



Preschool Parent Handbook Public Edition

This public edition of the SLO Gardenschool Parent Handbook is provided for prospective families to learn more about our program, policies, and practices. Certain information intended only for enrolled families such as specific contact, location, access, and emergency information has been omitted. Families offered an Outdoor Studio space receive the complete Parent Handbook, Calendar, and Enrollment Offer & Agreement.

Welcome & Philosophy

Childhood is a time of wondrous possibilities. During this time, foundations of lifelong learning, trust, and confidence are built. We are honored to be entrusted with these formative years and strive to cultivate an environment where each child feels capable.

Guiding Principles

The Child as Capable – We view children as competent, curious, and capable participants in their own learning.

The Environment as the Third Teacher – An effective learning space grows with and for the children.

Community as Cornerstone – We cultivate a lively community shaped by children, educators, and families.

Goals for Children

Curiosity & Growing Knowledge – Our evolving, interest-based curriculum encourages children to engage, ask questions, and experiment.

Individuality & Collaboration – We provide opportunities for both independent exploration and collaborative group learning. Multiple paths for participation support inclusivity and choice.

Community & Responsibility – Meaningful, predictable routines that invite children to contribute empower children to shape their community, practice stewardship, and experience reciprocity. Cultivating a lively community for children fosters appreciation for the people, plants, and animals of San Luis Obispo.

Kindergarten Readiness – Kindergarten readiness is woven throughout the day through conversation, stories, phonological awareness, early writing, mathematical thinking, problem-solving, self-regulation, and increasingly independent routines.

Program at a Glance

Contact Information

Location: San Luis Obispo, CA – exact location provided at enrollment
Email: slogardenschool@gmail.com

Program Hours & Information:

Monday - Thursday: 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Fridays are occasionally used for school community events and conferences.

The program has its own dedicated entrance and outdoor learning space, separate from the home's primary living areas. Two cats live in the home but do not have access to the program spaces.

Available Schedules

Monday through Thursday, Monday & Wednesday, or Tuesday & Thursday

Enrollment Eligibility:

Enrollment is based on developmental readiness for children approximately 3 - 5 years old. Because we are not equipped for diapering, our program is best suited for children who can manage their toileting independently.

Admission Process:

Families begin by submitting the Preschool Interest Form at slogardenschool.com. When a space is available, SLO Gardenschool will send the family a Preschool Enrollment Offer & Agreement, the current Parent Handbook, and the Tuition & Calendar for review. Families may accept an offer in writing by the stated deadline. After acceptance, families receive a Brightwheel invitation to complete required enrollment forms, documentation, and initial payment. Enrollment is confirmed once these requirements have been received and reviewed.

Waitlist Procedure:

Waitlisted applicants will be invited to enroll when space allows. Enrollment offers are based on availability, schedule fit, and completion of the admissions process.

Every Day at Preschool

A Typical Day

Indoor Arrival	settling into the day, morning activities
Morning Circle	greetings, songs, calendar, jobs, presentations
Indoor Choice	snack, building, puzzles, math, science, art, literature
Music Circle	live music, singing, dancing, and movement
Garden	construction, mud play, collaborative art, gardening
Indoor Pick Up	quiet activities, tea, reflection of the day

Daily Transitions: Throughout the day, plenty of time is allotted for unrushed transitions from one place or activity to another.

Arrival / Drop-Off

Arrival is between 8:00 and 8:20 AM. Families should close the entrance gate securely when entering and leaving.

We encourage brief, confident goodbyes to support predictable transitions for all children. Children arriving after 8:20 AM should have prior arrangements with the school to ensure each child has enough time to settle. Our neighborhood and the surrounding streets offer free parking. You are also welcome to walk or bike!

We use a state-approved mobile/browser application, [Brightwheel](#), to streamline sign-ins and sign-outs. A Brightwheel Guide is included in your enrollment packet for more details.

Dismissal / Pick-Up

Pick-up is between 12:00 PM and 12:20 PM. Families should close the entrance gate securely when entering and leaving.

Children are released only to parents/guardians and persons authorized in the child's records. Photo identification may be requested when an authorized adult is unfamiliar to educators.

After your child is signed out through the school kiosk, please allow a few minutes to gather belongings and briefly connect with your child's educator. We ask that all families exit the premises by 12:20 PM.

If you need to pick up your child earlier than 12:00 PM, please let us know at drop-off or earlier to ensure your child is ready when you arrive. Our 20-minute pick-up window is designed for an easy, no-rush transition. Late pick-up fees help ensure that the time of children, educators, and families is respected. Late fees begin accruing at 12:21 PM at \$2 per minute, and are added to your child's monthly tuition payment.

Belongings / Daily Essentials

Our program supports a light-pack approach to belongings. No backpacks are necessary—children simply need clothing suitable for messy and active play, sunscreen applied before arrival, and a 12–16 oz. filled water bottle. We store an extra set of clothing for accidents and messy play and will occasionally request additional garments as needed. *The School Readiness Guide in the enrollment packet includes additional details on what to bring for your child on the first day of school.*

If a family would like sunscreen applied during program hours, written authorization is required and sunscreen must be provided in its original container and labeled with your child's name.

Rather than sending daily creations home in folders or backpacks, our program supports an ongoing journaling practice. Children's expressions, ideas, observations, and creations are collected in their personal journals, which families are welcome to view throughout the year.

Rainy Days

Rain is an opportunity for a different kind of outdoor exploration. When conditions are safe and appropriate, we continue outdoor activities during light to moderate showers. The school will provide waterproof rain pants for comfortable rainy play. It is important for children to be prepared for the weather with appropriate layers, waterproof footwear, and a raincoat. Before pick-up, children will receive assistance changing into dry, clean clothing if necessary.

During heavier rain, thunderstorms, unsafe conditions, or other circumstances that make outdoor play inappropriate, we will adapt to indoor activities.

Off-Site Excursions

Our program takes occasional neighborhood walking trips throughout the year. Most walking excursions are a short walk to the Throop Park playground. Other excursions may take place within the surrounding neighborhood.

Prior to any off-site excursion, we will consider each child's ability to safely walk together and follow directions. Educators will carry their phones, emergency contact info, and a first aid kit on all outings. Children will be appropriately prepped for safe walking.

Nutrition & Snack

Every morning, we provide one snack containing at least two of the four main food groups: fruits/vegetables, dairy/fortified non-dairy milks, grains, and protein. Please have your child eat breakfast before arriving. Water is available at snack and throughout the day. We will work with families to accommodate documented food allergies, intolerances, and dietary restrictions when reasonably possible.

Items from Home

We ask that children not bring any toys or items from home unless they are invited to share a specific item. The following phrase may be helpful in communicating this boundary to your child: "This is a home toy. Today is not a sharing day. Gardenschool has many different toys and materials for you. We can either keep it at home or leave it in the car."

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are inspired by a Montessori tradition called "Walk Around the Sun". Families are invited to fill out My Birthday Story at home with their child. On the day of your child's birthday, parents and family members are invited to attend our Morning Circle and enjoy your child's Walk Around the Sun. Families are welcome to contribute a favorite fruit or school-approved snack to share, with advance communication with the educator(s).

Visits

Parents are welcome to visit during program hours. We encourage families to communicate ahead of time (to both the educator(s) and child) when possible to help children with the transition of their parents coming and going.

Family Communication & Participation

Communication

We communicate with parents in the following ways:

- Emails
- Printed Newsletters
- Informal Check-Ins at Pick-Up & Drop-Off
- Parent Bulletin Board inside the classroom
- Arranged Phone Calls or In-Person/Virtual Meetings
- Twice-Yearly Parent Conferences

*Note: To support presence and reduce screen use in the classroom, we prioritize in-person communication whenever possible. SLO Gardenschool will not use direct messaging as a form of typical communication. Urgent and Emergency messages will be communicated through SMS via Brightwheel, calls, and emails. Parents are always welcome to call Kalie for urgent matters.

For any questions or concerns, please contact Kalie directly. Phone calls and In-Person/Virtual Meetings can be arranged. Licensing-related concerns can be directed to Community Care Licensing.

Family Participation

Family participation is always voluntary and valued in whatever capacity families choose to engage. The following are a few ways families can get involved:

Morning Circle / Group Projects: Families are invited to schedule a time to share artifacts and experiences during our Morning Circle, or participate in collaborative projects.

Volunteering: Opportunities to volunteer will be communicated in advance through email and printed newsletters.

After-School Community Events: Siblings and extended family members are invited to school events throughout the year. These types of events are communicated through the annual calendar received at enrollment.

Parent Nights: 1-2 Parent Nights per year are dedicated to strengthening our parent community, providing support, and creating opportunities to shape the program.

Tuition & Attendance

Annual Calendar

SLO Gardenschool Preschool follows the San Luis Coastal Unified School District calendar as closely as is appropriate for our program. The Academic Calendar identifies school days, holidays, recesses, special events, and other scheduled closures.

Families receive the calendar before the applicable enrollment period. While changes are uncommon, circumstances may occasionally require an adjustment to the published calendar. Families will be given as much advance notice as possible when a change is necessary.

Absences

If your child is unable to attend on any particular day due to illness or scheduling conflicts, please email Kalie Oku (slogardenschool@gmail.com) as soon as possible. Communication about unexpected or extended absences is greatly appreciated.

Tuition reserves your child's place in the program and is not based on individual days of attendance. Tuition credits, refunds, or make-up days are not provided for child absences, including illness, family vacations, appointments, or optional stay-home days.

Schedule Changes

If a change to your child's schedule is needed, please contact the director, Kalie Oku, (slogardenschool@gmail.com) for availability. Schedule changes can be made when availability allows.

Tuition Structure

Tuition is divided into scheduled installments, not based on the number of class days in a particular month. Tuition reflects a reserved recurring space in the program and is billed monthly as described in the Tuition & Calendar. Scheduled holidays, recesses, and other closures published on the Preschool Academic Calendar are incorporated into annual tuition and do not change installment amounts.

Families beginning enrollment mid-month will have their first installment adjusted according to the child's start date. Regular tuition begins with the next scheduled billing cycle.

The required nonrefundable Enrollment & Materials fee will be identified in the family's Enrollment Offer & Agreement.

Tuition Billing & Payment

Tuition is electronically billed through Brightwheel, which enables families to manage, automate, and pay tuition securely through the mobile application or web browser. Tuition installments are issued on the 1st of each billing month and are due by the 14th.

Any account that remains unpaid as of the 15th will receive a \$30 late fee. Accounts with unpaid tuition for two consecutive months may receive notice of termination of enrollment, effective on the last day of the applicable notice period unless the account is paid in full. Tuition remains due through the applicable withdrawal or termination notice period.

If SLO Gardenschool must unexpectedly close on a regularly scheduled program day, families will receive a tuition adjustment that reflects each child's individual enrollment schedule. Credits are applied to the next Brightwheel tuition invoice and are not refundable upon withdrawal. Unexpected closures include staff illness or emergency, extreme weather, utility interruption, or another unforeseen circumstance affecting the health or safety of the program. Families will be notified with as much notice as possible.

Credits are not provided for individual child absences.

Continuing Enrollment

Current Preschool families receive priority consideration for the following school year. Renewal information, including the next year's Tuition & Calendar, will be provided in the winter before enrollment opens to new families. A completed renewal response and any required renewal fee must be received by the stated deadline to reserve a space. Enrollment does not automatically continue without a completed renewal.

Summer Program

The Summer Program is a separate, optional enrollment period for a program that runs 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Monday – Thursday. Whether it will be offered will be communicated no later than spring of the academic year. A returning family may choose not to participate in the Summer Program without giving up a confirmed space for the following academic year. Summer tuition reflects only the weeks during which the Summer Program is offered. Scheduled summer recesses outside of the Summer Program are not included in summer tuition.

Disenrollment/Withdrawal

We are committed to open, respectful communication and will work with families to resolve concerns whenever possible. While rare, there may be circumstances where continued enrollment is no longer feasible, including when the needs of a child or family can no longer be reasonably met within our program. If disenrollment becomes necessary, families or SLO Gardenschool may end enrollment with two weeks' written notice.

Tuition remains due through the notice period, and children may continue attending during this time. In circumstances involving an immediate health, safety, licensing, or other serious concern, SLO Gardenschool may end enrollment without the standard two-week notice.

Health & Safety

Illness

We strive to maintain a healthy environment for children. We request that parents do not bring their child to preschool if they have symptoms of illness that affect their child's ability to participate comfortably. These symptoms may include:

- Cold symptoms
- Fever $\geq 100^{\circ}$
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Unexplained rash
- Pink eye
- Lice
- Ear pain
- Unusual fatigue

If symptoms significantly affecting participation arise during program hours, your child will be isolated in the Peaceful Place (a designated comfort area) and we will contact you to pick up your child. Children may return to school after being free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea without medication for at least 24 hours and when ready to participate in normal daily activities.

Immunization Requirements

Before your child's first day of attendance, SLO Gardenschool requires current immunization documentation. Enrolled children must meet applicable, age-appropriate immunization requirements specified by California immunization requirements. Parents must update immunization documentation promptly whenever your child receives an immunization during your child's enrollment.

Injuries & Medical Emergencies

Minor injuries such as bumps, bruises, and scrapes are addressed by educators according to their First Aid/CPR training. Families will be informed of significant injuries or injuries requiring more than routine first aid.

If a child is seriously injured under the care of SLO Gardenschool, we will contact the parents, assess the injury appropriately per First Aid/CPR training, call 911 if immediate medical attention is necessary, and contact other authorized persons listed on the child's emergency card as appropriate.

If a child requires medical or dental attention, our educators will contact the parents. If the parents are unavailable, we will then follow the emergency plan indicated on the child's Identification and Emergency Information Form (LIC 700), while continuing to contact the parents. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, we will call 911.

Medication Policy

If your child requires medications including vitamins and supplements during your child's time at preschool, parents are required to provide written consent. Instructions about medication administration are available in the Medication Administration Form in the Enrollment Packet. As part of our incidental medical services, we are able to enroll children who require an EpiPen/EpiPen Jr. and/or inhalers on site. Any medical services to be performed by our educators must have the appropriate forms signed.

Discipline

Our approach to discipline is to encourage positive behavior and to understand each child's emerging needs. Discipline is not punishment, but rather a process by which children gain awareness, empathy, and communication skills through the observation of and discussion of appropriate (safe and considerate) conduct in a variety of contexts.

Methods of Discipline We Use

- Maintaining a calm, predictable, and engaging learning environment
- Modeling kind and considerate behavior
- Immediately addressing safety concerns
- Providing clear explanations about why a behavior is unsafe or inappropriate
- Encouraging children to verbalize and practice alternative behaviors
- Redirecting behaviors in an appropriate way
- Recording observations to better understand patterns and needs
- Working with the child and family to develop supportive strategies when needed

Methods of Discipline That Will Not Be Used: "Time Outs" as a way to isolate children to reflect will not be used. Instead, we offer the Peaceful Place, a cozy corner in the classroom to provide a space to manage emotions. Corporal punishment (physical punishment), humiliation, fear, harsh language, or the removal of basic human needs will never be used.

Potty Accidents

Any child who has an accident will be discreetly assisted with changing and cleaning up as needed. The remainder of the soiled clothing will be returned to the child in a plastic bag, along with a reminder to replace the extra clothing. Clothing that cannot reasonably be cleaned may need to be discarded. Parents will be contacted if frequent potty accidents occur to discuss the child's developmental readiness for participation in a diaper-free care environment.

Emergency Plan

SLO Gardenschool will conduct earthquake and fire drills with the children every 6 months. Educators are certified in CPR/First Aid and possess a certificate of completion of Health and Safety Training.

In the event of an emergency that requires us to evacuate, we maintain two designated evacuation locations. Specific locations are provided to families at enrollment.

We will notify families via emergency SMS through Brightwheel and by phone as soon as possible. If it is safe to remain on site, children will remain there until they are picked up. If evacuation is necessary, children will be moved to the designated evacuation site and families will be notified of our location. Please ensure your contact information and emergency contacts are always up to date.

Mandated Reporting

All educators are mandated reporters and required by law to report suspected physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Child Protective Services and Community Care Licensing immediately (Penal Code 11166). We are not required to notify parents when a report is made.

Right to Interview

California Community Care Licensing has the authority to interview children and staff privately and to inspect, audit, and copy childcare records as permitted under Title 22, including during normal business hours. SLO Gardenschool will cooperate with these requirements.

Non-Discrimination

SLO Gardenschool is committed to operating on a non-discriminatory basis and giving equal treatment and access to services without regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disabilities, or associations among these.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about SLO Gardenschool. We look forward to getting to know the families who may become part of our community.