather! Just make sure that the bag is sent back to school with your child each day!

Cubby Cans

Your child will have their own "Cubby Can" in the hall just outside the door. Please check these each day for newsletters, parent handouts and your child's artwork. I like to put a photo of each child along with their name their cans. Please bring a photo of your child for their can. This helps with name recognition and is very cute, too.

Emergent Curriculum

Here at Little Acorn we use an "emergent" curriculum. This means we take the lead from the children when choosing what to learn about. I have found that children learn and get excited about learning when they can relate it to their own world and when it is something they've have already demonstrated an interest in. I want to help your children explore and grow in their interests and learn to value the interests of others. I also believe that a child's "work" is their play. They learn by doing, touching, tasting, smelling, listening, and seeing. Our environment and our curriculum should create curiosity that sparks natural interest and excitement for learning.

Every child in the Star Class is at a different stage in their interest and development regarding academics. I understand that for some of you, academics are of no importance at this age and others of you are very concerned about the things they are learning. We are flexible. We don't ever force academic learning because children at this age are often not ready. The things they are learning through their play are extremely valuable and we will do our best to facilitate that as well as provide academic learning opportunities that they may participate in if interested. They will have opportunities to grow through art projects, science projects, games, songs, classroom jobs, cooking projects, field trips and through classroom adventures. They will learn things like letters, numbers, shapes, etc... when they are ready to. However, if there is something specific you are concerned with, please let us know and we'll be happy to look for opportunities to encourage that for your child. For example, one year we had a parent who was very concerned about her child's ability to use

scissors. So we looked for opportunities to encourage the child to participate in cutting activities whenever possible.

Outside Playtime

Fresh air is a key ingredient in growing! The Star class will be going outside to the playground in all but very unseasonable weather. If it looks like it may be cool during the day, please send a warm jacket and gloves/mittens. In the winter season, **please** don't forget those mittens and even a hat. We do go outside even if it is cold. There is a playroom inside for when the weather forces us to stay inside (since we are in Washington!).

Bike Helmets

On the playground there are tricycles and scooters available for your child to ride. If this is something that interests him or her, please bring a helmet to school. It can be left here for the school year, kept in a back pack or brought daily. Please be sure that it is properly fitted and labeled with their name. In accordance with City of Vancouver law, children will only be allowed to ride the tricycles and scooters with a helmet.

Art

During art sessions, we encourage the kids to be individuals. Instead of forcing product-oriented artwork, we allow the kids to be creative. If they want to paint only with orange paint one day, we encourage them to do so. This places the focus more on the process than the product.

Cooking

We will be having a cooking project once a month in our classroom. We will cook something, as a class, that is simple and age-appropriate. I like to introduce the concept of following a recipe as we cook. So I use simple step by step cooking projects. As the dates approach for these projects, we will let you know more specific details. (Please let us know if your child has any allergies.)

Dress

Please dress your child in "play clothes," clothes that are okay to play in the dirt and paint in. We will be doing various activities where something may stain our clothes. We think they're cute no matter what they are wearing! The only day that we encourage them to dress up is on picture day. (As soon as we get the dates for that, we will let you know.) Other than that day, play clothes are the best. Children who are worried about getting their clothes messy aren't going to open to being themselves. Also, keep in mind when you are picking out their clothes that they should wear clothes that have buttons or snaps that are easy to undo so that when they have to go to the bathroom, they can be quickly undone.

In Our Community

Several times a month, we take the children across the street to visit the "Grandmas" and "Grandpas" that live at Vencor. The kids always seem to enjoy spending time visiting with them! We usually sing songs with the Grandmas and Grandpas then, we spend time shaking hands and exchanging smiles! Children may or may not want to shake hands; we do encourage them to be friendly and to bring their smiles with them. ☺

Little Acorn is blessed to be so close to a community park. Shumway Park is right across the street. On occasion we will take advantage of that by walking to explore the park. We try to plan this a few days in advance and will set a note out on the day of the visit. The Director is always notified 24 hours in advance and our class will always be back to the school in time for pick up. Anytime we are off school grounds, we will always make sure that we have our walkie talkie and a cell phone with us in case a situation arises that we need help.

Field Trips

There will be a field trip approximately once every other month. The pre-school has the policy that you, as parents, are responsible for transporting your own child to and from field trips. Teachers may not transport the children. If you cannot transport your child, then you may authorize another parent to do so. This needs to be done in writing.

Class Pets

As the year goes on we may include small animals into our classroom. I will send out a note to the parents as our pet/pets are being introduced to the class. Pets give children the opportunity to care for and express their nurturing sides in ways that toys don't. Any pet we have will be handled with care and constant supervision and children will immediately wash hands after handling.

Sick Kids

PLEASE do not bring your child to school if they have had a temperature of 100° or above, or if they have a cough, diarrhea, or a green runny nose in the last 48 hours.

This policy exists to protect your kids and to keep yucky germs from spreading. If your child has any of these symptoms while at the pre-school, we will call to have them picked up to go home. I know that your children hates missing school (and we miss them too!) and will often want to come even when they are feeling badly, but please for the sake of our teachers and the other children, don't bring your child if they are sick.

Communication

I can't even stress how important it is that we as teachers and parents have open and honest conversation with one another. **PLEASE** if you ever have a question or concern, come directly to me and talk about it. We are very open to hearing from you. We promise to be respectful of your thoughts and feelings and we ask that you do the same for us.

Communication is a two-way street. I will provide a lot of opportunities for you to be up to date on what's happening at Little Acorn and in our class. Every week you will receive a newsletter that will include lesson information as well as upcoming events. **PLEASE** make sure you read through this newsletter every week to be well informed. Another great place to receive information is our classroom Facebook. I only invite families that are currently enrolled to be Star Class friends on Facebook. This site will contain a link for new photos on a weekly basis as well as keep a running list of upcoming class themes and events. We also have a white board that we keep in front of the classroom with upcoming events. We will provide the info and you will want to do your part to keep up with it so that you don't miss out on any special things. Parents are always welcome to participate in the classroom, volunteer talents, join us on field trips, or simply get on the floor and play with the children. Contact with parents enhances the entire classroom's learning experience, and we would love to have you as part of our "team."

I am always available by e-mail at Joanna@threepaw.com or my home phone number (771-1833) because there are times when you'd like to discuss things but don't have a chance during school hours. If you need to find information about upcoming events, check our website or Facebook first. Business-related questions like tuition, tax stuff, enrollment, etc... should be directed to Maria in the office.

Guidance

Many times, the children will work out their differences when guided by an adult and given the correct tools to resolve the situation. For example, children at this age sometimes hit others instead of trying to work things out by talking. When something like this happens, we find ways for the person who hurt the other child to comfort the one who got hurt (i.e. hugs, ice pack, apology, etc.). Then, we will ask them how they could have handled the situation better. We often practice with a try it again scenario. We want to encourage kind and respectful behavior of everyone in our class.

Please keep in mind that we are not able to speak with you regarding the behavior problems of other children. Your child may at times come home and complain of a situation that happened in the classroom. Please know that we are aware of it and have or are taking care of it but we will not be able to discuss other children with you.

Parent - Teacher Conferences

We would like to set up two parent- teacher conferences with you for the year. The first will be toward the beginning of the year, and the second will be held before registration for the next school year. During these conferences, we will discuss a "student profile," talk about our observations of your child in a classroom setting, and answer any questions you may have.

Birthdays/Holidays

Children love to have a party! We would like to encourage parents to bring in **Food Free Treats** such as pencils, stickers or something else small to give to the children or even better bring in a game to play with the children. You may bring a healthy treat to celebrate your child's birthday (or un-birthday for children with summer birthdays). Just let us know in advance. If you are throwing your child a party outside of school we ask that you not put invitations in the cubby cans. Please contact them outside of school for party invitations. We do put together a class directory for those who want one with addresses and phone numbers of classmates. We understand that different families celebrate different holidays in different ways. If you have special holidays you celebrate in your family, please let us know! We're open to your ideas and family traditions as we plan on celebrating various holidays!

Sharing

We will not have a scheduled "sharing" day or time in class. I suggest leaving toys at home. At school they could easily be lost or broken. Children are encouraged to bring items that relate to our theme anytime during the year. We do a **Word Wall** that highlights a letter for each week that I ask the children bring in items that start with the letter of the week. We usually do the word wall the last circle of the day and the items are put away in our pelican until the children share their items.

Book Bags

At the beginning of the year we decorate book bags. The children can take home a book from our library to share with you at home. They can trade their books every day they come to school or keep them for a while if they would like. We don't have an official check out system but as long as your child brings their book back they can pick out a new one.

Word Wall

We have a word wall that will feature a new letter each week. I encourage you to help your children find words that begin with the letter of the week and they can bring them into share with our class. This helps the children to start thinking about beginning sounds and they can have a lot of fun with it. It also gives them an opportunity to share with their friends, which can help with their confidence in speaking in front of others.

Book Orders

Here at Little Acorn we offer good children's books at a reasonable price through Scholastic book clubs. Each month your child will receive a flyer in his/her cubby that you may order books from. Make checks payable to Scholastic books. They come here to school and we deliver them to your child's cubby. Ordering books helps the school too! We receive free books and teacher resources for our classrooms when you order from the club.

Star Facebook & Online Album

The Star Class has a Facebook and I will invite you to be our friend after the year starts. No pictures or private information will be shared just classroom happenings and information. Throughout the year I will keep a photo journal of all the fun our class has together! You can view this online journal on Snapfish. I will do my best to keep this updated weekly. We will have a classroom album at www2.snapfish.com. You will have to sign up for a Snapfish account to be able to view the photos. I will provide you the password at the beginning of the year, I want to make sure that only people that we know are viewing our photos. You may purchase any of the photos anytime online through the links I will provide on our blog. Prints are usually around \$.12 or you can order the whole album.