

Columbia Greenhouse

Nursery School

2008/2009 Parent Handbook

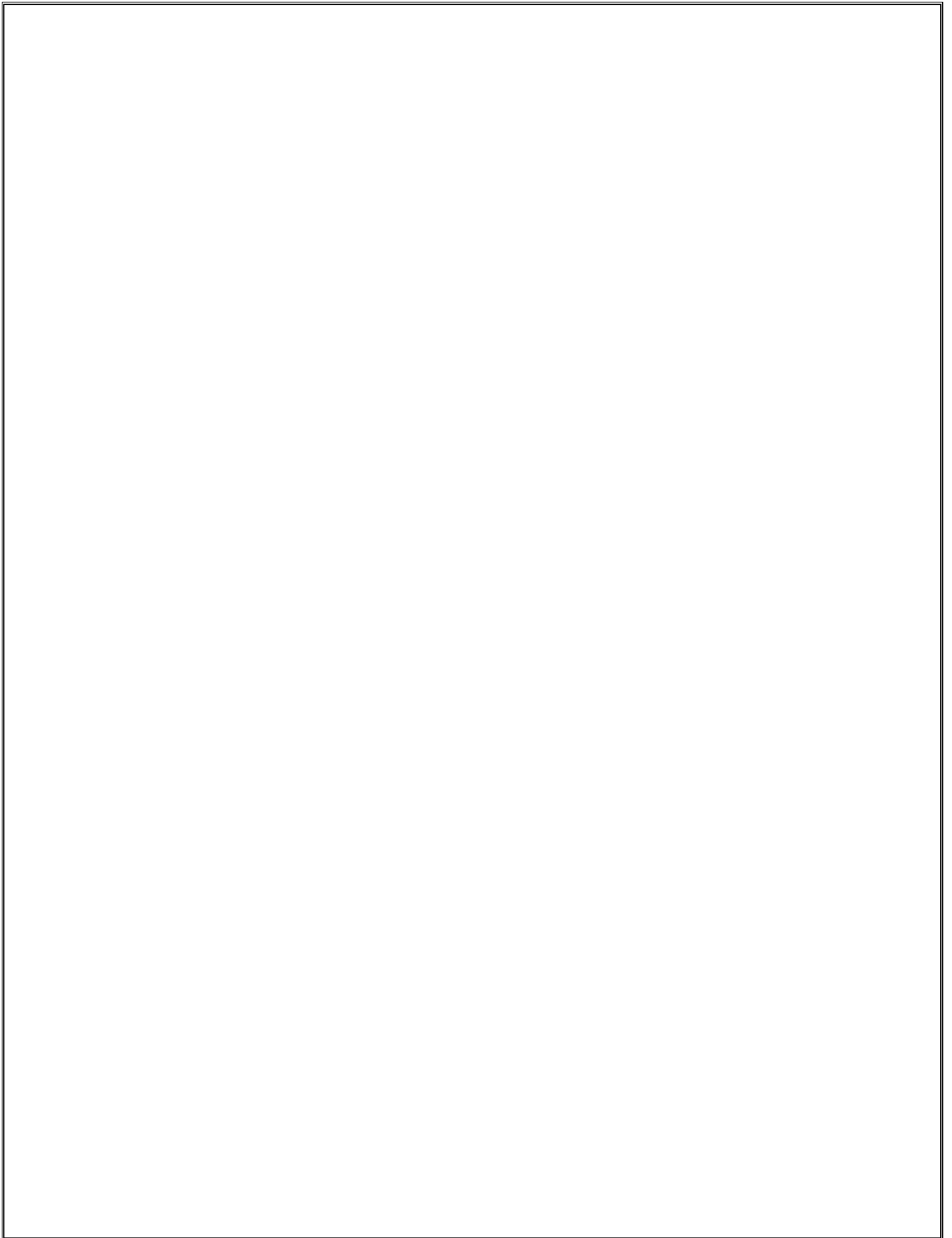
INTRODUCTION

The Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School is one of America's oldest nursery schools. Columbia Greenhouse is an independent, not-for-profit, and nonsectarian early childhood school. It is located adjacent to the Columbia University campus on West 116th Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Morningside Drive. Columbia Greenhouse is licensed by the New York City Department of Health, accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and registered with the New York State Department of Education. It is one of six early childhood programs affiliated with and supported by Columbia University. It reflects the diversity of the University community and of the neighborhood and is open to all who wish to apply.

PHILOSOPHY

In partnership with families, we are committed to promoting healthy emotional, social, intellectual and physical development in young children. The educational philosophy of Greenhouse pivots on the pedagogic belief that young children learn best through interaction and engagement with interesting materials, with peers in small groups, and with responsive and loving adults. Along these lines, we have carefully planned a warm and nurturing play-centered environment that encourages creativity, exploration, problem solving, independence, positive peer interactions and a sense of community. We believe that recognizing each child's uniqueness and strengthening each child's self esteem through the development of skills, interests, and a sense of self within the group is an important goal underlying our approach.

John Dewey, the noted Columbia University philosopher, stated, "Play is the child's way of learning." Play is an exploration, an experiment and an adventure that fosters involvement, concentration and imagination. Through building, cooking, painting, pretending, climbing, talking, and interacting children learn about the world around them and lay a foundation for more formal development in reading, writing, mathematics and other disciplines. Greenhouse provides a structured yet comfortable environment, amply equipped for the "work" of play.



BEGINNING THE SCHOOL YEAR

We have a gradual phasing-in process at the beginning of the school year so that each child will have ample time to adapt to a new setting while a familiar person is available to offer support. Please plan to stay with your child the first day of school. A parent or a caregiver may need to stay in the classroom or nearby in the parent lounge for several more days during the beginning weeks of school. Sometimes children need support for a longer period. If this seems necessary for your child, the teacher will discuss a plan with you.

When in the classroom, please be seated and available to your child if your child needs you. As your child begins to feel comfortable, you and the teacher will decide on a time for you to begin to leave the classroom. It is helpful to let the teacher know when you are leaving the room and to always say goodbye to your child. Although a goodbye may cause tears, it is important for your child, in building a trusting relationship with you, to be prepared for your leaving and to know when it will take place.

During the phase-in time, there will be coffee and tea in the common areas for parents. We invite you to take a few moments to relax and meet the other parents in your class while your child is becoming familiar with school.

DAILY ARRIVAL TIME

The school day begins at 9:00 a.m. and we encourage parents to arrive on time. It is often difficult for children to move into the group when they arrive late. Please accompany your child to the cubby area where outer clothing and the lunch box is left, and then go with your child to the classroom. Let the teacher know of any changes in your child's usual schedule such as a visitor at home, less sleep than usual or that a parent is away. Be sure the teacher and your child know when you are leaving

DAILY DEPARTURE TIME

You will be asked to fill out the **Permanent Permission Pick Up Sheet** with the names of those persons who pick up your child routinely throughout the year. When someone different is picking up your child on a particular day, you must fill out the **Temporary Permission Pick Up Sheet** with the person's name and verbally communicate the information to the teacher. If the pick-up plan changes during the morning, we need to be informed of the new arrangement by a parent. Please advise your caregiver that a change in pick-up plans, such as a last minute play date arrangement, must be communicated to the school by the parent. Please arrive on time to pick up your child.

MORNING, AFTERNOON AND EXTENDED DAY SCHEDULES

During the morning session children participate in a planned activity time, a group story and sharing time, snack and outdoor play on the yard. The classes for three to five- year- old children conclude their day with lunch, which is eaten together in the classroom. The morning session ends for the 2 Day/2's and 3 Day/2's at 11:30 a.m., the 2/3's at 12:00 p.m. and the older classes at 1:00 p.m.

The Afternoon 2's begins at 12:45 p.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m. and the Afternoon 3's class begins at 1:00 p.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. The afternoon programs follow the same schedule as the morning session.

Our Extended Day program in the older classes takes place until either 2:45 p.m. or 3:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Children who stay for Extended Day have a rest on a cot, a snack, and an afternoon activity time. We supply a cot and sheet for rest and your child may bring a small pillow, a blanket, and something special to have at this time.

You have the opportunity to choose extended days for your child until the end of the second week of school at which time we make appropriate staffing arrangements. A commitment for one semester is required. You can choose one to four days, but you must use the same days each week. The scheduling of extended days takes place in the office.

CLOTHING

We recommend that children wear comfortable, washable play clothes and practical, sturdy shoes to school. We do a lot of messy work and painting and it is likely that clothes will become soiled and stained. During cold weather, the children need to wear winter hats, mittens, scarves, sweaters, boots, and snow pants. We go outside all winter unless the weather is very cold or inclement.

An extra set of clothing needs to be left in school and placed in your child's cubby at the beginning of the school year. This should include a complete set of socks, underwear, pants and shirt clearly marked with your child's name. Please check the extra clothes periodically to make sure the clothes still fit and are appropriate for the season.

FOOD, SNACK, AND LUNCH

We ask that children do not carry snacks or treats into the classroom or receive them in the classroom. If your child would like a snack before or after school, please accompany your child to one of the common areas where they are welcome to eat. In the morning, a table is designated in the classroom where children may sit to finish eating breakfast.

The school provides a snack each day that consists of an assortment of crackers, juice or fruit, or a special snack that the children prepare.

Children in the older morning classes bring their own lunches to school. Popular lunch items include small sandwiches, yogurt, pasta, cheese and fruit. Items that need to be refrigerated

should be securely wrapped, clearly labeled with a name and, according to the particular classroom routine, placed on a tray or in the refrigerator in the morning. We encourage nutritional foods and ask that you refrain from sending candy, soda, potato chips and other like snacks to school. The school provides a beverage at lunch.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

Whenever there is heavy snow or other severe weather, Greenhouse will follow the decision of the NYC Board of Education regarding closings. When New York City public schools are closed due to weather, Greenhouse will be closed. Listen to 1010 WIN to hear about closings.

MESSAGES AND PHONE CALLS

If you would like to speak with your child's teacher, please leave a message with the office staff. Your teacher will be informed of the message and return your call at a time when she does not have classroom responsibilities.

When we are not available to answer the telephone, you will reach our answering machine. Please be assured that we frequently check our messages and pay particular attention to messages before the pick-up times. We will make every effort to deliver messages for you when necessary, but we do ask that care be given to confirming plans with friends and caregivers in the morning or evening.

MAIL BOXES, EMAIL, WEBSITE

Each family has a mailbox in their child's classroom. The mailboxes are used for the communication of general information and reminders about Greenhouse activities. The mailboxes are not to be used for the distribution of information unrelated to Greenhouse.

We also communicate frequently by email with families who have given us email addresses. In addition, announcements are also regularly posted on our website at www.columbiagreenhouse.com.

WAITING AREAS

The coffee room at the 404 location and the cubby room at the 424 building are our designated waiting areas. We ask that you do not use the building's lobby at 404 for extended periods or for eating.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

We enjoy celebrating birthdays at Greenhouse. We try to make these celebrations fun and yet keep them simple. We ask that parents provide a cake or cupcakes that are either packaged with the ingredients listed or homemade. Cakes or other food from bakeries are not acceptable due to the requirements of the Peanut and Tree Nut restricted policy. In keeping the party low-key, we ask that you do not include candy, favors or party hats. Since each classroom teacher follows a slightly different procedure, you and your teacher will need to discuss individual plans together.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Greenhouse welcomes children with special needs who will benefit from participation in our program. We work with several agencies that support the inclusion of children with a wide diversity of abilities and learning styles. They provide specialists to work with individual children who need help entering fully into the life of the classroom. You may observe these special educators working in our classrooms.

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGIST

Our consulting psychologist spends time in the classroom on a regular basis and is available to faculty and parents for consultation. She is also available as a resource for parents on child development and parenting issues. Parents who wish to meet with the psychologist should contact the Director and she will set up an appointment for you.

MUSIC SPECIALIST

Our music specialist meets with the older classes weekly in half groups. She includes movement, singing, musical instruments and dancing experiences in these classes.

ENDING THE SCHOOL YEAR

As we focus on the children's adjustment in the beginning of the school year, when June approaches, we begin to help children think about the school year ending. It is an opportunity for teachers and children to reflect and talk about the year and to share plans the children have for the summer and the next school year. There is a closing party in each classroom the last day of school.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM

If you have a problem related to finances, you should contact the Director. For concerns about your child, talk with your teacher and the Director as another resource. If you have concerns about a staff person, talk to that person and/or the Director. To bring questions and concerns related to policy to the Board of Trustees for consideration, talk to your class representative or the Co-chairs of the Board of Trustees.

HEALTH POLICIES

MEDICAL EXAM

Greenhouse is registered with the New York State Department of Education and licensed through the New York City Department of Health. Our license is renewed every two years. The Board of Health requires that a medical record, which includes the results of a current physical examination and the child's immunization history, be on file with the school by the first day of school. **CHILDREN ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ATTEND SCHOOL IF THESE RECORDS ARE INCOMPLETE.**

ALLERGIES

If a child is allergic to any foods or has a special health condition, the details must be given on the medical form and specific guidance and information given to the office and the child's teachers. Each child with an allergy will have a Health Plan posted in the classroom, the office and the play yard. If a child has a life threatening allergy, such as a peanut allergy, there will also be a treatment plan in case of ingestion that has been developed and agreed to by the parent, the child's doctor and the school.

ILLNESS

Children should not come to school if they are not feeling well or are unable to participate fully in the daily program, which includes time outdoors. A child who is not well cannot benefit from the program and jeopardizes the health of others. Specifically, a child who is coughing, sneezing or has a sore throat, headache, earache, upset stomach, diarrhea, or an undiagnosed rash, should remain out of school until these symptoms have cleared. Also, if a child runs a fever (101 and above), even without other noticeable symptoms, he or she should not attend school and should not return to school until the fever has remained normal for a period of twenty four hours without medication.

If a child becomes ill during the day, we will contact the parent and ask the parent to come to Greenhouse. A sick child will be brought to the office to be cared for until a parent arrives.

Please inform the school in the morning if your child will be absent. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness, such as chicken pox or strep throat, let the office know so we can inform the parents of the other children in the class of the exposure.

MEDICATION

It is not permitted for teachers to administer medication of any kind to a child.

PEANUT AND TREE NUT RESTRICTED POLICY

Columbia Greenhouse follows a peanut and tree nut restricted policy to protect children who are allergic to peanuts and/or tree nuts. An allergy to peanuts/nuts is very serious and potentially life threatening because the ingestion of a peanut/nut product or just being in close proximity to peanuts/nuts or a product of peanuts/nuts can trigger a sudden, severe reaction known as anaphylactic shock, or the closing of the breathing passages in an allergic child.

Our peanut and tree nut restricted policy states that any food made with peanuts or nuts or the by-product of peanuts or nuts cannot be brought into our buildings at any time. This includes products made with peanut/nut oil or products that may have come in contact with peanuts/nuts or peanut/nut oil (plain M&M's, jelly spread with a knife that has been in the peanut butter jar, etc.).

We ask for everyone's cooperation in following this policy. Foods packed in lunches, special snacks, or birthday treats must be peanut and nut free. Please take time to check the ingredients on packages of all processed food, particularly snacks. Lunchables, a popular lunch with children at this time, often include treats that contain products of peanuts. We request that you inform caregivers of these restrictions, which apply to siblings or any other children or adults who come into the school. Our teachers will provide additional security by checking foods and ingredients in foods that are brought in lunches. (Please see additional handouts for more information)

MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If your child should get seriously hurt or sick during the day, we will contact you immediately. If we feel the situation needs immediate attention, we will call an ambulance and go to the pediatric emergency room at St. Luke's Hospital at Amsterdam Avenue and 113th Street and meet you there. Please be sure you have filled out and submitted the Blue Emergency Form which gives the school personnel permission to get necessary treatment for your child in the event a parent cannot be reached. It is also important that your current work and home telephone numbers are on the Blue Emergency Form and updated if any changes occur during the year.

SAFETY POLICIES

SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR ENTERING AND LEAVING THE BUILDINGS

Because of the nature of our buildings, it is necessary to follow routines that will ensure the safety of the children in our buildings. Since neither building is equipped with an intercom system, on arrival it is necessary for you to ring the bell of the school and then wait for someone to open the door. To make it more convenient a staff person is at the door each morning until 9:20 and at pick-up times. During the course of the day, parents and caregivers often help with answering the doors, and we appreciate this help. We must ask, however, that you do not open the door for anyone unless it is a parent or caregiver that you know. Also, the doors may not be propped open for any reason unless someone is monitoring the door. If your child attends a class in the 424 building (3/4's, 2/3's, 3's Aft.), please be sure to pull the door shut when you enter and leave. The door does not close on its own. Pull it shut even if people are standing near the door in the hallway.

In addition, special precautions need to be followed at pick-up times, which can be crowded and a little hectic. Children may not leave the cubby rooms alone. They must be with an adult in the 404 lobby and 424 hallway at all times. Children should not open the lobby doors leading outside at anytime even if they are with you or helping you leave the building. It is important that both teachers and parents consistently follow this routine to prevent a child from unthinkingly walking outside or opening the door for someone waiting to come into the building. Finally, the stroller rack in 424 and the railing along the ramp in 404 are not made to be played on.

It is important that you share this information with everyone who will be bringing or picking up your child. We very much appreciate your cooperation in helping us keep the buildings safe throughout the year.

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND EMERGENCY PRACTICE ROUTINES

The faculty and children practice three routes to exit each building. Our two locations place us in a good position should we need to respond to an emergency. The two buildings are an advantage because classes can gather in one building, one that is familiar and equipped for children, should there be a fire or emergency in the other building. Greenhouse is also fortunate to be located in close proximity to several Columbia buildings that have large lobbies and other spaces that would house our school in the event that both of our buildings were evacuated.

The staff and children practice three routes to exit each building. They practice the one from one building to the other along the front sidewalk and from one building to the other through the back stairways to our yards. The third route practiced leads from each building to the June and William Warren Hall (Columbia Business School building) on Amsterdam Avenue that is reached by going through the back walkway that connects our buildings with Amsterdam Avenue. Each classroom has specific posted instructions that detail the three emergency plans. A master list of the home, work and emergency numbers for every family and a flash light and radio are conveniently stored in each classroom and carried on each practice.

METHOD OF DISCIPLINE

Our good staff/child ratio and close supervision of the children reduces the amount of negative behavior that is sometimes shown between children. Also, we believe that setting clear expectations and limits helps children act in positive ways. We also encourage children to express themselves verbally rather than resorting to physical means. If a child is aggressive or disruptive, we will remove the child from the group and talk about what has happened. If the behavior is repeated there will be a consequence such as losing the privilege of participating in an activity or playing with particular children. If a child continues to display negative behavior we will speak with the parent and together formulate a plan to help the child

PARENTS

THE PARENTS ASSOCIATION

All Greenhouse families are members of the Parents Association, and parents are encouraged to attend meetings. Meetings are planned throughout the year to address the interests of the parent body and to provide the opportunity for parents to exchange ideas and information. The Parents Association also supports the fund raising efforts of the school. The class representative from each class attends meetings and acts as the liaison between members of the class and the association.

PARENT - TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences are held with parents twice a year (see calendar for specific dates). This is a special opportunity for you to meet individually with your child's teacher and share in your child's life in the classroom. It is also an important time for the teacher to learn more from you about your child's interests and feelings. Conference days are scheduled but please feel free to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher at any time during the school year.

PARENT PARTICIPATION, MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Greenhouse needs ongoing participation in fundraising and the ongoing committees of the school. We engage in fundraising for two principal reasons. The first is to give partial scholarships to deserving children who might otherwise miss the valuable opportunity of developing in a warm and engaging environment - children whose presence contributes to the social and economic diversity of the Greenhouse community. The second is to provide support for faculty development opportunities that inspire and our teachers.

Each family is asked to make one major contribution by serving as a class parent, parent tour guide, as part of the newsletter team or as a co-chair or member of one of the annual fundraising events: Apple Day Bake Sale, Winter Dinner and Auction or Spring Fair. In addition to a major

contribution, we ask that everyone cook for and work at the Spring Fair, make a tax-deductible donation of merchandise or services to the annual Auction and bake for the Apple Day Bake Sale.

Each family will receive a Parent Participation Form outlining the possible avenues of fulfilling your responsibilities as a family. Please complete the form and return it to the office during the first week of school

The following events and meetings usually take place each year:

Parent/Teacher Welcome Meeting - a full school meeting followed by a classroom meeting for parents to meet their child's teachers before school begins. Special attention is given to the plans for the first weeks of school and how separation will be handled.

Family Welcome Picnic - a picnic to welcome all families to Greenhouse that is held on a Columbia campus lawn. Each family brings dinner and Greenhouse provides watermelon.

Apple Day Bake Sale - a bake sale with apple desserts and other goodies that takes place on the Columbia campus.

Curriculum Night - a group meeting for parents that is organized in the Fall to discuss the early childhood curriculum set up in the classrooms and the teacher's plans for the year.

Workshops - meetings with a focus on issues of interest to parents that provide a supportive environment with a balance of presentation and discussion.

Annual Dinner and Auction - a fun evening with a catered dinner, lively auction, and dancing.

Kindergarten Admissions Information Night - a meeting for those parents who will be applying to kindergarten in the following year.

Spring Fair - an elaborate street fair on our block with games for children, wonderful food, rummage, pony rides, petting zoo, and a raffle.

Family Farewell Picnic - a closing picnic that is held at the end of the year on a Columbia campus lawn. Parents bring a picnic dinner and Greenhouse provides watermelon for dessert.

Annual Fund Appeal - an annual appeal to parents and friends that supports financial aid and special projects.

RE-ENROLLMENT AT GREENHOUSE

Re-enrollment forms for the next school year are mailed in early January to families who presently have children at Greenhouse. The return deadline for re-enrollment is early February and before the general admissions for new children takes place. A deposit of 20% of the next year's tuition is required at the time the re-enrollment form is due. The school will hold a place for your child only if the re-enrollment form and deposit are received by the specified deadline. Financial aid is also allocated at this time.

GREENHOUSE ADMISSIONS

Columbia Greenhouse admits 55 to 60 new children each year. We begin processing applications in the fall for the following year. Tour groups are scheduled weekly from October through January to show prospective families the school.

We advise parents who plan to enroll siblings to submit their applications as early as possible and before the deadline of November 21. Siblings are given preference and admitted before new children are accepted. We also give preference to families affiliated with Columbia University.

KINDERGARTEN PLANNING

Greenhouse offers various levels of support during the process of looking for a public or private school kindergarten, which include a general information meeting and individual meetings with the Director.

COLUMBIA GREENHOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL

2008/2009 Personnel

Administrative Staff

Director	Vicki Aspenberg
Administrative Assistant	Vera Elumn
Office Assistant	Alyssa Evans
Admissions Coordinator	Paula Doerfel

Faculty

2 Day/2's, 3 Day/2's And 2's Afternoon	Rachel Silberman Angela Coulibaly Nina Basescu Theresa Swink
2/3's and 3's A	Paula Doerfel Maia Cannon Erica Maldonado Theresa Swink
3's Front	Arlene Carter Heather Guerrier Emily Smith
3/4's	Elizabeth Soriano Lisa Orr-Chambliss Bethany Sadownick
4/5's	Margaret Williams Xiomara Menendez Nexhmiye Avoricani Lisa Minier

Support Staff

Consulting Child Psychologist	Lorraine Harner
Music Specialist	Colleen Itzen
Maintenance	Ali Coulibaly

Contact Information

Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School
404 West 116 Street
New York, New York
10027

Phone: (212) 666 - 4796

FAX: (212) 865 - 1294

E-mail: info@columbiagreenhouse.com

Vicki's email: vaspenberg@columbiagreenhouse.com

Vera's email: velumn@columbiagreenhouse.com

Website: www.columbiagreenhouse.com

FEDERAL TAX ID# 13-3194659

COLUMBIA GREENHOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL

Board of Trustees

2008/2009

Chairperson - Sara Edlin
Vice Chair - Stan Monk
Secretary - Monica Cohen
Treasurer - Sandra Kavangh
At Large - Lisa Garson
At Large - David Duttonhofer
Educator - Patricia Pell
PA Rep - Rebecca Marzen
Faculty Rep - Margaret Williams
Director - Vicki Aspenberg