



# Little Hands

LEARNING AND PLAYING TOGETHER



## Little Hands Parent Handbook 2023-2024

PART I  
General Information

## Little Hands Contacts

### Staff

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### Board

President	Jamie Gilfix West	<a href="mailto:president@littlehands.org">president@littlehands.org</a>
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## Little Hands Philosophy and History

Little Hands is committed to educating parents and encouraging them to get involved in their children's education. Both are crucial to a child's success. Parents are the students at Little Hands and attend classes with their children. Through observation, teacher-led group discussion, and classroom supervision, parents explore child development and gain confidence in their parenting role.

At Little Hands, we believe that children learn best through play and exploration. We believe that **children** should be free to touch, see and do, discover through sensory experiences, get messy, try new things, and show the adults in their world the magic they see in simple things. We also believe that all **parents** not only deserve the support and friendship of a parenting community, but that they thrive when part of one. We feel that each person - parent and child - is unique and learns in his/her own way and at his/her own pace and that understanding and respecting these differences is key to creating a safe, open and nurturing environment.

Little Hands began in 1975 when a handful of families attending Carlmont Parents Nursery School (CPNS) recognized the need for a preschool for younger siblings. Nancy Forbes, then a CPNS teacher, embraced the idea and founded Little Hands.

Little Hands officially incorporated in 1978 and began operating out of its current location. We rent space from, but are not affiliated with, the Church of the Good Shepherd.

In 1992, Little Hands opened a sister school in San Mateo, which was incorporated independently and renamed Little Wonders. Little Hands also helped create Family Connections, a tuition-free parent participation preschool for low-income families. In 1998, Family Connections became independent and is thriving with the support of the community and fellow council schools.

Today, Little Hands serves families throughout the Peninsula and we are proud to have many parents in our program who attended Little Hands when they were babies and toddlers.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As an organization, we acknowledge that a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion requires that we continually educate ourselves and our community, embrace challenging conversations, and transform this ideal into action. We hold ourselves accountable by striving to infuse diversity and inclusion in our day-to-day practices and in our decision making processes. We expect this

dedication from our school and our community because all of our families deserve an open and accepting learning environment, and experiences that celebrate the rich diversity of the world in which we live. As an educational and community-based organization, Little Hands plays an important role in ensuring that both parents and children see themselves reflected in the school and the greater community in which they live.

## Play-Based Schools

*“Play starts at birth and early childhood environments that promote play for all children and allow children to feel motivated, esteemed and appreciated are cause for celebration.”* — Elspeth Harley

*“Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered for himself, that child is kept from inventing it and, consequently, from understanding it completely.”* — Jean Piaget, Developmental Psychologist

Research shows that it is through creative play that children learn about themselves, their peers, and their world. Play-based schools offer meaningful, age-appropriate experiences that encourage children to learn through play. Little Hands emphasizes play-based learning by encouraging children to actively investigate different learning stations (water, gravel, paint, play dough, climbing structures, dress-up, music) in a safe and supportive environment. Children’s inborn curiosity guides them to choose activities that interest them, discover things on their own, and understand their world more completely.

## Cooperative Schools

A co-op is a non-profit organization jointly operated by its members. Parents manage and maintain Little Hands while the director and credentialed teachers are responsible for the school’s curriculum.

Co-ops provide several advantages and help build community with other parents. For participating parents, a co-op school provides a safe place to examine parenting techniques and learn from others in a non-judgmental way. Parents learn with their child while becoming an integral part of their co-op community. Sharing the joys and challenges of parenting fosters strong friendships that often outlast the preschool years. Co-op schools also give parents an opportunity to regularly observe their child’s introduction into a (gently) structured environment and to begin the gradual process of separation. Additionally, co-op programs cost significantly less than drop-off programs because parents contribute their time and talents to help with all aspects of the school.

## What Does a Healthy Co-op Look Like?

### **Everyone Is Included**

It's never assumed that someone won't be interested; we always extend the invitation to all.

### **Honesty Prevails**

Honesty prevails about feelings, concerns, and motivations, which are discussed openly.

### **Participation Is Universal**

Everyone is encouraged to contribute in whatever way they can; there are guidelines but there is also some flexibility. Members are comfortable enough to participate beyond their responsibilities.

### **Understanding Is Encouraged**

Everyone tries to focus on issues, not personalities; to look at the other side; and to be prepared to consider others' priorities and feelings.

### **Appreciation Is Obvious**

Group members, board members, and staff recognize each other's contributions. There is tolerance for mistakes and for other methods.

### **Support Is the Norm**

Once a decision is democratically made, regardless of initial disagreement, it is supported. There is support for each other, the board, and the teachers and their program goals.

### **Resolution Is Key**

Conflicts are dealt with; there is a problem-solving process.

### **Communication Is Effective**

Opportunities abound for communication: weekly classes, productive meetings, social occasions, newsletters, teacher conferences, social media, and more. These connections allow strong friendships to form.

### **Enjoyment Is Crucial**

There is time, motivation, and opportunity for enjoyment and the establishment of good relationships.

## Affiliations

### **Sequoia Adult School**

Little Hands is affiliated with the Sequoia Adult School, a state-supported organization offering adult education classes, including parenting education. It is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Little Hands is a license-exempt program which operates within Sequoia Adult School.

### **The San Mateo Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools**

The San Mateo Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools (SMCPPNS) is a regional organization that helps provide information and support to parents and teachers of cooperative nursery schools in San Mateo County. The Council strives to promote the parent participation movement and to provide services and support for the member schools and their families.

As a member of the SMCPPNS, Little Hands enjoys the following benefits:

- Connections with other organizations, agencies or legislative bodies working in the fields of health, education and welfare
- Access for Little Hands families to the Family Consultant Service, a referral service made up of professionals in a variety of areas, including legal services, speech therapy, and family services
- Sponsorship of community events
- Comprehensive insurance coverage designed for parent co-op schools
- Council-wide information sharing

The San Mateo Council is one of 12 regional councils in the state-wide California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools. For more information, see <http://sanmateopreschools.org> and [www.ccppns.org](http://www.ccppns.org). To speak with Little Hands' volunteer Council Representative, drop a note to [president@littlehands.org](mailto:president@littlehands.org).

## About Our Classes

### **Parent Education**

Parents are the students, learning through observation, supervision, and teacher-led discussions. They gain confidence in their parenting role by exploring child growth and development and related parenting issues. Little Hands provides a stimulating, safe, and nurturing environment for parents to ask questions, reflect, and share with other parents and their teachers.

In class, parents help supervise and engage the children. Additionally, parents take part in teacher-led discussions about child development and parenting.

### **Observation**

- Observation gives us a chance to step back and learn first-hand what the child is doing at a given stage of development.
- It helps us to better understand the personality and moods of an individual child and allows us to see their uniqueness.
- It teaches us about ourselves: what we see, how we interpret and how we feel.

### **Discussion**

- In discussions, we have an opportunity to share observations, interpretations and feelings.
- We learn about the specific ages and stages of child development and the how and why of what we observe.
- We share experiences, and learn new ideas and perhaps new ways of handling specific situations.

### **Supervision**

- While encouraging and supervising the children at the many learning stations around the school, we put into practice what we have learned.
- We model appropriate ways of interacting with other parents and children, realizing that each is unique.

## Typical Class Schedule

Our classes follow a general schedule each time you visit. Variations in classes may happen for a variety of reasons, but typically this is what you'll experience:

Infant/Toddler 1-Day Classes	Twos Class	Wed PM Class	Activity
9:15	9:15	5:15	Arrival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sign in, wash hands and get name tags</li> <li>▪ Older children may do welcome circle or a special activity</li> <li>▪ Parents go to station</li> </ul>
9:55	10:10	5:50	Snack/Dinner Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Let children know hand-washing time is near</li> <li>▪ Prepare tables for snack time</li> <li>▪ Food parents provide and set up snack/dinner</li> </ul>
10:00	10:15	5:55	Hand Washing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bring all children from stations for hand washing</li> </ul>
10:05	10:20	6:00	Snack/Dinner Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents and children share snack</li> <li>▪ Food parent cleans up and puts away food</li> <li>▪ Children wash hands again</li> </ul>
10:25	10:45	6:25	Continued Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents resume station supervision</li> <li>▪ Classes with in-class discussion meet</li> </ul>
10:55	11:25	6:55	Circle Time Preparation and Transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents clean up toys and tidy</li> <li>▪ Bring all children from station for circle time</li> </ul>
11:00	11:30	7:00	Closing Circle Time
11:15	11:45	7:15	Good-bye <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pick up artwork and handouts</li> <li>▪ Parents clean and set up for next class</li> </ul>



## Parent Resource, Offerings, and Extras

### **Family Consultant Service**

Family Consultant Service is a professional referral service sponsored by the San Mateo Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools. As Little Hands is a member of the Council, all consultants participating in this program offer their services to Little Hands families at a reduced rate.

### **Parent Lending Library**

Little Hands maintains a small lending library of recommended parenting books in the back space art room. There is a selection of books on various topics:

- Parenting
- Eating/Nutrition
- Sleep
- Siblings
- Nursing
- Childbirth
- Child Development
- Positive Discipline

Your Little Hands teachers may refer to books in various discussions. If you're interested, check out our library and see if there is a resource that would be helpful to you! Please check out the book and return it within a few weeks.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Each family may arrange a half-hour private parent-teacher conference during the school year by contacting their teacher directly. Families should plan to schedule conferences prior to May.

### **Parenting Together Events**

Periodically, Little Hands might offer seminars to Little Hands families and the wider community. The events include topics of special interest to parents of young children such as Sibling Relations, Sleep, Wellness, and Limit Setting. There is no fee for enrolled Little Hands families. Stay tuned for dates!

### **Spirit Wear & Merchandise**

Show your school spirit and support for Little Hands with fun gear for the whole family. We hope to have merchandise available for purchase as our school year gets started. Stay tuned for exciting offerings or contact us at [community@littlehands.org](mailto:community@littlehands.org) to learn more.

### **Fundraising - A Fresh New Look at Our Co-op Model**

Little Hands has always depended on the support of its families, alumni, and community. In 2012, all Adult Education programs lost state funding and Little Hands became reliant on sponsorships, donations, corporate matching, and

grants. Since COVID, with smaller class sizes and reduced resources, we have needed even more community support and fundraising.

This year, we're excited to be moving our focus to you, the families of Little Hands. We want the community and support of Little Hands to be available to busy Bay Area families, with less commitment. We want everyone who needs us to find us and join. Our goal is to provide a rich and rewarding experience that will serve you and your children for years, and then your children's children decades from now!

As part of our lighter co-op model, we will have fewer fundraisers. That said, we will still need additional financial resources to cover some of our operational costs. As a result, your financial support will be important as we build a strong foundation for our future. Please watch for fundraising opportunities presented throughout this year, help spread the word, and pitch in when you can!

We also appreciate your much-needed donations of school supplies, special items for raffles or events, and any other ways you can give. Please visit the [support page](#) on our website to learn more about how you and your family can support Little Hands.

***Give While You Shop!***

We encourage every family (and aunts and uncles and grandparents!) to register for eScrip. It is an easy and safe way to bring extra money to our school every time you shop! Click below to easily register.



[Sign up for eScrip](#)

Little Hands ID: 125298634

For more information, assistance, or if you have questions, please contact [president@littlehands.org](mailto:president@littlehands.org).



# Little Hands

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*Proud members of:*

