



# Family Handbook

**Will Smith Zoo School**

**A Nature-Based Preschool**

103 Tuleta  
San Antonio, Texas 78212

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## **Program Information**

### **Mission Statement**

Through its passion and expertise in animal care, conservation, and education, the zoo's mission is to inspire its community to love, engage with, act for and protect animals and the places they live.

LOVE- It starts with the heart. We are the stewards of our planet and its animals. Through the stories, connections and interactions we make between guests and each other, we will inspire others to care.

ENGAGE- The spark forms a flame. Our hope is to see guests and zoo crew become advocates for wildlife, carrying the torch for conservation and education and lighting the way for others around them.

ACT-Turning passion into action. We invite others to join us in our mission, investing their time, resources and talents in the work of securing a future for wildlife.

PROTECT- Multiplying the mission. Our aim is to see guests and zoo crew own the mission for themselves, becoming partners with us in a shared vision.

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## **Guiding Principle**

Will Smith Zoo School is dedicated to cultivating innovative, resilient, and compassionate children who value living things and natural resources and who develop a relationship with nature through high quality, child-driven experiences involving enriched play, problem-solving and risk-taking. Our students will impact the world by helping to secure a future for wildlife.

## **Mission Purpose**

### Innovation

#### *Best Practices*

- Reggio Emilia, Maria Montessori, Lev Vygotsky, and Jean Piaget
- Development of creative thought, executive functioning, problem solving, and conflict resolution is present

#### *Child-centered collaboration*

- Students work collaboratively with their peers in ways that respect diversity and inclusion

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- The curriculum is modified to reflect the languages spoken by families, acquired from and supported by community perspectives
- Curiosity and inquiries of the students drive instruction, materials, and the pace/sequence of the units presented
- Students are challenged and enriched with open-ended questions, engaging staff, an environment that supports inventiveness and investigation, and opportunities to express curiosity and observations

### Resiliency

#### *Centered on Play*

- Students experiment with various roles and social interactions
- Students are challenged and enriched with opportunities to display and value interdependence and cooperation, while also being flexible to change and novel experiences
- Play based learning will be process-focused at all times. Large blocks of time allocate for

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children's self-initiated learning choices, which include creative expression and play.

### *Safe Risk Assessment*

- Gaining confidence with small risks at a young age will give students the tools they need to assess larger risks when they are adults
- Students are becoming emotionally competent and resilient as they experience achievements and success while learning from failure
- Students are supported by staff who facilitate the increase of awareness and responsibility for oneself and all living things

### Compassion

#### *Connection to Living Things*

- Our students vacillate between place –based learning and zoo animals
- The love the students feel for the flora and fauna fills them with awe and invigorates their spirit.
- The unique affinity individuals have for nature is fostered and appreciated

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### *Empathy towards Others*

- Staff and students model and encourage respect and inclusion
- Staff and students value the perspectives of others and set the expectation that all living things have an important role in this world
- Curriculum and activities can be modified to reflect the beliefs, values, and experiences of the families enrolled

## **General Policies**

### **Ethical Guidelines**

All staff is expected to know and use ethical guidelines in their conduct as member of the early childhood profession and as San Antonio Zoo employees. Upon hire, all teachers receive orientation regarding the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and receive a copy. To review the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, see front office for a copy.

### **Hours of Operation**

Monday-Friday  
8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

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## **Licensing**

The Will Smith Zoo School adheres to the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for review in the Will Smith Zoo School's office or by contacting the local licensing office at (210)337-3399, the Child Care Information Line at 1-800-862-5252 or at the TDFPS website: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>.

Parents may also request to review the Will Smith Zoo School's most recent licensing inspection reports located in the office.

## **Enrollment and Tuition**

Will Smith Zoo School runs from September through May, with summer options available. Three tuition payment options are offered. These include yearly, semester, and monthly payments. Tuition payments remain the same regardless of absences, holidays, vacations, etc.

The reoccurring monthly payment is due by the fifth of the prior month. If the fifth falls on a holiday or weekend, payment will be processed on the following business day. For example, March payment

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would be due February 5<sup>th</sup>. If you desire to change your payment method for the month, or would prefer to use a different card, please let us know one week in advance.

Should circumstances arise that require you to withdraw your child from Will Smith Zoo School, written notice is required at least 30 days in advance. Please see the tuition contract concerning withdrawals.

The Will Smith Zoo School does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, culture, gender or ability.

Preference for admission will be given as follows:

- Children presently enrolled and/or children of staff
- Siblings of children presently enrolled
- Siblings of former children enrolled
- All others on the waiting list will be based on a combination of availability of days, scheduled desire and date of placement on waiting list by visiting the program
- Once Fall registration is full, a waiting list will be maintained to fill any openings that become available

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Enrollment is secured upon notification of receipt of the registration form, tuition contract and nonrefundable registration fee. By the first day of attendance, each child must have a complete enrollment file.

Any changes in address or telephone number should be reported promptly in writing via email to school administration. Telephone numbers of emergency contacts and individuals authorized to pick up the child should also be kept current.

## **Registration**

Please be aware that registration for current families opens January for the following school year.

Registration for the following school year will be secured upon receipt of enrollment packet and nonrefundable deposit equaling the first month's tuition.

Registration will open to the public in February to fill any available slots not taken by current families.

## **Grouping**

The Will Smith Zoo School classrooms are comprised of boys and girls whose ages range from 3-5 years old. Mixed-age classrooms meet the social and developmental needs of young children. The adult

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to child ratio is 1:8, with one lead teacher and one assistant teacher serving up to 16 children.

## Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

The Will Smith Zoo School runs five days a week, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The door to enter will open 15 minutes prior to class starting. Please **sign in your child** and entrust them to the teacher in their classroom each morning, bidding a cheerful and confident goodbye. Remember, any hesitation on your part may make your child feel they have something to fear. You are welcome to come into our classroom the first day of school, share the children's excitement about the brand new class, and help them place their lunches and belongings in the proper place.

Should a child arrive late, please bring your child to the lobby and administration will take your child to join their class. **We ask that Family's avoid arriving when their child's class will be exploring the zoo. Teachers are NOT to wait for a late arrival NOR meet up in the zoo for a late arrival. Please keep your child with you until the expected time the class should arrive back to the classroom.**

The doors will open for dismissal 15 minutes prior to class ending. **Please sign your child out** and

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remember to check for any reminders every day. We will hold Family workshops and will also send emails with information on what is happening in class and what the children are learning. Even though we would love to talk to each Family on a daily basis, in the interest of safety, please wait until the last child is picked up if you need to discuss matters with the teachers in detail.

If something prevents a child from being picked up on time, please call 210-686-5606, and let the person at the front desk know that you are running late. We ask that you make every effort to be on time as children get a little nervous if they are the last ones to leave.

A fee of \$20 will be charged to a parent/guardian whose child is left in our care 5 minutes after the conclusion of dismissal time. An additional fee of \$20 will be added when they are left in our care an additional 10 minutes.

9:00-2:00 classes	Dismissal 1:45-2:10	1 <sup>st</sup> late fee at 2:15	2 <sup>nd</sup> late fee at 2:20
Extended care	Dismissal 5:30	1 <sup>st</sup> late fee at 5:35	2 <sup>nd</sup> late fee at 5:45

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Please ensure that any person picking up or dropping off the child is on your pick-up list in the paperwork and has a picture ID. We consider the safety of the children our topmost priority and so that you in advance for your patience and understanding in this regard.

## **Cell Phones**

Families are encouraged to refrain from talking on their cell phones as they drop off or pick up their child. The arrival and departure times need to be special one-on-one time between child and family to say goodbye and to reconnect after a long day.

Taking into consideration the view of the child, it can give your child the message that work or the other person on the phone is more important than they are when families are talking on the phone as you say goodbye in the morning or greet your child at the end of the day.

## **Health and Safety Policies and Practices**

### **Food Policies**

WSZS provides snacks for the children. The food is prepared, served and stored in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture's Child and

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Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. The program documents compliance and any correction that it has made, in accordance with the recommendations of the program's health consultant, nutrition consultant, or sanitarian, that reflect consideration of federal and other applicable food safety standards. Our consultant reviews our menus as well as nutrition policies and procedures and makes recommendations needed.

The school does not provide meals for the students, but lunch is eaten together with staff as they model engagement in conversation and promote healthy living. Families are to send a nutritious lunch every day for their child. Lunch should be brought from home in a reusable lunch bag. Make sure to include an ice pack if your child's lunch needs to be refrigerated. We do not have refrigerator space for lunches, or a microwave available for warming food.

**Will Smith Zoo School is a nut-free school.** Foods containing nuts or processed in facilities that also process food containing nuts are prohibited.

As part of our Nature Preschool program, we will be emphasizing the need for less waste and reusable items. Please pack your child's lunch in containers that can be washed and reused. In addition, consider your child when selecting items for their lunch. Make sure they are able to open their

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containers and they like the food you are sending. We have recycle bins in our classroom, and since we will be learning the concept of the 3 R's (reduce, reuse and recycle), it could be a fun project to put together a minimum waste lunch.

For all children with disabilities who have special feeding needs, we will handle the child's needs on an individual basis as the family and program develop an appropriate plan.

With food brought from home, we ask to take certain safety precautions:

- Items such as water bottles and lunchboxes should be labeled with the child's first and last name
- Wash hands before and during preparation
- Families may bring in food for special events, such as birthday and/or school parties. **We ask that families get confirmation and approval by the teacher of any food allergies**
- Staff will not microwave any food or drinks for children
- 

Water is available at all times. The Will Smith Zoo School will provide snacks to be served mid-morning in the classroom. If a child has a food allergy, parents are to indicate this in their enrollment

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paperwork and provide a food allergy plan that is signed by the child's physician. This information will also be a part of their file.

## **Naps and Sleeping Arrangements**

Children who stay for extended care must have a supervised sleep or rest period. The sleep or rest period occurs between 2:15-3:15 p.m. Children are not required to sleep during this time. Staff will allow each child who is awake after resting or sleeping for 30 minutes to participate in an alternative, quiet activity such as, books, puzzles, drawing, etc. until the nap/rest time is over for the other children.

Families arriving during naptime are discouraged, but we understand things arise. Teachers must attend to the children during this routine as it is difficult for the child and disruptive to the other children who are trying to rest.

Staff members are encouraged to have a nap-time plan which includes assigned areas for each child's mat or other special instructions.

Further sleeping/nap guidelines:

- Each child must have a separate personal sleeping mat that may not be shared.

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- Mats and blankets must be labeled with the child's name
- Mats should be a minimum of 3 feet apart, alternating children's heads and feet if needed for spacing
- Mats will be disinfected daily and blankets should be sent home weekly for laundering
- A solid barrier or at least a three-foot spacing must separate sleeping children from one another. Three feet is measured from one child's face to another child's face so placing children to sleep by alternating head and toe position may achieve the three-foot spacing.
- Napping equipment will not block entrances or exits to the area, not be set up during other activities or left in place to interfere with children's activity space, be arranged to provide a sufficient walk and work space for caregivers between each mat, be arranged so that each child and caregiver has access to a walkway without having to walk on or over the mats of other children, and be arranged so the caregiver can easily see all children in the group.
- All staff are aware of and positioned so they can hear and see any sleeping children for

whom they are responsible, especially when they are actively engaged with children who are awake. Staff may lower the lighting in a room while children are sleeping, provided there is adequate lighting to allow visual supervision of all children in the group at all times.

### **Toileting Policies**

- All children must be toilet trained. The school does not serve children who are not toilet trained.
- Disposable gloves on each hand must be used when assisting children with toileting accidents. Soiled and wet clothes are placed in Ziploc bags and sent home
- The child's and caregiver's hands must be washed after each toileting following hand washing guidelines. Handwashing procedures should be posted by each hand washing sink
- Notify the WSZS office immediately if you have any concerns about the cleanliness of the classroom/bathroom

## Hand Washing

The program follows these practices regarding hand washing:

- Staff members and children are taught hand-washing procedures and are periodically monitored
- Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers and children. Thorough hand washing is the best prevention to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others.
- Staff assists children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance.
- Children and adults wash their hands
  - On arrival for the day, parents are included if they are staying in the classroom
  - After using the toilet
  - After handling bodily fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or touching any blood, mucus, or vomit
  - Before meals and snacks, before preparing or serving food, or after

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handling any raw food that requires cooking (i.e., poultry, eggs, meat)

- Before and after playing in water that is shared by two or more people
- After outdoor activities
- After returning to inside the classroom
- Any other time when he/she comes in contact with any substances that could be harmful to children
- Adults must wash their hands
  - Before and after administering medication
  - After assisting a child with toileting
  - After handling garbage or cleaning
- Staff wear gloves when handling blood or bodily fluids that might contain blood, which includes wiping a child's nose.
- Handwashing is required even after using gloves!
- Note: The use of alcohol-based hand rubs in lieu of hand washing is not recommended for early education and childcare settings. If these products are used as a temporary

measure, a sufficient amount must be used to keep the hands wet for 15 seconds. Since alcohol-based hand rubs are toxic and flammable, they must be stored and used according to the manufacturer's instructions

- Proper hand washing procedures are followed by adults and children include:
  - Using liquid soap and running water
  - Rubbing hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including back of hands, wrist, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails.

## **Cleanliness**

All surfaces and items in classroom must be sanitized or disinfected according to the NAEYC Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Frequency Table.

Cleaning supplies must be stored and locked out of reach of children. The floors, sinks, and bathrooms are cleaned during the day by maintenance staff. Maintenance staff is also responsible for cleaning

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carpets and other heavy cleaning according to the NAEYC Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Frequency Table.

### **Communicable Disease/Reducing the Risk of Spreading Infection**

Communication with the medical consultant and/or the public health authorities will be provided for families and staff as needed in the event of an outbreak of any communicable disease or public concern.

Parents will be notified of injuries, minor cuts and scratches requiring first aid by teaching staff. A written accident report will be provided when you pick up your child. The report is to be signed by the parent and copy will be kept in the child's records. Additionally, teachers will notify parents if a child bumps his/her head or something appears to be more serious and needs parent decision for possible medical treatment.

When a child becomes ill during the day, the parent will be notified immediately for you to pick up your child. In an attempt to prevent illness from spreading, sick children will be isolated from others in the treatment room and supervised by a familiar staff. If you are to be away from your usual phone numbers

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during the day, please let the office and your child's teacher know how they can reach you. In the case of an emergency when a physician is needed, EMS will be called and the information given on the enrollment form will be followed.

For daily attendance, the children must be free of symptoms of illness as follows.

When children are exposed to a contagious illness, staff will inform parents verbally and written notices will be posted in the infected classroom.

Any child that may be under-immunized (when medically necessary) will be immediately excluded from the group of children, if a vaccine-preventable illness occurs in the school. Parents will be called to pick up their child immediately to prevent the child from becoming ill. Children will be allowed to return once the illness had been contained.

**If a student becomes ill and a sibling attends the school. BOTH students will be sent home and BOTH will not be able to return until cleared by a physician.**

Parents of children with chronic symptoms of colds/allergies may be asked to have their child checked by a physician to rule out any infection. Written documentation from a physician is required

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for readmission if your child has had a communicable disease.

The following guidelines for the exclusion of children with transmissible disease will be followed:

- An illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in classroom activities, including outside play
- The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of other children
- In the past 24 hours, oral temperature of 101.0 degrees or greater. Child must be fever free without fever lowering agents such as acetaminophen or ibuprophen for 24 hours before returning to school
- Two or more vomiting episodes in the past 24 hours
- Two or more episodes of diarrhea or loose, watery stools in the past 24 hours or within 2 hours at school. Rash with a fever, discharge from the eyes, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior changes or other unusual signs, until medical evaluation indicates the child can be included in classroom activities

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- The child has been diagnosed with any communicable disease, including, but not limited to chicken pox, mumps, diphtheria, scarlet fever, fifth disease, strep throat (24 hours after treatment and without fever for 24 hours), lice (after treatment and all nits are removed), conjunctivitis or pink eye (24 hours after treatment), impetigo (after 24 hours of medication/treatments and covered, if needed). Until medical evaluation determines that the disease is no longer communicable and the child is able to participate in classroom activities; child must recuperate at home (See Minimum Standards for a complete list of communicable diseases)

Teachers follow the same exclusion rules as children in regards to communicable disease.

All staff and Families of the children in the school must exchange information on exposure to communicable diseases, so that staff will be aware of whatever measure are necessary to prevent or control spread of infection. Families should notify staff if their child has a communicable disease. If a child has been absent for two days without

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communication, staff will call the parent and check on the child.

Families will be notified of the presence of a diagnosed contagious illness such as conjunctivitis, strep throat and others recommended by the Texas Department of Health. When a child has any sign or symptom that requires exclusion from the program, staff must immediately inform the WSZS director and or the assistant director and notify the parents.

### **Vision and Hearing Screening**

Vision and Hearing Screening are required for all four year old students and will be offered on campus annually or must be provided by student's physician at four year old checkup.

### **Medication Policy and Procedures**

The school prefers not to administer any medication to children. If the school is to administer medication, it must be handled by administrative staff, not teachers. Teacher should not administer medication (unless designated in charge during absence of administrative staff). No medications will be given without written parental permission and doctor's prescriptions. The parent must sign a medical authorization form stating the medicine to be given

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and the times at which it is to be administered by office staff and the length of time to be given. Parents must give the first dose of any medication. All medication must be in the original containers.

Medications must be labeled with:

- Child's first and last name
- Date that either the prescription was filled or the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health care provider
- Expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medication
- The manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label and details the name and strength of the medication instructions on how to administer and store it

**No prescription medicine or over the counter, OTC, will be administered without a physician's signature and only as needed.** The medication must specify the dosage indicated for the child's weight/age and must be in the original containers. If medication does not have a specific dosage or says "consult physician" it must be accompanied by a licensed health care provider's office may fax over or email instruction only as stated on the label directions. Office staff will document the dosage/time for the

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medication administered. We will not accept expired medication.

Medication will be stored and locked in the treatment room or in the staff lounge refrigerator. It is the parent's responsibility to retrieve the medication at the end of the day if needed. Epi- pens, sunscreen, special soaps, lotions, bug sprays do not need to be kept in a locked cabinet and may be in the classroom for easy adult access, but must be inaccessible to children.

For recurring medical problems, such as asthma attacks, allergic reactions, or other special health care needs the school will require an action plan from the child's physician with type of medication, instructions and symptoms to watch for. A new authorization form to dispense medication for such conditions is required every six months. Parents must speak to the director if their child requires any special medical procedures. The administrative staff is required to review written instructions from the child's health care provider on how to perform the procedure and receive additional training. Teachers will be informed of children needing medication or any special medical procedures.

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Fever reducing pain medication will NOT be administered to any child, as they mask symptom, which would prevent a child from attending school. There should be NO fever reducing pain medication vitamins or cough drops in a child's back pack, or lunch box. They are considered medications. Diarrhea treatments such as Pedialite fluids or similar treatments will not be substituted for regular diets so children may attend the school while illness is treated. Children must be symptom-free before attending care.

### **Application of Sunscreen and Insect Repellent**

Staff may apply sunscreen and insect repellent only when written authorization by parent or legal guardian has been obtained. We will apply sunscreen and insect repellent once a day. Parents must apply the first application before the child comes to school. If sunscreen or insect repellent are applied by spraying the application, this must be done outdoors to avoid inhalation by children and adults.

## Emergency Preparedness

Fire drills, severe weather and active threat drills are each practiced four times a year.

### Evacuation

In the event of an environmental emergency or other circumstances that would require WSZS to leave the building (gas leak, toxic fumes, chemical release, bomb threat, etc.) the WSZS director will announce that staff should take the children to our evacuation site:

DoSeum  
2800 Broadway  
San Antonio Texas 78209  
210) 212-4453

If a neighborhood evacuation is ordered by the fire or police department, WSZS reserves the right to follow the evacuation orders and emergency location determined by the authorities. The WSZS director and administrative staff are responsible for assigning children to the vans and/or staff vehicles. Every effort will be made to have each child in a seatbelt, but in the event that all children must be evacuated off site immediately, some children may need to be double belted in the cars. In the event

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

that it is not safe to return to the WSZS building, parents will be called to pick up their children from the designated location. Staff is provided training in evacuation procedures on an annual basis.

## **Weather Related School Cancellations**

San Antonio Zoo security staff monitor weather conditions at all times. In the event of severe weather, updates and any changes to school operations will be communicated via email, communication apps, and social media.

## **Operating Policies**

### **Curriculum**

The Will Smith Zoo School staff collaborates to ensure engaging activities and experiences are planned in the following areas: literacy and language, animals, math, geography and culture, sensory, art, practical life, science, dramatic play, and circle time discussion.

The Will Smith Zoo School Curriculum is comprised of themes to drive open-ended discussions, animal experiences, and classroom activities. These themes are driven by the interest of the students.

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The children explore nature through outdoor experiences either on our grounds or in the zoo for at least 50% of their day. Outdoor exploration will take place in all weather conditions so it is very important that your child comes to school dressed appropriately. In the case of lightning or extreme weather conditions, exploration will be held indoors.

Children will not participate in swimming or wading pool activities while under the care of Will Smith Zoo School.

### **Show-n-Tell**

Children are encouraged to bring in items to share with the class that are nature related or pertain to a topic or theme discussed in class. Children are not to bring toys or living things to Will Smith Zoo School.

### **Assessments/Program Evaluation**

Will Smith Zoo School instructors focus on providing the children with opportunities to gain confidence in nature consciousness and skills that will prepare them for kindergarten.

Throughout the year the children are observed in the following four areas of nature consciousness:

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

- Awareness
- Compassion and Care
- Discovery/Exploration
- Appreciation

The students are also assessed on the following skills:

- Math
- Literacy
- Art
- Social Skills
- Science and Social Studies
- Motor Skills

Periodically, Family Workshops are held during the day to share what is being explored in the classroom and ways to incorporate those themes and ideas into home life. Activities are also shared to help develop good discussion topics between Families and children.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held to discuss the progress of each child.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

The WSZS staff enjoy being a part of birthday celebrations of their students. Please talk with your child's teacher as the special day approaches so

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

that she can plan accordingly. Birthdays celebrations can involve pictures and stories of the birthday child rather than sugary treats. Details will be dispersed by teachers to families.

Another suggestion to celebrate your child's birthday could be to make a donation to a conservation fund in their honor or donate a book to the classroom.

## **Communication**

Communications will be sent via email relating to curriculum and classroom activities. Parents will also receive updates to the policy or procedure changes via email.

## **Communication with Families**

Families are welcome visitors to WSZS at all times. Staff are expected to establish and maintain positive communications with parents through daily conversations, newsletters, Family apps, bulletin boards, phone calls and individual notes. The WSZS Administration is responsible for sending a school-wide monthly newsletters and other important notices to the classrooms. The teachers are responsible for classroom newsletters and ensuring that parents/guardians receive their handouts. Staff or parents/guardians can request assistance from

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the office to translate or explain the handouts, if needed.

## **Negotiating Differences**

It is very important for teachers and families to work together to help children participate successfully in the early childhood setting. This begins with positive two-way communication. When teachers and families exchange information on a regular basis, children's care in both places becomes more consistent and responsive. However, good communication may be hard to achieve when there is little time to communicate or when professional values and practices differ from those of the families.

Program staff and family members should use a variety of techniques to negotiate difficulties, always keeping the child's best interest in mind. Children need their teachers and families to deal with differences in ways that don't interfere with their care. A disagreement doesn't have to mean that someone is doing something wrong. Instead, a disagreement can be a point from which both the teachers and families can learn and grow.

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### Four steps to negotiation:

1. Teachers and parents should take time to figure out what the problem is and how to state it clearly.
2. Restate the other person's side to show your understanding of their points.
3. Together, teachers and parents should brainstorm solutions that would work in a classroom environment and/or be reinforced at home.

Choose a solution and decide on a plan together. It is important to arrange a check-in with each other after the plan has been implemented to see how it is working.

Information will only be shared about the parent's own child, not the children in the classroom and children will not be compared. Have realistic expectations. Staff shall be a resource to parents. Resolving differences often takes much time and discussion. Some differences may never be resolved. However, as long as both are willing to negotiate differences, families and teachers can remain partners in the child's development.

## **Confidentiality**

All concerns should be addressed with the teacher after dismissal, or during a scheduled conference. If you would like to set up a conference with your child's teacher, please send a note with your child or call 210-686-5606.

Given that our work centers on children and their families, in addition to working closely with other staff, the information we have access to and discuss will be held in the strictest confidence.

We will refrain from discussing personal information concerning children, families, and staff in the presence of children and other adults.

We shall follow the ideals and principles of professional, ethical, conduct in our work with the children, families, colleges and community to the best of our ability. (See NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment)

## **Animals**

Animals are an intricate of the Will Smith Zoo School classroom. AS a part of the zoo, we will take every opportunity to expose and teach the children about animals.

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

While most of our animals are in enclosures and not a touch opportunity for the children, we do have education presentation animals that can be used in the classroom. Some of these animals may be available for a controlled touch by the children under certain circumstances. All animals in the zoo collection have been properly vaccinated and are under the care of staff veterinarians.

## **Dress Code**

Children will be provided a Will Smith Zoo School and should wear it each day they attend school. We recommend close-toed shoes for safety and convenience. Families may purchase additional shirts when available for purchasing. Please leave an extra set of clothes, including an extra pair of shoes, socks and underwear, in a labeled Ziploc with your child's teacher. The children will be working with water, sand, dirt, paint, and glue which could require a change of clothes. Should an accident occur, please remember to replace the extra set of clothing. Extended care will need a separate change for that classroom.

## **Lost and Found**

**Labeling all belongings is a great practice to prevent loss.** Check with teachers and front desk as soon as

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

you notice an item is missing. Unclaimed lost and found items will be sent to local charities.

## **Visitors**

WSZS has an open door policy. Families may visit the preschool at any time during the day to observe their child. Please check in at front desk upon arrival. If a parent would volunteer on a consistent basis, they may contact administration to set that up and submit a background check.

The director and assistant director are on grounds. You may schedule an appointment at any time to meet with them.

Under Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a childcare center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject increased penalty.

As with all areas of the San Antonio Zoo, there is a comfortable place for mothers to breastfeed their children. All mothers have the right to breastfeed or provide breastmilk to their own child in care. We have a treatment room is provided for privacy for breastfeeding mothers.

## **Extended Care**

Extended care is offered from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. for an added fee.

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10



Children staying for extended care will have a rest time. The rest time will be for one hour fifteen minutes and children will be able to nap or engage in quiet activities. Children are to bring a shoe box size container with a blanket to go inside, similar to the size of a beach towel. Please do not send pillows, large blankets, or toys/stuffed animals. The children will also be given a second snack for the day. Children staying in extended care will be playing outdoors and have planned activities provided for them.

## **Transportation**

Students will be transported by bus from the school to the San Antonio Zoo every day for a field trip. Transportation will be regulated by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TXDFPS) minimum standards. The Texas Department of Motor vehicles is referenced for vehicle safety standards. Safety precautions will be taken loading and unloading children from bus, and utilize children passenger safety seat system to restrain children when transporting. Transportation minimum standards may be viewed at TXDFPS website. <https://www.dfpd.state.tx.us/>. Subchapter X Transportation §746.5601.

## **Eco-Healthy Practices**

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

Teaching staff give the children the opportunity to learn how our environment is negatively and positively affected. Children are spoken to about recycling and littering. Families and children can take part in various activities to learn what impacts our environments.

The school discourages idling vehicles (buses, automobiles) in our parking areas, except if vehicles need to idle in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures.

## **Guidance and Discipline**

### **Discipline Policies**

Staff encourage developmentally appropriate independence in children by using positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, anticipation and elimination of potential problems, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than comparison or criticism. Staff abstains from corporal punishment or other humiliating or frightening discipline techniques. Under no circumstances will children be deprived of their basic needs. Persistent refusal by a child to cooperate in cases of biting and inflicting bodily harm to other children may result in the use of "time away" procedures. The staff and child discuss the situation

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

and feelings to determine when the child is ready to return to the group. Consistent and clear rules are explained to the children and understood by the adults. The staff will be proactive in regard to discipline.

Any strong concerns will be communicated to the parents, as well as developed with parent input as to what will be done in the future to encourage positive behavior and relationships. In the event a child's behavior is unacceptable and out of control, the child's parent will be contacted immediately, and the parent may be asked to pick up their child. Parents are encouraged to give the staff any suggestions or insight regarding their child.

### **Encouragement Versus Praise**

Everyone knows a little praise goes a long way, but a little praise really needs to be something more than the same few phrases repeated over and over. Children need more than the traditional "good," "very good," and "fine." Staff verbally describe what they notice a child doing. They make a connection with the child, and try not to attach a value judgement, especially to art projects. They comment on what they see, and value the child's perspective and opinions.

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

## **Challenging Behavior**

When handling challenging behaviors, the teachers will seek information on how the Family(s) deal with this behavior at home. If a child is engaging in challenging behavior, the teacher will consult with the director or assistant director for further assistance if necessary. The teacher, families and other professionals work as a team to develop and implement a strategic individualized plan that supports the children's inclusion and success for children with persistent, serious, or challenging behavior. Challenging behaviors may include physical or relational aggression, tantrums, whining, testing limits, and refusal to allow directions or observe classroom rules. Positive support strategies used to address behavior may include removing or modifying materials from the environment, shadowing, positive redirection, etc. Documentation will be kept on the progression of the behavior. When dangerous or disruptive behavior persists, brief removal from the group is used. Parents will be called for extremely disruptive behavior that causes a safety issue for the child, teacher and/or other children. The goal of this policy is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion or exclusionary measures.

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

## **Termination of Enrollment**

Exclusionary measures are not considered until all other possible interventions have been exhausted, and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child. Once all documentation and plans have been implemented and revised, and all strategies and techniques have been exhausted by the school staff, exclusionary measures may be taken. The program offers resources to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

WSZS staff members are trained annually on the following:

- Methods for increasing employee and parent awareness of issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including warning signs that may be a victim of abuse or neglect and factors indicating a child is a risk for abuse and neglect
- Methods for increasing employee and parent awareness of prevention techniques for child abuse and neglect
- Strategies for coordination between the center and appropriate community organizations; and

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

- Actions that the parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should take to obtain assistance and intervention, including procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect.

### **Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect**

WSZS is committed to compliance with the Texas law on reporting abuse and neglect of children. The law requires any person, including personnel at a school or childcare facility, who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person- whether a parent, an WSZS staff member, or anyone else-to make a report to the appropriate authorities, Child Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400. Before reports are filed, staff members are expected to share concerns with the director and/or assistant director, so that WSZS may take appropriate action.

- Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for the reason alone unless it is proven that the report is in bad faith. The program is required by law to cooperate with any investigation of child abuse or neglect.

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10

- This report should be made immediately when, and in no event more than 48 hours after, a person first suspects abuse or neglect. The report should reflect the person's belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected, and should also include the name and address of the child and of the person responsible for the care, custody or welfare of the child, and other pertinent information about the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of the child.
- It is a criminal offense under Texas law to knowingly fail to make a report of abuse or neglect. In most cases, the identity of the person making the report is confidential, and a person acting in good faith who reports or assist in the investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect or who testifies in the legal proceeding is immune from civil or criminal liability. There is no immunity, however, for a person who reports his or her own abuse or neglect of a child, or who acts in bad faith or with malicious purpose.
- If any staff member has questions about what constitutes abuse or neglect, about whether a report should be made in particular situation, or has a question about

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10



this policy, please contact the director immediately.

Accreditation Criteria: 3B.2; 5A.17; 5A.19; 5A.21; 5A.23; 5A.25; 5B.3; 5B.5; 5B.9; 6A.10; 10B.18; 10B.20; 10D.9; 10D.10