



**Tallahassee
Museum**

TREE TO TREE ADVENTURES

Tallahassee Museum

Preschool

Parent Handbook



The Tallahassee Museum Early Childhood Department offers exciting programs for children from three to five years of age. The information in this booklet has been put together by the early childhood staff to help acquaint each parent/guardian with Museum policies and procedures for the Monday-Friday Full Day and Morning Class preschool classes.

PHILOSOPHY

The Tallahassee Museum Early Childhood programs provide exciting experiences for children. Each program gives the growing child the opportunity to develop an understanding and appreciation of his or her ever-expanding world through a hands-on program.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Children learn decision making in a supportive environment where choices are offered.
- Children learn responsibility.
- Children use tools such as magnets, microscopes, scales, and magnifying lenses to explore the environment.
- Children verbalize needs to adults and peers. Children learn to share, wait for a turn, and empathize with others.
- Children develop an attention span appropriate to their age.
- Children refine perceptual skills and motor movements in the context of hands-on, theme-related activities.
- Children are involved in language arts and bookmaking. They learn relationships between speech and written words.
- Children learn concepts related to letters, size, number, and color in the context of hands-on, theme-related activities.
- Children participate in activities and share experiences designed to show that learning and the quest for knowledge are stimulating, entertaining, and intrinsically rewarding.
- Children become familiar with science concepts such as interrelationships in nature and conservation within the context of hands-on, theme-related activities.
- Children are prepared for school readiness using the criteria set forth by the State of Florida Sunshine State Standards and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program.

LUNCH AND SNACK

Children should bring morning snack and lunches in a disposable bag or soft lunch box with an ice pack in containers they can open. All lunch containers need to be labeled with child's name. Tallahassee Museum Preschool does microwave or refrigerate snack or lunches.



Please do not pack anything that is a choking hazard. Whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, whole grapes, nuts, cheese cubes and any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe may not be served to any child under the age of 4 according to Florida law.

FAMILY EVENTS

Tallahassee Museum Preschool holds family events multiple times a year. These events are our opportunity to share projects with families and usually involve a performance or project prepared by your child's class. These events will be announced in advance.

CLASS TIME

Drop Off:

You are to park in the Museum parking lot and walk your child to the classroom for drop off. Please help us teach good habits by arriving on time. Drop off time begins at 7:30 AM Monday-Friday. Instructional time begins at 8:00 AM each day. All students must be signed in by a parent or designated adult. Please take your child to the restroom prior to entering the classroom.

Pick Up:

Park in the Museum parking lot and walk to preschool garden. All students must be signed out by a parent or designated adult.

Anyone arriving after the pick-up times will be charged \$1.00 per minute. The late fee amount will be reported to the office and you will be contacted by office personnel with the amount and information you will need to pay your fee.

If someone else will be picking up your child, you must provide **written consent and they must provide photo ID at time of pick up**. If you need to pick your child up early, please notify the teacher when you drop off your child so that we can best accommodate you. Thank you for your consideration.

V.P.K. hours are on Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm and are the designated days and times that participants must attend. All vacations, doctor appointments and family days are not valid excuses for absences. No exceptions will be made. If you anticipate vacations or frequent absences, you may enroll your 4 year old in the Pre-K program and choose not to participate in VPK.



ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT

If your child is ill, please keep him/her at home. If your child becomes ill or has an accident, you will be contacted immediately. Your child will be kept comfortable and isolated in the Preschool building awaiting your arrival. All accidents will be documented with a parent signature required. You must keep us updated with new telephone numbers and addresses.

MEDICATION

Tallahassee Museum Preschool does not administer nonprescription medication. This includes bug spray and sunscreen, which must be applied prior to arriving. Prescription medication must be in the original container with a label stating the name and contact of the physician, child's name, name of the medication, and medication directions. The preschool must have written authorization from a custodial parent or legal guardian to give prescription medication.

COMMUNICATION & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Regular communication between school and home can improve your child's preschool experience. Teachers will use electronic communication to notify you about preschool activities and calendar reminders,

Any parent is invited to assist with fundraisers or to help or plan special events on behalf of the preschool (with Museum approval). If you have an idea or would like to volunteer in our classrooms, let us know!

If you feel the need to speak with the teacher or director, please make an appointment. It is a courtesy and helps us to prepare to give you our complete attention, and, if needed, an objective evaluation of your child.

Children's progress will be documented through work samples and assessments. Teachers will set up a conference(s) to inform you of your child's progress.

OFFICE HOURS - REACHING A TEACHER

The Museum office is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

If you have a non-emergency message or question regarding your child and/or their classroom, please call 575-8684 ext.129. Or ask the Admissions Clerk to radio a teacher.



If you have an emergency, give your name, number and nature of the emergency to the Admissions Clerk, and they will have the teacher call you as soon as possible. Part of the mission of the program is to be out on the Museum grounds and teachers may not be near a phone throughout the school day.

FIRE DRILLS & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Child Care Licensing requires fire drills and emergency preparedness drills (such as inclement weather) to be held monthly to acquaint students with emergency evacuation procedures. Dates and times are posted in the classroom after each drill occurs.

ABSENCES

In compliance with Florida state laws parents will be contacted beginning at 9:00 am each day if their child has not arrived. If parents cannot be reached, we must call your designated emergency contact.

Because you are securing a spot for your child in our program, no credits or pro-rates can be given. That spot is held for your child whether or not he/she attends.

Important for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten participants: These students may not be absent more than 10 days of the 540 hours required by the State of Florida. Attendance Records will be audited and monitored often by the State of Florida and the rules of attendance strictly enforced. Non-compliance may result in termination from the VPK program.

If your child is dropped from the VPK program, you are personally responsible for your child's tuition.

REGISTRATION

Preschool registration for the upcoming year will open in April. At that point, days, times, and other information will be available.

ATTIRE

Dress children for outdoor play. **Closed-toed shoes are required.** Please remember that part of our day is spent on our trails and the farm. Please bring a labeled change of clothes to be kept at the preschool for emergencies. This should include underwear, pants, shirt and socks. All winter clothes must be labeled with child's name.



OPEN HOUSE

Parents will be notified of the date and time of the Open House in advance of the school year. All paperwork, registration, and health forms should be turned in by this time.

SUBSTITUTES

The Museum has a list of qualified substitute teachers on call to replace the teacher or teacher's assistant.

LOST AND FOUND

Please label all items from home. You may check with the Museum's lost and found at the Admission desk. Items are held for 14 days.

TUITION

Tuition rates are set annually by the Museum. Tuition is paid in 10 monthly installments. Payment is due by the 1st day of the month prior to the tuition month. For example, September's payment is due August 1st. There is a \$10 fee for late payments. Tuition payment will be made online. **NO PAYMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED BY THE PRESCHOOL DEPARTMENT.**

Your child's attendance may be terminated if tuition is behind.

Note: Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) participants' tuition will be paid by the State of Florida as long as the contract requirements are met for attendance. The State of Florida pays only for 540 hours. If your child is dropped from the VPK program, you are personally responsible for your child's tuition.

The Museum tax identification number is 59-0838924. We suggest you consult a qualified accountant for information concerning tax credit for preschool programs.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM

In the case of early withdrawal, there will be **no refunds** unless the spot is filled.



Note: VPK participants refer to your contract requirements. Any tuition which the State of Florida would require to be repaid, the parents are responsible for paying.

TALLAHASSEE MUSEUM DISCIPLINE STATEMENT

Our goal, as staff members of the Tallahassee Museum, is to encourage and nurture self-discipline in our students. We can achieve this goal by taking positive action to develop a healthy learning climate and by using effective intervention techniques to interrupt inappropriate behavior. To create a healthy learning environment, the teacher will provide the students with love and respect. The teacher will provide a balance of interesting, stimulating, and challenging physical and intellectual activities for the children.

The teacher will encourage and call attention to appropriate behavior so that students can be models for each other. When necessary, the teacher will teach the proper behavior, e.g., in a group: "We take turns speaking. It's John's turn now." The teacher will also model appropriate behavior, for example, by using a soft voice to request that children use quiet, inside voices.

If a teacher finds it necessary to take action to interrupt inappropriate behavior, there are a range of intervention techniques that may be used. The teacher may:

1. Make the children aware that he/she is present and observing.
2. Comment on the behavior: "I see an angry face."
3. Question: "Where are you going with the bucket?"
4. Assist the children with their communication: "Donna says that she would like to play with the blocks, too."
5. Help the children with conciliation and negotiation strategies: "I see that you both want a turn on the slide. How can we work this out?"
6. Redirect the child to a more appropriate activity: "There's a space at the water table. What do you think will happen if we pour water in this tube?"
7. Allow a child to experience the natural consequences of his/her choices: "You are hungry because you chose not to eat your breakfast. You may eat again at lunch time, which will be at 10:45." Children will not be punished for not eating.
8. Set up "logical consequences" for a child's actions: "Please wipe up the water that you spilled on the floor."
9. Children will not be punished for toileting accidents.
10. In the unusual event of a child refusing these discipline procedures, the staff will address the situation individually as needed.



The staff feels that if we can successfully implement this discipline plan, we can progress toward our goal of promoting self-discipline in the children at the Museum preschool.

If the children are engaged in an activity which is not safe for themselves or other children, e.g., kicking, hitting, for fighting, the child will sit in a “time out” chair until he/she is able to control himself/herself again. The staff will not use any of the following: loud, negative verbal correction; physical correction techniques such as, spanking, cuffing, or shoving; or removal of food from a child.

IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL

1. Any child who runs away from the staff will be removed from the program for the remainder of the program. If staff cannot convince a child to return, the police will be called. The staff is not permitted to chase after children or leave the site.
2. Any child who harms himself or another will be removed (physical and/or verbal abuse).
3. Any child who abuses staff will be removed.

Physical violence is not permitted in this program. The Tallahassee Museum reserves the right to dismiss a participant whose behaviors endanger the safety of themselves or others.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Parents are expected to follow the program rules and treat the staff with respect. All program and/or staff issues, comments, and concerns should be directed to the Preschool Director. A child whose parents verbally abuse staff will be removed from the program. This includes sarcasm, criticism, yelling, screaming and/or negative comments directed at other staff/parents. The police will be called to remove any parent who appears out of control.

TOILET ACCIDENTS

Children must be toilet trained before they may enroll in the Museum’s preschool class. Please bring a labeled change of clothes to be kept at the preschool in case of an accident. This should include underwear, pants, shirt and socks. If the child requires bathing after an accident, a parent will be contacted for pick up. If a child has frequent accidents, the child will be withdrawn from the program.



HEALTH FORMS

Health forms, Florida physical (yellow form) and Florida immunization (blue form), are due on the at the Open House. No exceptions can be made. Teachers will notify parents in writing if your child's health forms need to be renewed. Failure to respond or meet these requirements may keep your child from attending class until requirements are met.

Florida law requires parents to be aware that due to extenuating circumstances some children enrolled in the Tallahassee Museum Preschool may not be up to date on their immunizations prior to the 30 day due date.

INSECT REPELLANT AND SUN SCREEN

Parents or caregivers should apply these products prior to the start of class, either at home or outside the building over the mulch cover ground not the boardwalk. Please be aware that the combination of several strong smelling oils and repellants in the classroom and hallway can cause breathing difficulties and severe headaches for children and staff.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

The Tallahassee Museum Preschool employees will respect the confidentiality rights of every child who attends this child care facility. They understand that the confidentiality of each child's information is strictly maintained to protect the privacy rights of the parents and children. They pledge that they will not discuss or otherwise communicate any form of information concerning the care or condition of any child with unauthorized individuals.

NAP MATS

The Tallahassee Museum Preschool does not provide nap mats. Parent provided mats must be at least **two inches thick per APPLE Accreditation policies**. Affordable nap mats can be found at Walmart or on Amazon. We recommend sending a crib sheet or a small blanket. Please do not send in full sized sheets, comforters, or pillows. All nap items should be labeled with your child's first and last name.

REASONABLE CONCERN

A student will not be released to any designated pick-up person if the staff suspects them to be under the influence of alcohol or medication. The staff will call the next designated pick up



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contact on the child's file to arrange for an alternate pick up. This is a requirement of our accrediting agency.

REFERRAL

The Tallahassee Museum Preschool is an inclusive environment welcoming children of all abilities. Our goal is to work with parents and caregivers to provide resources and referrals to assist with all children's individual needs. If it becomes clear that your child is in need of a referral to an outside agency (speech therapist, behavior specialist, etc.) a parent teacher conference will be held to discuss next steps. Oftentimes a list of specialists will be given at this meeting. Parents are also given the option to sign their child up for the Early Learning Coalition's free Warm Line service that provides access to a range of different services, observations, and assessments.



Preschool School Day Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
7:30-8:00	Arrival & Table Toys
8:00-8:15	Circle Time
8:15-9:00	Center & Small Group
9:00-9:30	Breakfast Snack
9:30-10:30	Museum exploration such as trail walks, animal encounters, farm, & gardening <i>*In the event of Inclement Weather exploration activities will take place in the Discovery Center</i>
10:30-11:00	Playground <i>*In the event of Inclement Weather gross motor activities will take place in Preschool Classrooms or Natural Science Building</i>
11:00-11:30	Lunch
11:30-12:00	Story Time
12:00-2:00	Nap
2:30-3:00	Snack
3:00	Departure

Extended Day Schedule

3:00-4:00	Small Group & Center Time
4:00-5:00	Playground
5:00-6:00	Table Toys & Reading Books



Preschool Themes & Units

Tallahassee Museum Preschool implements Creative Curriculum and our lesson plans have engaging, weekly theme-based activities. This chart outlines the themes we use that promote early childhood development.

Month	Theme
August	Back to School & All About Me
September	Outdoor Classroom and My 5 Senses
October	Fall and Farm
November	Community Helpers and Transportation
December	Winter
January	Elements of Art and Tinkering
February	Habitats and Animal Friends
March	Spring, Gardens and Insects
April	Weather and Space
May	Ocean and Freshwater