



## 2017-2018 Parent Handbook

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Evanston, IL 60201  
847-869-7170

[www.unitypreschoolevanston.com](http://www.unitypreschoolevanston.com)

*Unity Preschool lays a foundation for success by providing children with a family-centered, play-based learning environment where their natural curiosity and interests inspire our curriculum and activities.*

## WELCOME TO UNITY PRESCHOOL

Unity Preschool is a not-for-profit preschool with a tradition of more than 50 years of providing early education to children of Evanston and the surrounding area. Unity is a part-day developmental preschool governed by a parent Board of Directors.

Unity is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Other affiliations include the Evanston Early Childhood Council and the Evanston Early Childhood Community Collaboration. In addition Unity works with Evanston/Skokie District 65, SPPAC, National-Louis University, Oakton Community College, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Chicago chapter of that organization.

**Unity Preschool admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all programs and activities. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of our educational or admission policies. Unity Preschool is an equal opportunity employer.**

### OUR PHILOSOPHY

Unity Preschool provides a warm, inviting environment for children to develop socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. The emphasis is on building relationships with other children and adults in a happy, safe and stimulating setting. Creating a positive self-image for the child is of primary importance. Within the context of play comes growth and learning.

The design of our program and the arrangement of our three classrooms encourage choices and decision making by offering a wide variety of activities and materials. Each room provides experiences with small manipulative toys, art, music, block play, sand and water play, dramatic play, science, and literature. The schedule provides opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, quiet and active, large muscle and small muscle, child initiated and staff initiated and opportunities for play as individuals, in small groups or in large groups.

Our curriculum is planned around the interests of the children within each classroom. We promote developmentally appropriate practices and the activities are planned with the skill level of each child in mind. Our curriculum goals include introducing children to simple conflict resolution skills and encouraging children to think, reason and experiment. We also emphasize an anti-bias perspective which means that we help children learn to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping. Unity is also committed to being good stewards of our planet by reducing, reusing and recycling as much as possible.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Board of Directors governs Unity Preschool and is comprised of current and past parents/caregivers or community members with an interest in Unity. This Board sets policy and works in conjunction with the Director, who is in charge of the day to day operations of the school. Parents are invited to attend Board meetings, and the dates and times of these meetings are published in the monthly newsletter. Minutes from the board meetings will be posted at school and are also available via email upon request. For your convenience, the names and phone numbers of all board members are listed on the last page of this handbook. Please feel free to contact them with any questions.

### COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Community Council, consisting of parents/caregivers of Unity students, meets monthly and is responsible for organizing social and fundraising events for Unity. Parents are invited to attend Community Council meetings, and the dates and times of these meetings are also published in the monthly newsletter.

## CLASS OFFERINGS

Unity offers classes for children ages 2-5. Children in the 3/4 class and the 4/5 class can attend 3, 4, or 5 days a week; parents may choose which days of the week their child attends, space permitting. For the 2/3 class, children can attend Tuesday/Thursday, Monday/Wednesday/Friday, or all five days.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

As a developmental preschool, we believe that children learn through play experiences. Each component of the day provides children with a chance to interact with adults, other children, and enjoy a wide variety of experiences. We consider these play experiences to be a child's work. The components of the day include: children's choice, clean-up, group, snack, and large motor activities.

## ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

In-house registration for families of current Unity students/siblings and former Unity students/siblings begins each year in January. Open registration for families new to Unity begins at the Community Open House.. Applications are processed on a first come, first serve basis. If there are more applicants than spaces available, a waiting list is maintained for each class, ordered by the date/time the application is received. Unity maintains age requirements for each class and attempts to balance classes by sex of children, and maintains limits on group size for each class (12 maximum for 2/3s; about 18 for 3/4s and 4/5s). Children must be 2 by September 1st for the 2/3 class, 3 by September 1st for the 3/4, class, and 4 by September 1st for the 4/5 class. This is in keeping with the entrance requirements for Evanston/Skokie School District 65 and neighboring school districts.

## HOURS

All classes meet from 9:15 to 11:45 from the beginning of September to the end of May.

## EARLY DROP OFF

Unity offers an early drop off option. Children may be dropped off as early as 8:30. Children will play with teacher supervision for 45 minutes before school begins. They will then be taken to their classroom, or to the park, at 9:15. Early drop off enrollment is by semester. The fee must be paid for each committed day that school is in session, whether the child attends or not. Parents may sign up for an occasional day, space permitting. See the Tuition Schedule for details.

## LUNCH BUNCH

The lunch bunch program is offered as an enrichment opportunity for children who are 3 years old and potty trained as a service for parents. The hours are 11:45-1:45. Children may enroll from one to four days a week, Monday-Thursday.

Enrollment commitment is by semester while billing is monthly. The fee must be paid for each committed day that school is in session whether your child attends the lunch session or not. You may not swap a lunch bunch if your child cannot attend a particular day. Parents may sign up for an occasional day (space permitting) at an additional cost. See the Tuition Schedule for details.

Children should bring their lunch from home, including a drink. **Please remember that Unity is a nut-free school.** We will refrigerate all lunches. Please label your child's lunch.

## TUITION POLICY

A non-refundable deposit of \$100.00 is due upon registration. Tuition for the upcoming school year may be paid in one annual payment, four equal installments, or nine equal payments. Invoices will be placed in your family mailbox.

## TUITION WITHDRAWAL POLICY

If a student withdraws:

- Between May 1st and September 1st, one month tuition payment is non-refundable.
- After September 1, there is no tuition refund for installment or monthly payment plans. A one month tuition is non-refundable for annual plans.
- Between September 1 and December 1, half of the payment will be refunded for annual plans.
- After December 1, there are no tuition refunds.

## LATE PAYMENT POLICY

If tuition is not paid by the due date, a late fee of \$10.00 will be charged. If tuition is two months in arrears, a late fee of \$25.00 will be charged. If tuition is three months in arrears, the child's enrollment may be revoked.

## RETURNED CHECKS

All returned checks will be charged at the rate of the bank processing fee.

## TUITION ASSISTANCE POLICY

The tuition assistance policy of Unity reflects the school's commitment to embracing the diverse population of the greater Evanston community. Awarding financial aid to families with need broadens the socioeconomic base of the school and allows us to reach out to people who would otherwise be unable to participate in our program. For a complete copy of the tuition assistance policy and/or an application, please contact the director.

## CALENDAR AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Unity generally follows the same calendar as District 65, with a few differences. Please refer to the Unity calendar for specific holidays and school closings. A copy of the school calendar was included in your summer packet, and is posted on the bulletin board in the common area of the school. One is also available on the school website: [www.unitypreschoolevanston.com](http://www.unitypreschoolevanston.com). Please take time to post school holidays on your home calendars. When District 65 closes due to inclement weather, we will be closed as well. Unity may also be closed at the discretion of the director or board if safety is an issue. Families will be notified by text message and email if school is closed. Additional days are built into the calendar in case of school closing.

## PARKING AT SCHOOL

When you are dropping off or picking up your child, you may park on the north side of Foster Street with your flashers on. Please pull as far up to the west under the L tracks to accommodate all families. Longer term parking is available on the south side of Foster, Sherman and Maple Streets.

## CARPOOLS

If your child will be part of a carpool, please make sure that your child understands each day's arrangements and knows who is picking up. A note detailing carpool plans should also be given to your child's teachers. A pick-up form was included in the summer mailing and must be completed for every family by the start of the school year.

## DROP OFF AND PICK UP

We ask that you please be prompt when dropping off and picking up your child from school. We find that children who arrive on time have an easier time separating from parents and engaging in activities.

For the 2/3 class, parents should bring children into the classroom at the start of the day and make sure that the teacher knows the child has arrived. The 3/4 class and 4/5 class will regularly meet at Firemen's Park on the corner of Simpson and Maple. Please bring your child to the teacher to be checked in. Do not leave your child until you are sure they have been checked in by the teacher. **If classes are meeting inside because of inclement weather or some other reason, you will be notified by text message or email.**

Children should be picked up at the end of the day from inside the school building. Near each classroom door is a sign-out sheet on which you should sign out your child and any other children you're picking up.

The "Dismissal Procedures and Authorization" form (included in the summer mailing and available upon request from the director) explains in detail our rules and regulations regarding persons other than parents who can pick up children from school.

## LATE PICK UP

Please be prompt in picking up your child at the end of the school day. Please call school if you will be late in picking up your child.

In the event that you are 10 minutes late for pick up at the end of class or the end of lunch bunch, we will call your home and then your emergency phone numbers listed in your child's file until we are able to locate someone who is authorized to pick your child up. At 11:55 your child may be brought to the lunch bunch room to wait until your arrival. The late pick-up fee is \$10.00.

If you are frequently late (more than three times in a month) the director will contact you to discuss making alternative arrangements for pick up or changing the child's school schedule (if space is available on other days).

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

**Unity is a smoke-free and gun-free facility.**

### CAR SAFETY

Current state laws require that all children up to their 8th birthday must be secured in an appropriate child restraint system (a car seat or booster that meets NHTSA safety standards). All other passengers and drivers must wear seat belts. We encourage you to observe these laws and make sure children are settled and secure before starting your car. When dropping off and picking up your child, it is safest to have children enter and exit from the curbside of the car. Please do not leave siblings in the car while dropping off your other children. Help us impress upon your child the importance of caution when near or crossing a street.

### UNITY SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLANS

Fire and Disaster Emergencies: Fire and emergency drills will be planned by the director and conducted during each full month in operation. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Teachers are responsible for guiding children out of the building and for having their attendance clipboard in their possession. One designated staff member will be responsible for having the emergency card file.

This file will be used to call parents in the case of a real emergency or disaster. Children will be evacuated to the Symphony of Evanston Rehabilitation Home across the street at 820 Foster (847-492-7700). An all-school text will be sent out as soon as the children's safety is secured. A notice will be posted at the school entrance identifying the emergency site.

### MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of a medical emergency, a staff member will call 911. Whenever possible, a staff member will accompany a child who must be transported to the hospital. Every effort will be made to contact the child's parent or guardian. Failing that, an effort will be made to contact a person listed as an emergency contact. In case of extreme emergency and in the event that the parent cannot be reached, parents are required to give permission on the school emergency card for school authorities to authorize whatever treatments are deemed necessary by the attending physician and to agree to any expenses incurred.

## HEALTH INFORMATION

### ABSENCES

Please let us know if your child will be absent. If your child has been absent for several days we will call you if we have not heard from you.

### MEDICAL

All forms required by law must be in a child's file in the school office prior to the first day of school. The forms include the following:

- Child & Family History
- Certificate of Child Health Examination (from your child's pediatrician)
- Emergency Authorization Form
- Emergency Contact Card
- Pick-Up Authorization Form
- Copy of Child's Birth Certificate

The Certificate of Child Health Examination must include a TB test with results recorded, a lead test with results recorded, the physician's and the parent's signature. Every two years a new Certificate of Child Health Examination must be completed. It is also the policy of Unity that children must be fully immunized and the dates must be recorded on their medical form. In accordance with the Child Care Act a parent may request that immunizations, physical examinations and/or medical treatment be waived on religious grounds. Beginning in October 2015, the Illinois Department of Public Health requires that any parents opting out of any immunizations must submit a Certificate of Religious Exemption to the school authority/director of the preschool. Required immunizations include: measles, mumps, rubella, Haemophilus influenza B, Hepatitis B, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, and varicella (chicken pox).

### BIRTH CERTIFICATE

DCFS requires all families to: provide us with a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of child.

### ILLNESS

Please check your child every morning for signs or symptoms of illness and use careful judgment in sending your child to school. Do not send a sick or overly tired child to school. When a child's resistance is low, they are more susceptible to illness. A fresh cold, sore throat, or upset stomach can infect an entire class, including the teachers. We therefore ask you to keep children home if they appear ill.

Teachers will send children home if they do not seem healthy upon arrival, become ill at school, or report having been ill within the past 24 hours.

Guidelines for keeping your child at home

- If your child has an excessively runny nose
- If your child has diarrhea
- If your child has vomited within the last 24 hours
- If your child has a croupy cough
- If your child has a fever (even a low grade fever)
- If your child is overly tired
- If your child has a sore throat
- If your child has a contagious disease (often a child is most contagious at the beginning of an illness)

Guidelines for returning to school after an illness (the minimum 24 hour rule):

- If your child had chicken pox: after all pox scab over (1 week minimal)
- If your child had diarrhea: when there are no loose stools for 24 hours
- If your child had a fever: after being fever-free for 24 hours
- If your child had head lice: after being treated with lice shampoo and after ALL nits have been removed and parent has cleaned and treated house and car; the child's head will be checked before re-admittance by the director
- If your child had pin worms: 24 hours after treatment
- If your child had open sores (impetigo): after sores are no longer draining and treatment has begun

- After your child has been on an antibiotic for a full 24 hour period and symptoms have subsided

Please contact Unity if your child is diagnosed with any of the following illnesses, as the school must notify other parents:

- Strep throat
- Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease
- Pink Eye
- Lice
- Pertussis or paraptussis

If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you, or if you are unavailable, one of your emergency contacts, to take your child home.

If your child needs to receive medication during school, we require a note from your child's physician giving us permission to administer the medication. The medication must have instructions clearly marked on the bottle. In addition, our Medical Dosage form will need to be completed by a parent.

## POTTY TRAINING

Unity supports children during all stages of potty training. While there is no requirement that children in any of our classes be potty trained to attend school, we encourage parents to work with their children when they feel they are ready for training. Please update your child's teacher as to progress or problems with this process so they can be supportive and attentive to your child's needs. Please feel free to contact the director if you need assistance or have questions.

## GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

In accordance with Illinois State Licensing requirements, Unity is required to have a guidance and discipline policy. Both staff and parents/guardians are required to read this policy and sign a document that they have done so. Separately, DCFS requires that all parents read and sign-off on the Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers.

### GUIDANCE POLICY

Unity shall set limits (discipline) which help children develop self-control, assume responsibility for their own acts and learn to understand the rights of others. Discipline may include firm positive statements and redirection of behaviors by staff. Teachers will help children to understand the rules of the school, limits and consequences of their actions and encourage children to resolve their conflicts through the use of their words. Unity also teaches beginning strategies for problem solving and conflict resolution. These strategies include helping children understand their options, learn to make good choices and then reflect on and evaluate consequences of those choices.

### SCHOOL RULES

Our school rules include but are not limited to:

- Respect one another
- Behave in a safe manner
- Be fair in your play
- Respect the school environment

There will be times when children may lose control of their behavior. Teachers may give children an opportunity to regain control of themselves in a quiet place in the room or nearby. The teacher will remain with the child and help them to identify, verbalize and understand their feelings.

### CONTACT PARENTS AND DEVELOP A PLAN

Parents/guardians will be contacted if teachers have a concern about a child's behavior. Open communication between family and staff is essential. Parents/guardians may be asked to reinforce school expectations at home, as teachers also work towards the home goals of behavior at school when possible. Conferences with parents/guardians and the teachers and/or director may be encouraged to share information and seek to understand how the child behaves outside of school. Together, teachers, the director and parents/guardians will discuss solutions and set goals for resolving the behavior issues. Teachers will implement the agreed upon plan of action discussed. A time frame will be set for review and for a follow up conference with parents/guardians. At any time in this process, the director may recommend that parents seek help from community professionals.

## **ENROLLMENT TERMINATION**

Ultimately, the school reserves the right to ask parents to find a more appropriate placement for their child, based on the following Illinois Department of Children and Family Services regulations: "Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates an inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be discharged from the facility."

Unity takes this position as the child's advocate. In all instances, when a determination is made that it is in the best interest of the child to terminate enrollment, the child's and parents' needs shall be considered by planning with the parents to meet the child's needs when he or she leaves the program, including referrals to other agencies or programs.

## **CLOTHING**

Dress your child in simple play clothes. We try to keep paint, glue, etc. off clothes through the use of smocks, but it is not a foolproof method. We recommend you dress your child in clothing that is easy for them to put on and take off.

We request that all children keep a complete, extra set of clothes at school, including socks, underwear, shirt, and pants.

Please put your child's name on all clothing, especially loose items and boots.

The 3/4 class and the 4/5 class go outside daily throughout the year. Regular outdoor play at Unity is at Firemen's Park.

The 2/3 class will take advantage of the small outside area behind the school. When the group is ready, they will use a rope with loops to walk to Firemen's Park.

Children go outside as long as The Weather Channel "Feels Like" temperature is 18 degrees or above. Please dress your child accordingly. Mittens should be attached to coats with clips, when possible. On snowy days, children need to wear hats and snow pants.

We recommend that children wear sneakers to school. Party shoes, sandals or flip flops can be challenging on climbing equipment. Pants are appropriate playground attire for both boys and girls. If your child is wearing a dress, please be sure their legs are covered for safety when climbing. If your child wears snow or rain boots to school, please send extra shoes to wear at school. Extra footwear may be kept at school if desired.

## **SNACKS**

Unity will provide all snacks, paper towels, and tissues. A supply fee of \$60.00 per child will be assessed. At Unity we strive to provide healthy snacks along with introducing new foods to children. Unity is a nut free environment.

## **IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY ALLERGIES WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT, PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER IN WRITING.**

Illinois requirements state that no home-baked goods be served at school. However, regulations allow us to prepare snacks at school.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

All Unity field trips are either walking or on public transportation. Parents are always invited to accompany classes on field trips; and generally children who do not normally attend on the day for which the field trip is scheduled are invited to come along.

## **PETS**

Unity does not allow any animals on school grounds except for pets of the preschool or when prior permission from the director has been granted.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

A birthday is an important event and we will mark this special day. You may supply birthday napkins for the birthday boy or girl to pass out during snack time. A special snack picked from our birthday cookbook will be made during class time for the birthday child. Please remember, children's feelings can be hurt very easily. Please do not deliver party invitations at school.



## TOYS FROM HOME

Unity does not encourage children to bring toys from home unless asked to do so by a teacher. If a child brings a toy from home, he/she will be asked to keep it in his/her school bag during school hours. Guns or war toys are not to be brought to school at any time.

Occasionally children may benefit from bringing a transitional object to school to help ease separation anxiety and to make the transition from home to school. If you feel this is the case for your child, please talk with your child's teacher for suggestions before bringing items from home.

## COMMUNICATIONS

We take very seriously our responsibility to communicate with parents. We utilize email as one means to communicate with parents. This process will be facilitated both through the use of classroom email lists for specific class information and through school wide lists for general school or board announcements

The monthly newsletter will be sent via email for your convenience. If you would like a hard copy please let the director know. We will also send home many notes and handouts throughout the year. Please look for these and other notes in your mailbox.

## PARENT/FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, a number of parent and family activities are planned. Family events include: Back to School Social, Chili Cook-off, Italian Dinner Night, CommUNITY breakfast and end of year picnic. The annual Auction is for adults only. The Community Council supports additional social events throughout the year. Please check your email, monthly newsletters, and posters throughout the school for upcoming events.

## CONFERENCES

There will be three scheduled parent/teacher conferences during the school year. The first before school begins, the second conference in November, and the third in March. Parents will be notified of conference dates in advance. Staff members are available and happy to meet with parents to discuss questions or concerns anytime throughout the year. The best time to make arrangements for a meeting or phone conference is after 11:45. Throughout the year staff may also request conferences, if deemed necessary.

## VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

Parents are welcome in our classrooms at any time to observe, visit with children or help with an activity. We strongly encourage moms, dads, and grandparents to volunteer at Unity. If you would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher.

If you have a special talent or hobby that you would like to share with a group of children, we encourage you to contact us. On occasion teachers may ask parents to share their heritage, customs, traditions or language with children in our school.

## FUNDRAISING

The Community Council sponsors several fundraising events throughout the year that provide opportunities for parents to both socialize and support our school.

Fundraising is a necessity to rebuild reserves, purchase equipment for the school, and fund scholarships. Your participation by either volunteering for or financially supporting these events allows Unity to keep our tuition costs in-line with other schools in our community.

## TEACHER APPRECIATION FUND

Unity's Board of Directors collects contributions for a Teacher Appreciation Fund at the beginning of the school year. Each December, all teachers will receive a holiday bonus from money donated to the Fund. During Teacher Appreciation Week in May, the fund will be used to provide a lunch and gifts for Unity teachers. At the end of the year, all remaining funds will be distributed among the teachers. The recommended family donation is \$80/child, but any amount is appreciated. Participation is voluntary, and all contributions are anonymous.

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

If you have a question or concern with any procedure or policy of Unity, please feel free to set up an individual meeting with the director. Unity believes that most issues can be worked out through individual meetings or conferences between parents or guardians and staff or parents or guardians and the director. However, there is a process in place when an individual meeting or conference does not fully satisfy the aggrieved party. The parent or guardian may ask to meet with the Board of Directors. The President of the Board will convene the meeting at a time convenient to both parties. After a presentation and discussion of the concern by the parent or guardian, the executive committee will, within three days, meet with the director to discuss the matter. The parent or guardian will be contacted within three days of that meeting regarding the decision of the Board.