

THE FAMILY ANNEX

PARENT HANDBOOK

2016-2017

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# Introduction

The Family Annex was incorporated as a Parent Cooperative in 1982. Our school is an independent, not for profit, and nonsectarian early childhood school located on 113th Street and Broadway. It is 3 blocks away from the Columbia University campus. The Family Annex is licensed by the New York City Board of Health and is in compliance with the Department of Health Article 47. 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.

Although The Family Annex is a Parent Cooperative, the school is staffed with head teachers and a Director who are licensed educators, parents serve on a variety of committees or can be elected to The Board of Trustees. They are also included in special classroom and school events.

# Mission

To create a community that will foster a nurturing environment, which promotes self confidence, self worth, independence and creativity.

# Philosophy

Since 2005 we have been immersed in learning and applying the Reggio Emilia approach from the town of the same name in Italy. This developmentally appropriate philosophy encourages creative thinking for children and encourages both teachers and children to be researchers. The curriculum is rich with multiple projects based on the children’s interests and natural curiosity. The children are engaged in discovery through the use of materials, discussions and possibilities which the teachers explore with the children. The approach respects the child’s abilities and ideas and the philosophy is meaningful and directly connects to the children’s world and their lives. We observe how the children see and think about the world.

The materials we use includes a variety of writing and drawing implements, natural materials, light tables, overhead projectors, and recycled materials.

Panels including photographs and a written description are put together by the staff to document children’s learning and the process they went through to complete an investigation or project. This documentation makes learning visible.

In working with the Reggio approach we are always reflecting on our practices to think about and implement improvement. As part of this process, we ask parents to complete a yearly survey to provide feedback regarding all aspects of our school. You will be apprised of the results once the survey has been completed and results are compiled. The staff, Board and Educational Committee will discuss the results and consider ways to revisit practices and improve other aspects that need to be considered.

# Facilities

The Family Annex occupies three floors of a brownstone owned by Columbia University. The spacious downstairs Toddler Room opens into the backyard play space with a sand box and climbing equipment. The Nursery Room occupies the second floor and the third floor contains the Pre-K Room, the director’s office and the kitchen, as well as an“atelier” or studio.

By the order of the New York City Department of Health, The Family Annex is a smoke free environment. Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the school premises or anywhere near the building entrances.

# Your Child’s First Week

Each child enters The Family Annex in his or her own way. Successful adjustment to the nursery school setting takes time. A parent or caregiver may need to stay in the classroom or nearby for several days during the beginning weeks of school.

There is a suggested schedule for the transition, but there is flexibility to ensure that each child has a smooth beginning. The teachers will be available to help, and to answer any questions or discuss any concerns that parents may have. Sometimes children need support for a longer period. If this seems necessary for any child, an individual plan will be created.

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 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.

We are also aware that some children have a delayed reaction after several weeks and may resist coming to school or letting you leave. Be assured that the best policy is to continue with the established routine. We know that almost all children are happy once they become engaged in classroom activities.

During the phase in time, there will be coffee and tea in the “atelier” or studio for parents. We invite you to take a few moments to relax and meet the other parents in the school while your child is becoming familiar with school.

Home Visit:

Prior to the first days in school, the teachers will make home visits. We feel that it is helpful for children to meet the teachers in an environment that is comfortable for them. This also gives the teachers insight into your child’s favorite toys, books, or other items that may be important to your child. The teachers will make an appointment to visit. The visit lasts a little less than a half an hour.

# (1) ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Please inform your child’s teacher if your child will be absent from school. If your child will be away on vacation, please let the teachers know that in advance. All of the classrooms may be reached by calling 212-749-3540.

# (2) ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

Once your youngster has learned to separate successfully and adjustment to the program has been established, you are encouraged to continue whatever arrival ritual or routine makes sense: a hug, a kiss, reading a short story, doing a puzzle, and a goodbye or helping your child settle into her first activity. When it is time to leave, which should be no more than ten minutes after arrival, be positive and firm, but cheerful about leaving. Set a time limit that works for you and your child when you come in. Avoid the temptation to gain permission from your child to leave. If your child resists your leaving, prolonging the process makes it more difficult for both of you. Feel free to ask a teacher for assistance. Always make certain you say goodbye to your child before leaving.

Children who arrive in the morning may arrive between 8 A.M. and 8:50 A.M. The teacher will usually have circle time or a meeting at 9:00. It helps to have your child make the transition before 9:00 A.M. Children find it easier to join a group when other children are also arriving. Coming in late hinders the child’s participation in the morning’s activities and makes the transition more difficult for the incoming child. It is easier for the teachers to greet and help the children before a very active morning begins. Once morning meeting begins, we want to be respectful and not interfere with this process. The nursery curtain will close to indicate morning meeting is in progress, and the pre-k room’s door will be closed for the same purpose. The teacher’s will open the curtain or door once the meeting has concluded to greet your child. The toddlers may wait in the hallway and the teacher will come out to greet you there.

# (3) BEDTIME

Children who are rested generally have an easier time at school working with their peers and enjoying an active time. It is advisable to have a consistent bedtime routine and time.

# (4) BIRTHDAYS

Each classroom has its own birthday tradition. The teachers will tell you about their

celebration in the beginning of the year. Families are encouraged to attend the event. Please keep the food simple. Because some children are uncomfortable with the popping of balloons and we’re concerned about a choking factor, balloons are not permitted in the school. If you want to check regarding appropriate food or snacks please speak to the teacher.

# (5) BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees meets every six weeks with the Director of The Family Annex during the school year. The Board is the oversight body of the school and makes decisions and operates according to a set of By Laws. It is responsible for the school’s financial stability, approves major changes in the physical plant and program structure of the school, and works to establish long range planning and goals. It establishes tuitions and makes decisions about faculty salaries and benefits. The Board Treasurer coordinates the investment policy of the school and receives approval regarding investments from the Board. Furthermore, the Treasurer or Board Chair assists in making decisions about tuition reduction for families who demonstrate need. Members’ backgrounds are varied and represent areas that are helpful to the running of the school such as Human Resource specialist, attorneys, financial advisors, as well as staff and students who represent our connection with Columbia University. The Board members are elected on a yearly basis. Minutes are available to attending families and the Board meetings are open for parents who wish to attend the general meeting.

# (6) CHANGES IN HOME OR WORK SITUATION

Please notify the Director and classroom teachers promptly when there is a change in home or work address and/or telephone, cell phone number, or email address. If there is an emergency we want to be able to reach a parent quickly. It is also important to inform the school whenever there are any changes in the family situation of living arrangements. Knowing that changes have occurred will help the classroom teacher’s work more effectively and supportively with a child during her or his adjustment to those changes.

# (7) CLOTHING AND REST PROVISIONS

We recommend that children wear comfortable, washable play clothes and practical, sturdy shoes to school. We use materials that are messy and it is likely that clothes will become soiled and stained. To protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect borne disease, the program ensures that: Children wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth in cold weather. Children have the opportunity to play in the shade. When in the sun, they wear sun-protective clothing, applied skin protection, or both. Applied skin protection will be either sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher applied to exposed skin. When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents, only repellents containing DEET are used on children older than two months not more than once a day.

The children need to wear winter hats, mittens or gloves, scarves, sweaters, boots and snow pants when necessary. We go outside every day unless the weather is very cold or inclement. Please do not dress children in one piece snowsuits for school. In case of emergency we want to be able to quickly dress a child if we must leave the building. For the warmer months, please send a bathing suit, water shoes, sun block and a beach size towel. We set up a sprinkler in the backyard for the children's use or children go to surrounding parks.

An extra set of clothing needs to be left in school. The set should include socks, underwear, pants and a shirt. Please change the clothes when there is a major seasonal change and also check to be sure the clothing still fits. **Please mark all clothing with your child's name.**

Children who nap need a sheet and a small blanket. A new sheet will be supplied to your child. If you wish additional sheets the cost is $10 and you may give the money to the classroom teacher. The rest provisions will be sent home weekly for washing. Soft sleep toys, such as stuffed animals may be kept in the children's cubby and are brought out during rest time.

# (8) CLOSING OF SCHOOL

The Family Annex is closed for severe weather conditions. We will try to determine as early as possible if we will close due to weather conditions. Once the Board Chair and the Director have determined that the school will close, the Director will inform the Parent Body via email. The Parent Contact from each classroom will be responsible for coordinating a telephone chain to follow up on the email. The school will also close if there is a situation which would make it unsafe to try to access or use the school building.

# (9) COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FAMILY ANNEX

The Family Annex is housed in a brownstone owned by Columbia University. However, the school is an entity that is independent from Columbia. The staff personnel are employees of the school, not the University. Our school is one of six University- subsidized programs for young children. Columbia University provides a small scholarship each year for financial assistance. We provide our own utilities and maintenance for cleaning.

Over fifty percent of our population is affiliated with Columbia through parents who are students, professors or alumnae

# (10) CONSULTANTS

As part of our intention to provide a rich curriculum and stimulating, aesthetically attractive environment, we work with various consultants both on the Reggio Emilia approach and other areas that are specific to early childhood, such as child development, music, art, etc. Teachers are also sent to other schools and conferences to gain more knowledge about the approach and topics related to developmentally appropriate early childhood practice.

# (11) CONTRACTS

The days and hours that you purchase in your contract are the only days and hours that are covered by the contract. You may not switch one day for another or have long hours on a different day without paying the hourly fee for them. There is no credit for hours or days that are not used. If your child is absent, you forfeit your time and the school can sell the hours to another child. Please call the school when your child is absent and inform the teacher if your child will be away on vacation. All families are responsible for all tuition fees on their contracts as is indicated in the signed contract.

# (12) CURRICULUM, GOALS and ASSESSMENTS

We have taken our inspiration from the Reggio Emilia Philosophy, an approach that has been successfully used in Italy for over forty years. This philosophy draws upon the strength of the children’s intellectual curiosity and hypotheses regarding the world around them. It is difficult to adequately describe the Reggio approach in a short paragraph. The following presents the fundamentals of the Reggio Approach. This is excerpted from Bringing Reggio Home by Louise Boyd Cadwell.

* The child as protagonist. Children are strong, rich, and capable. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in constructing their learning, negotiating with everything their environment brings to them. Children, teachers, and parents are considered the three central protagonists in the educational process.
* The child as collaborator. Each child is focused on in relation to other children, the family, the teachers, and the community rather than on each child in isolation. There is an emphasis on work in small groups. This practice is based on the constructivist model that supports the idea that we form ourselves through our interaction with peers, adults, things in the world, and symbols.
* The child as communicator. Children have the right to use many materials in order to discover and communicate what they know, understand, wonder about, question, feel and imagine. They make their thinking visible through their many natural “languages.” The studio teacher works with the children and teachers to enable children to explore many materials and to use a great number of languages to make their thinking visible. The Reggio approach fosters children’s intellectual development through a systematic focus on symbolic representation, including words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, etc. This leads children to surprising levels of communication, symbolic skills, and creativity.
* The environment as third teacher. The design and use of space encourage encounters, communication and relationships. There is an underlying order and beauty in the design and organization of all the space in a school and the equipment and materials within it.
* The teachers as partner, nurturer, and guide. Teachers facilitate children’s exploration of themes, work on short and long-term projects and guide experiences of joint, open-ended discovery and problem solving. Teachers listen and observe children closely to know how to plan and proceed with the work. Teachers ask questions; discover children’s ideas, hypotheses, and theories; and provide occasions for discovery and learning.
* The teacher as researcher. Teachers work together to discuss and interpret children’s work. This provides ongoing training and theoretical enrichment. Teachers see themselves as researchers preparing documentation of their work with children, whom they also consider researchers.
* The documentation as communication. Careful attention is given to the presentation of the thinking of the children and the adults who work with them. Teachers comment on the purposes of the study and the learning process of the children. They transcribe children’s language, document using photographs of their activity and process and represent their thinking in various media. These panels present the process of learning. It also makes parents aware of their children’s experience; allows teachers to better understand children, to evaluate their own work, and to exchange ideas with other educators. The documentation also relates to the children that their work is valued. Finally, the documentation creates an archive that traces the history of the school and the pleasure in the process of learning experienced by many children and their teachers.
* The parent as partner. Parent participation is considered essential and takes many forms. Parents play an active part in their children’s learning experience. The exchange of ideas between parents and teachers assists is working in this approach. The parent is viewed as another source of wisdom about the child and presents another opportunity for collegiality.

Assessment Process:

The assessment pieces we use include both formal and informal observations. These help to give us a deeper knowledge of the individual children and help in planning the curriculum for individuals, small groups and the class.

Beginning of school year:

* Home visit: Each teaching team visits the children prior to the first day of school. This gives children the opportunity to meet the teachers in their own space and comfort zone. It gives the staff a sense of the child’s home life including interests; space to play in, home language, favorite toys and books, siblings, etc.
* All parents are given a Background Information packet. Physical, emotional and cognitive questions are addressed to give teachers a fuller sense of who the child is.

Informal Types of Assessment:

* Teachers record conversations the children are having in various centers to understand how children view the world, how they use materials and what questions the children are wondering about. This also helps teachers frame research projects based on the children’s questions and hypotheses.
* During project time the teachers also record questions they ask, questions the children ask and responses to review as a team in thinking about how to deepen children’s understanding of various concepts.
* Portfolios: Children’s work is stored and saved in portfolios. Parents, teachers and children have opportunities to look at the work and discuss trends, changes and ways to move forward. The portfolios also include blogs that a child has been in and work that reflects the growth of the child. The portfolios follow the children from room to room.

Formal Type of Assessment:

* At the beginning of the school year teachers in each classroom use an assessment known as Ages and Stages. This helps in knowing where your child is in various areas and how best to plan to meet each child’s needs.
* Twice yearly, at the end of the fall and in the spring the teachers use “Creative Curriculum” checklists appropriate to the age group. This is a valid and reliable tool. After the teachers use the checklists, they send written reports to the family on their findings prior to the Parent-Teacher conference. This gives the parents a chance to look at the various areas of assessment and bring questions and comments to the conference. The teacher and parents talk together about next steps for the child and formulate goals.

The various assessments that are built into the program help the teachers ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to the interests and development of the children. The project based curriculum emanates from the children’s thoughts, questions and hypotheses about the world around them. We can learn more about this world through the multiple assessment pieces we use.

# (13) DEPARTURE FROM SCHOOL

Please be prompt in picking up your child. The morning pick-up is between 12:30 P.M. and 12:45 P.M. The afternoon pick-up is between 3:15 P.M. and 3:30 P.M. The last pick-up is between 5:30 P.M. and 5:45 P.M. The last pick-up of the day is particularly important as teachers need to get home to their own families. Parents and children are expected to be out the door by 12:45 P.M., 3:30 P.M. or 5:45. Any departure after those times is subject to the following penalties: The first time the child is picked up late there is a warning, (time determined by the classroom clock). The second time that the child is picked up late, the cost is $1.00 per minute after the scheduled time. The third time the child is picked up late, $2.00 per minute, etc. Parents are expected to sign a late pick-up form and pay the penalty at the time of pick-up. Please relate this policy to anyone picking up your child. They will be expected to follow the same policy. Lateness fees after 5:45 P.M. are paid directly to the teachers on staff as they are deterred from going home at the end of their work day.

Once you have picked up your child, please do not linger in the classroom meeting with other parents. The children who continue their day need to continue with their routines and activities. If you would like to speak to a teacher, please call them to arrange a phone call or email time to chat.

If there is a change in time or a substitution of person(s) for the child’s pickup, the school must be notified in advance, preferably in writing.

# (14) DISCIPLINE

One of our goals at The Family Annex is to help our children develop self-control. Children learn self-control when adults treat them with dignity and respect and they are aware of the classroom and school rules. It is important that the children understand what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, while showing them that you recognize their feelings. It is important to be consistent. The discipline should be appropriate for the age of the child. Toddlers may be redirected if they are doing something disruptive, but a pre-k child generally understands what acceptable behavior is. Our discipline policy incorporates safety rules and positive discipline techniques. They are:

* Children may not hurt themselves, others or property.
* Doors to the outside and windows are opened by adults only.
* Children must be accompanied by an adult on all stairways.
* Children are always under the supervision of an adult.
* During fire drills or emergency situations children are aware of the need for quiet and listening to the teacher.
* During walks outside of the building children remain together and walk one behind the other so the teacher can see everyone.

Problems are handled by:

* Setting up limits with children’s input (nursery and pre-k).
* Noticing and encouraging appropriate behavior.
* Reminding children of the rules in a calm manner.
* Conflict resolution techniques with nursery and pre-k children.
* Redirecting toddlers to another activity.
* Separation of the child from the class or activity when a child is hurting someone.
* Informing parents if a pattern of behavior seems to repeat itself and discussing ways to redirect behavior patterns.

# (15) EATING IN THE BUILDING

Parents who bring coffee cups, juice, soda cans, etc. into the building are responsible for throwing out their own containers and refuse.

# (16) E-MAIL

The e-mail address of the school is info@familyannex.org. If there is an urgent matter, please call the school (at (office) 212-749-3271 or (classroom): 212-749-3540) rather than emailing. The Director is the only one with access to this e-mail account and is sometimes at meetings without access to the e-mails for that day. If there is a change in pick-up time or people picking up, please call the school and talk directly to the teacher. You may e-mail the teachers in your child’s class. They will give you the e-mail address in the beginning of the year. If your e-mail address changes, please inform us immediately as much information is now sent home via e-mails.

# (17) ILLNESS

Any child who has a bad cold, fever, or any symptoms of illness should be kept at home. For most illnesses, a youngster should be kept out until all symptoms disappear or are no longer contagious. This protects both the sick child from catching something new and protects a well child from being exposed.

A parent, whose child becomes ill during the day, will be called to arrange early pick-up of the youngster. There are no facilities to care for sick children in the school for any length of time. If your child contracts a contagious disease or condition (chicken pox, strep throat, conjunctivitis, head lice, etc.) please let the Director know promptly so that parents of exposed children can be notified. Children will remain with the Director until they are picked up.

The Family Annex requests that your child remain at home if:

* The child has a fever of 100 or more in the morning. Your child may return to school when he/she is fever free for 24 medication-free hours.
* Your child has conjunctivitis, commonly referred to as “pink eye” as it is highly contagious. Your child may return to school with a physician’s note stating that the contagious period is over or the condition has cleared.
* Your child has a rash you cannot identify and has not been diagnosed by a physician.
* Your child has impetigo.
* Your child has a bad cold, is vomiting, or has diarrhea. A child will be sent home with these symptoms.
* Your child has a contagious disease such as measles, strep throat, chicken pox, etc. The child may return to school with a physician’s note stating that the condition has cleared. After an ear or throat infection requiring medication the child cannot return to school until he/she has been without a fever for at least 24 hours.
* There are visible nits or head lice present on your child.
* Your child is unable to participate in normal class activities for any other reason.

Please note: The staff is not able to administer medication.

In case of a serious accident the following procedure will be followed:

* The staff will contact a parent to notify and ask for instructions.
* If a parent or emergency contact is not available, the Director (in case of absence) or staff member will call 911. If parent is not able to get to school in a timely manner due to distance, the school will contact 911.
* The Director and/or staff member will accompany the child to St. Luke’s Hospital Emergency room with an EMS team and remain with the child until the parents have arrived.
* The staff will continue to try and contact the parents until contact is made.

# (18) LUNCH

All children have lunch in school at noon. Lunchtime is a pleasant, sociable time for youngsters. Please send nutritious food that includes: protein (cheese, beans , meat, fish, among others), fresh fruits and/or vegetables bread and a beverage. Please do not send candy, chips or other sweets. Please note that children younger than four years old should not bring these foods to school for lunch: hot dogs, popcorn, raw peas and hard pretzels; spoonful’s of soy butter or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole, also whole cherry tomatoes and whole grapes.

**Please do not send any food containing nuts to school with your child.**

Please gauge the lunch size according to how much your child generally eats at home. The teachers will let you know if the lunch is too much or not enough for your child. Uneaten food is generally sent home so you can be aware of how much was eaten. Hot food may be kept in a thermos and not put in a refrigerator. Foods that should be served cold may be stored in the refrigerator. In pre-k, lunches are stored in a hamper and should have an ice pack if you want to keep the lunch cold. Please label all food containers, drinks, etc. by using a sharpie with your child’s name on the container or box. All milk bottles for the toddlers must be marked with a child’s name and date it has been put in the refrigerator.

# (19) MEDICAL RECORDS

The Department of Health requires us to maintain medical records for each child and to update them on an annual basis. Requests for new examination records must be handled promptly or exclusion from class may occur**. No child may enter school** **without an immunization record on file**. We also request background information from each newly entering child to help the staff understand your child. New entrants must have a medical form filled out by their pediatrician no more than 3 months before entering school.

Please advise the staff about any information that is pertinent to your child’s health or of any changes in your child’s health status.

# (20) OUTDOOR PLAY

Except for very inclement weather, the children will be going outdoors every day. Children who are in school for a half day will go out once a day. Full day children will go out again in the afternoon. Each class is outside for 45 minutes. Every class has a scheduled outdoor time. Please speak to the classroom teacher to find out the time of outdoor play. The schedule changes from year to year. Please see the section on clothing regarding appropriate outdoor gear. All children who attend school will be expected to go out with their class.

# (21) PARENT CONFERENCES

Parents may not have daily access to all their child’s teachers, since staffing is staggered to cover the full day program. However, one teacher in each classroom has at least one late evening every week for planning. During that time they will also be available for individual conferences that have been pre-arranged. A teacher (at the beginning of the day or end of the day ) is also available for brief chats or questions. E-mails may be sent to the classroom email with questions or concerns. The teachers are also available to take phone calls and can schedule a mutually agreeable time to talk.

Formal conferences will be held twice yearly. One conference is in the fall and the other prior to the end of the school year. Parents will receive e-mailed reports prior to the conference.

The report will be signed by the parents and the teacher. This report will be placed in your child’s file in the area adjacent to the main office. The files are **confidential** as are all school reports sent to on going schools. The file cabinet containing the children’s records is kept locked. An information form is required with the parent’s signature before information will be released to on going schools. These forms are generally provided by the on going school.

In addition, whenever a parent wishes to know more about his or her child’s development, that parent may request a conference at any time and should arrange one directly with the teacher. A teacher also may request a conference at other times, when there is a need.

The Director is also available to discuss concerns, children’s progress, and choice of schools after nursery school, etc. Please arrange for a conference by telephone or e-mail.

# (22) PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Each family has a mailbox for distribution of notices regarding school and community events. There is also a parent information board outside of each classroom. The parent information board will indicate community events, workshops and events that may be of interest to families. Please check the parent board and your mailboxes daily. Please also check your e-mails for updates and additional information. Feel free to e-mail the Director or classroom teachers at any time.

A calendar has been distributed to all families indicating workshops, school closings for staff development days and holidays. Please check the calendar monthly so you may be aware of these special dates.

# (23) PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTICIPATION THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND COMMITTEES

The combination of a Parent Coop and the Reggio Emilia approach both encourage parents to take an active role in the life of the school. The school is eager to have parents assist during special classroom events and to share any talents they may have. The school encourages parents to let the teachers know that they would enjoy volunteering and the areas in which they might be of service. The teachers also will be providing specific types of opportunities for involvement, such as volunteering for special cooking projects, coming in to read to the children in either small or large groups, being a part of birthday celebrations, bringing in or preparing special snacks, coming in to talk about careers, travelling experiences with their families or working on projects that the children are researching. We also need parents to volunteer to go on walks, trips and to transcribe discussions and assist with documentation panels. Our program has an “Open Door Policy” and we welcome parents to be a part of our learning community.

The Family Annex is a parent cooperative and the Board is comprised of representatives for each classroom. The Board and Director meet every six weeks to discuss fiscal issues, maintenance of the school and updates on the daily functioning of the school educationally as well as setting the new tuition, discussing staff salaries, approving the calendar, etc. Each Board member serves as a liaison to one of The Family Annex committees and reports on the activities of these committees.

Other activities that encourage parent support and interaction are the following:

**Two potluck dinners per year**- one in the fall to meet new families and say hello to continuing families and one at the end to say good-bye to friends made through the year. families rather We have a winter holiday party that’s held on a Saturday, as well as a year end family picnic. We celebrate Special Persons’ Day with a breakfast for the special someone in your child’s life and we have a lovely Harvest feast with food the children have made with their teachers and goodies donated from home. There are ample opportunities to meet families in your child’s class and to cultivate a warm relationship with these families and school staff.

# Committees

School committees encourage parents working together as part of the parent cooperative. Each parent/guardian is expected to serve and be active on one committee for the school year. The work responsibilities and workload distribution vary depending upon the committee selected. The types of committees are updated annually to best serve the needs of the school. The following is a list and description of current committees:

**ADMINISTRATION** (Board) This committee works with the Director and handles the fiscal management of the school including salary raises, staff bonuses and tuition decisions. The Board also looks at the programs of the school regarding changes in the physical plan and the maintenance of a quality program. It is comprised of the elected officers who represent the toddler, nursery and pre kindergarten classes. The Board meets monthly with the Director.

**PARENT EDUCATION COMMITTEE**: (Participants TO BE DETERMINED IN September of each school year): This committee will meet approximately every six weeks to discuss curriculum, educational issues and items pertaining to the parent participation in the classrooms. The committee meetings will include an elected parent and alternate from each room and one member of each classroom team as well as the Director.

**FUNDRAISING & HOSPITALITY**: Parents plan and coordinate events designed to raise money for special school projects. A general person will help coordinate tag sales, magazine or merchandise sales, a school wide raffle sale and dinner, etc. Members of this committee will be responsible for soliciting donations for raffle events. Each event will have its own chairperson. The hospitality committee will work in conjunction with fundraising to organize parties and events.

**ROOM CONTACTS** **& TEACHER APPRECIATION:**  One parent from each class is needed to update families and pass information regarding special school events, school closings and other pertinent information via email or telephone. Members of this committee will assist in ensuring that parents participate in activities such as maintenance, fundraising, etc. The contact will also collect funds and shop for teacher’s birthdays, the winter holiday gift and end of year gift.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT**: Members of this committee may be called upon for general technology support. Members of this committee are needed to update and help maintain a website.

**SHOPPING**: This committee is responsible for shopping for the weekly snacks for all classrooms. The shopping is done on Monday or Tuesday morning. This committee will be limited to four people who will be responsible for shopping 3 months per year.

**HOUSEKEEPING/MAINTENANCE**: This committee will appoint two committee members to go into the school on a monthly basis to clean toys, sleeping mats, collect and wash school laundry, hang items, repair if needed, etc.

**RECRUITMENT**: This committee is responsible for conducting group tours for prospective parents and answering questions that may arise during the tour. Tours are conducted at 9 A.M. and last approximately a half an hour. The tours start in November and run through the spring. Familiarity with the school for at least one year (currently or in the recent past) is required.

**GRANT WRITING**: The members of this committee will work collaboratively to seek out, apply for and write grants that will support and enhance the curriculum of the school.

**DOCUMENTATION:** One parent from each class is responsible for assisting the teachers with documenting the work of the children. The parents’ responsibilities include pasting photographs and placing text on panels (boards) that will be hanging in the classroom or school hallways. An artistic background is helpful.

**NUTRITION**: A parent who is also a physician, preferably for children, may assess food and nutritional policies for the classrooms.

Parents from the same family are requested to choose different committees.

Failure to contribute to your committee places a burden on those who do contribute.

If a committee chair determines that a parent has not fulfilled an obligation, the chair will contact the parent and urge him/her to participate. If the problem persists, the Board Chair or Director will contact the parent. If the parent does not fulfill their obligation, his/her committee assignment will be revoked and he/she will be billed for the committee work fee of $300.

# (24) PARENT WORKSHOPS

Workshops are offered as well as curriculum evenings for the parents in the school. We want to present opportunities for parents to work with materials and understand how their children are working on projects and the hypotheses that children make and reflective thinking that goes into these projects. The projects reflect small group work depending upon children’s interests. Curriculum evenings give parents an opportunity to view the projects the children have been working on and to study panels to understand the research that has been taking place by the teachers and children. We want to take the learning that is happening on a daily basis and make it visible to parents.

# (25) REPORTS AND FILES

As a member school in the ISAAGNY organization, the teachers are requested to fill out reports to on-going schools. The information is only shared with the on-going school. These reports are usually sent to schools during December and/or early January (before the mid-January deadline for completion of application materials). As it is very time consuming for the teachers to complete several reports, each family may request three unpaid reports. Additional reports are $10. Per report which is paid to the teacher for time spent working on the report after regular school hours.

Many public, parochial, and other religious schools (those not members of ISAAGNY) require reports about youngsters whose parents may be applying for the following year. Many of the public schools have their own reports. Other schools request that the school send whatever information it wishes to provide. In these cases, the reports sent are edited versions of The Family Annex’s own progress report.

All children’s files are stored in a file cabinet in the office area. These records include background information, medical records, neighborhood walk permission slips and teachers reports. The children’s files are confidential.

# (26) SNACKS

The shopping committee provides snacks for the school based on teacher’s requests. Children are given snack during the morning and afternoon sessions. A snack menu is posted for each classroom so parents may see the snacks that children are eating everyday. Snack usually consists of fruit, juice, skim milk (New York City Department of Health regulations), rice crackers, saltines, cheese, yogurt, raisins, raisin bread, bagels, cereals, etc. The afternoon snack does not duplicate the kind of snack served in the morning. Juice is not served twice a day.

If your child has a food allergy, please alert the teachers.

# (27) STAIRWAYS

Please cooperate in not allowing children to use the stairways alone. All parents or care givers should escort their children to and from their respective classrooms or the playground. This includes pick up times as well. Please do not permit a child to go alone on the steps or into a classroom without an adult.

# (28) TELEPHONES

The main office telephone number is 212-749-3271. However, the Director is the only one that uses the phone on a regular basis. As there are times she is not in her office, it is recommended that if you need to leave a message for a teacher, you call the alternate school telephone number.

The number for the classrooms is: 212-749-3540. All teachers have an extension with the same number.

# (29) TOYS

Sharing is difficult for most children. When they bring a toy to school it is too hard for children to share with their friends. Also, if something is lost, it becomes difficult for the child to accept the loss. It is easier for all the children, if toys are kept at home and not brought to school.

A transitional object, however, such as a special stuffed animal or blanket, which eases the separation process for the children is understood to be an exception to the rule regarding toys. Special books, CD’s, etc which can be shared with the entire class, are always welcome in school.

# (30) TRIPS

All parents sign permission forms for neighborhood trips, which might include those to the grocery store, fire house, Farmer’s market, local parks, etc. These trips often are taken spontaneously, which usually precludes prior parental notice.

When special trips are planned that go outside of the immediate neighborhood, parents will be notified in advance. Special permission slips will be sent home indicating the date and destination of the trip. Parents will be invited to attend the trips when additional supervision is needed.

# (31) TUITION AND FEES

Tuition is due payable to Smart Tuition on the first of every month based upon the number of payments your contract indicates. Any payment received after the 10th of the month will be subject to a late fee based on Smart Tuition fees.

Please note on the contract that tuition reduction is not provided for absences. Tuition is non refundable and is not discounted for early departures.

We urge all parents to make payments in a timely fashion. The school is dependent on tuition for its financial operations. Delayed payments can affect the financial health of the school.

# ADDENDUM: EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

When children need early intervention services, we make every effort to accommodate their needs. When staff or family feel that a child may need some assistance, it is wisest to begin the process as quickly as possible. Although all families are entitled to an evaluation through the Department of Education, services are more readily available early in the school year. We are available to facilitate the process in any way we can.

If children have been diagnosed with speech or language delays or have been identified as needing the services of an occupational or physical therapist, they may receive DOE services here at The Family Annex. We are always willing to provide a quiet space in school for these services if the family finds this arrangement more convenient than traveling to an office or having home visits. These visits may take place during the hours the child is in attendance at school.

Some children who receive early intervention services are assigned Special Education Itinerant Teachers (SEIT). The SEIT spends time in school with the child and is trained to support him/her as needed in the classroom. At an initial meeting, The Family Annex staff will talk with the SEIT and the family to agree on common goals and strategies to best serve the child’s needs. Thereafter, on a regular basis , the classroom teacher and SEIT will meet to discuss the child’s progress and work as a team to achieve the maximum benefit for the child.