



# **Little Hands Parent Handbook**

## **2021-2022**

**PART I**  
**General Information**

## Little Hands Contacts

### Staff

Executive Director and Teacher	Carol Cross-Phillips	director@littlehands.org
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### Board

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VP Communications	Robyn Miyagawa	communications@littlehands.org
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## Letter from the President

*Dear Little Hands Families,*

*Welcome! We are so excited to have you all part of the Little Hands community and to be joining us in the 2021-2022 school year.*

*In August 2020, we weren't sure we were going to be able to open our doors, but we made it happen...with many changes. And we had a successful year! We learned a lot last year, from how to do circle time with 18 month olds over Zoom, to how much children and parents like being outside all year round. We found that parents enjoyed parent education class after bedtime with a glass of wine from the comfort of their own homes, so we've decided to add in an additional parent connection class for those that want it. We also learned that community is extremely important during this stressful time. For me, Little Hands gave my son and me something to look forward to each week. We enjoyed the stories Teacher Carol read, the activity kits, and the adult conversations with other parents at a time when the world felt terribly lonely. We are proud to be able to continue offering this wonderful community to families like yours.*

*With the Delta variant weighing heavily on our minds, Little Hands has decided to keep almost every aspect of safety that we did last year. Masks will be mandatory for adults and strongly encouraged for kids two years old and older, we'll be washing hands all the time, and taking temperature checks. Toys will be cleaned and sanitized, and we'll do everything we can outside! We strive to make 2021-2022 as safe as possible and we will continue to follow state and local guidelines as they evolve.*

*I don't know about you, but for me, last year was all about creativity and trying new things - making yogurt in an Instant Pot, virtual Little Hands class, and taking a music class that was taught in Florida with family that live in Africa. One of my favorites was Trivia Night done over Zoom with our Little Hands community. Constrained by the pandemic, we got creative and had a lot of fun. This year, we're planning on bringing in-person events back with some creativity. The Little Hands spirit will be the same, but you'll notice some changes to keep our community safe.*

*Co-ops like Little Hands only work because their communities are committed to them. The more you put in, the more you get out. I encourage you all to get involved as much as possible. Share your wins, your hard moments, and your child's favorite new thing with each other. Connections come in all different ways, some big and some small. You never know who you'll meet at an event. With that said, we hope to see you all at the Ice Cream Social hosted by your Board on September 26th!*

*We are so grateful to have you here and part of the Little Hands family! Let's make 2021-2022 a successful, happy, and healthy year!*

*Best Wishes,*

*Malinda Marshall - President*

## 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; however, Little Hands continues to support the program.

Today, Little Hands serves more than 100 families throughout the Peninsula each year. We are also proud to have many parents in our program who attended Little Hands when they too were babies and toddlers.

## 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*

## Play-Based Schools

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. They thus discover things on their own, which enables them to understand their world more completely.

## Cooperative Schools

A co-op is a non-profit organization jointly owned and 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, most importantly, build community. 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 and develop 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: productive meetings, social occasions, newsletters, social media, bulletin boards and two-way interactions. Strong friendships can 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. (During COVID, parent discussions may take place virtually.)

### **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:

AM Classes	M/W/F 3/4's Class	Wed PM Class	Activity
9:15	9:00	5:15	Arrival <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Health Check, sign in, wash hands and get nametags</li><li>▪ Three's Class Gathering Circle</li><li>▪ Parents go to station</li></ul>
9:55	9:55	5:45	Snack 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 food</li></ul>
10:00	10:00	5:50	Hand Washing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Bring all children from stations for hand washing</li><li>▪ Three's Class Story Time</li></ul>
10:05	10:15	5:55	Snack 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>
10:15	10:30	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	11:10	6:55	Circle Time Preparation and Transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Parents clean up and set toys for sterilization</li><li>▪ Bring all children from station for handwashing before circle</li><li>▪ Do not leave children unsupervised</li></ul>
11:00	11:15	7:00	Closing Circle Time
11:15	11:30	7:15	Good-bye (Lunch time for 3/4s) <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. A directory is available at: <http://sanmateopreschools.org/consultants>.

### **Parent Lending Library**

The Little Hands Parent Lending Library is located in the Art Room and has a wide selection of books for parents, from one of our staff favourites, *Becoming the Parent You Want To Be*, to *35,000 Baby Names*. You will find books on the following topics and many more:

- Parenting
- Activities
- Divorce
- Eating/Nutrition
- Sleep
- Psychology
- Siblings
- Nursing
- Childbirth
- Death
- Child Development
- Positive Discipline

Little Hands teachers will often refer to books in the lending library in the event you want additional information on a discussed topic. Books may be checked out and borrowed for a couple of weeks, and they are marked with red tape across the binding to make it easy to see if you have one at home.

### **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**

Several times per year, Little Hands offers 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. The series is free to enrolled Little Hands families, and \$10 for guests and community members. Stay tuned for this year's lineup!

### **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 [publicity@littlehands.org](mailto:publicity@littlehands.org) to learn more.

## **Project Days**

Projects Days are scheduled days to get handy and join the Projects Team to maintain and improve the school. From small painting jobs to larger construction efforts, these days are a great way to help the school. During COVID, projects will be managed by single individuals or very small, distanced groups. If you or a family member has an aptitude for repair work, please let us know by emailing [jobs@littlehands.org](mailto:jobs@littlehands.org).



## Fundraising

Now more than ever, Little Hands depends on the support of its families, alumni and community. In 2012, all Adult Education programs lost state funding. Little Hands is now growing its business operations to seek sponsorships, donations, corporate matching, and grants. In addition, we hope all of our families will join whatever COVID recovery fundraising events we arrange for this year. We also appreciate your much-needed donations of school supplies, special items for raffles or events, and any other ways you can give.

We also ask every family (and aunts and uncles and grandparents!) to register for eScrip and Amazon Smile. Both are easy and safe and bring extra money to our school every time you shop!

Every family should receive instructions to sign up for both programs during orientation. For more information, assistance, or if you have questions, please contact [president@littlehands.org](mailto:president@littlehands.org).





# Little Hands

LEARNING AND PLAYING TOGETHER

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*Proud members of:*

