



# Outdoor Studio 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.

**Process Over Product** – Children deserve the freedom to move, create, and pursue their ideas without being right or wrong.

### Goals for Children

**Creative Agency & Self-Expression** – Children develop confidence in their physical, emotional, social, and language skills by exploring ideas, observing others, and participating in creative projects.

**Problem-Solving & Collaboration** — Open-ended, transformable materials in collaborative environments encourage children to negotiate, coordinate, and test possibilities.

**Connection to the Living World** — Daily contact with a seasonally changing garden environment encourages observation, care, and familiarity with the natural environment.

## Program at a Glance

### Contact Information

Location: San Luis Obispo, CA – exact location provided at enrollment

Email: [slogardenschool@gmail.com](mailto:slogardenschool@gmail.com)

### Program Hours:

Mondays: 1:10 PM - 3:30 PM

### Program Information:

Outdoor Studio is a fully outdoor, garden-based program that provides children the time and space to freely create. Much of the work children create at Outdoor Studio is temporary. A structure may be rebuilt, a mud creation may return to the soil, and shared materials are regularly taken apart and used again. We focus on experimentation, conversation, and the joy of making.

Two cats live in the home but do not have access to Outdoor Studio program areas.

### Enrollment Eligibility:

Enrollment is based on developmental readiness for children approximately 4 - 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 Outdoor Studio Interest Form at [slogardenschool.com](http://slogardenschool.com). When a space is available, SLO Gardenschool will send the family an Outdoor Studio Enrollment Offer & Agreement which contains the current Parent Handbook, Calendar, and Brightwheel invitation which allows families to complete required forms and make initial payments. Enrollment is confirmed once families complete required enrollment forms and initial payments by a stated deadline.

### Waitlist Procedure:

Waitlisted applicants will be invited to enroll when availability allows.

## Every Day at Outdoor Studio

### A Typical Day

|                          |                   |                                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Arrival & Optional Snack | 1:10 PM - 1:30 PM | settling into activity            |
| Studio                   | 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM | deep focus & collaboration        |
| Prep for Dismissal       | 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM | closing down, storytelling, music |
| Dismissal                | 3:30 PM - 3:45 PM | quiet activities                  |

### Arrival / Drop-Off

Arrival is between 1:10 PM and 1:30 PM.

We encourage brief, confident goodbyes to support predictable transitions for all children. Please communicate later arrivals in advance. North Tassajara Drive 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 3:30 PM and 3:45 PM.

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.

We ask that all families exit the premises by 3:45 PM.

If you need to pick up your child earlier than 3:30 PM, please let us know at drop-off or earlier to ensure your child is ready when you arrive.

Our 15-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 3:46 PM at \$2 per minute, and are added to your child's monthly tuition payment.

## Belongings / Daily Essentials

Outdoor Studio is designed for active, messy outdoor play. Children should arrive in comfortable clothing and shoes that can get wet, muddy, stained, and well-used.

Each day, please send your child with:

- A filled water bottle your child can manage independently
- A small backpack packed with a complete change of clothing (including underwear and socks)
- Any weather-appropriate layers needed for the afternoon

The change of clothing is intended for bathroom accidents and messy play. Spare clothing will remain in your child's backpack and travel to and from Outdoor Studio each day rather than being stored onsite.

Please apply sunscreen before arrival. Outdoor Studio does not store or reapply sunscreen during program hours. We recommend your child wears a sun hat.

Please do not send sunscreen, topical products, or medications in your child's backpack. Please see our Medication Policy.

## Nutrition & Snack

As children arrive, we provide one optional snack containing at least two of the four main food groups: fruits/vegetables, dairy/fortified non-dairy milks, grains, and protein. Your child's water bottle provides your child water with snack and throughout the day. If needed, their water bottle can be refilled with clean drinking water. 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. 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."

## 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.

## Rainy Days

We embrace light, scattered showers, and will continue our usual outdoor programming in these conditions. When rain is heavy or constant, we will utilize our indoor space to continue care. Rainy day activities include building, art or cooking/baking projects, music, and playing in the rain for a short period of time.

On days that the weather is so severe that it makes traveling unsafe or results in hazards such as flooding, Outdoor Studio will close and a \$25 credit will be added to your next bill. Notifications of safety-related closures will be communicated as soon as possible. Please see Tuition Billing & Payment for more information.

## Communication

We communicate with parents in the following ways:

- Emails
- Printed Newsletters
- Informal Check-Ins at Pick-Up & Drop-Off
- Arranged Phone Calls or In-Person/Virtual Meetings

\*Note: To support presence and reduce screen use during program hours, 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.

## Tuition & Attendance

### Annual Calendar

SLO Gardenschool follows the San Luis Coastal Unified School District calendar as closely as is appropriate for our program. The SLO Gardenschool 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](mailto: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.

### Tuition Structure

Outdoor Studio enrollment is offered on a recurring weekly schedule. Each family's enrollment continues month-to-month unless the family withdraws or SLO Gardenschool ends enrollment in accordance with the Parent Handbook. Tuition reflects a reserved recurring space in the program and is billed monthly. 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.

Any required nonrefundable enrollment 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. Monthly tuition invoices 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 \$10 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 is not prorated for a child's remaining scheduled days after withdrawal.

If SLO Gardenschool is closed on a regularly scheduled Outdoor Studio day, families receive a \$25 tuition adjustment. The \$25 tuition adjustment is utilized for published holidays, recesses, and unexpected closures due to staff illness or emergency, severe weather, utility interruption, or another circumstance affecting the health or safety of the program. Families will be notified with as much notice as possible. Credits are applied to the next Brightwheel tuition invoice and are not refundable upon withdrawal.

Credits are not provided for individual child absences.

## Continuing Enrollment

Current Outdoor Studio 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. Enrollment information will be announced separately in the spring. Because summer capacity is limited, participation cannot be guaranteed for all currently enrolled families.

## Disenrollment/Withdrawal

Families may end enrollment at any time. We appreciate at least two weeks' written notice whenever possible, as it helps us plan thoughtfully for the group and offer an available space to another family. Tuition already paid for the current month is nonrefundable and will not be prorated for a child's remaining scheduled days.

We are committed to open, respectful communication and will work with families to resolve concerns whenever possible. SLO Gardenschool may also end enrollment when a child's needs cannot be reasonably met within the program or when continued enrollment is otherwise no longer feasible. Whenever possible, families will be given advance notice. Enrollment may be ended immediately when necessary for health, safety, licensing, or other serious concerns.

## Health & Safety

### Illness

SLO Gardenschool strives to maintain a healthy environment for children. We request that parents not bring their child to Outdoor Studio 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, we will contact you to pick up your child. Children may return to Outdoor Studio after being free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea without medication for at least 24 hours and when ready to participate in normal daily activities.

### Medication Policy

If your child requires medication while attending, please contact SLO Gardenschool in advance to determine whether the medication can be safely accommodated within the Outdoor Studio environment.

Emergency medications, including prescribed EpiPens/EpiPen Jr. and rescue inhalers, may be kept on site with the appropriate authorization and required forms.

## 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.

## 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
- 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 support children in finding a calm space when they need distance from an activity. 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.

## 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.