

# song sparrow playgarden

Handbook  
2023-2024

## **WELCOME**

Welcome to Song Sparrow Playgarden. I am looking forward to getting to know your child—getting attuned to their needs and striving to create an environment that gently holds and nurtures them. I hope this handbook will answer any questions you may have about my program and its policies.

## **YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER**

Amy Mulvaney is a certified LifeWays® early childhood educator. She founded Song Sparrow Playgarden in 2017 when she began holding playgroups for the local community. Prior to the birth of her daughter in 2015, she spent several years working as a nanny and as a teaching assistant in the public school K-3 classrooms in the Los Angeles and La Cañada Unified School District. Before becoming a Waldorf educator, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies from California State University Northridge where she received her elementary grades teaching credential. Her early childhood trainings also encompass caring for infants and mothers during the tender postpartum time. She has completed the RIE Foundations course, the Mothering Arts Training, and a Postpartum Doula core training through Natural Resources in San Francisco. Amy has become extremely passionate about child development and Early Childhood Education. She is always on the hunt for the latest publications and books that focus on the importance of a play-based education in early childhood. She participates in conferences and professional development in order to support the students as well as their parents during the precious early childhood years.

## **PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH**

Song Sparrow Playgarden is a small home-based preschool program inspired by Waldorf Education which is based on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian scientist, educator and writer, who founded the first Waldorf school at the end of the First World War. He was a pioneer in the area of development-based, age appropriate learning. He sought to develop a balanced education for the whole child, one that would engage the child's feeling, willing and thinking and would leave his or her spiritual nature acknowledged but free. He recognized that the young child learns primarily through example and imitation, with emphasis on the importance of imaginative play, movement, rhythm, and storytelling.

Song Sparrow Playgarden offers warmth, beauty and calm. In the lovely playgarden and the large yard, there is ample room for the child's imaginative expression through play and exploration, whether by creating sand cakes for a friend's birthday; soup with water, dirt, sticks and pine cones; or riding the wagon to the station to visit family out of town. There is the unfolding of unlimited possibilities.

At Song Sparrow Playgarden, I strive to present speech, movement and a joyful approach to life that is worthy of the young child's imitation, and a daily and weekly rhythm that offers balance between quieter activity and lively movement. There is a soothing repetition to the daily rhythm so the children know what to expect each day they are in my care. Puppet stories are told weekly allowing the richness of the language and imagery to enter deeply into the child. And imbued in the art and craft, the

songs, poems and verses of circle time, are the seasons and seasonal festivals and celebrations.

We regularly partake in many practical life skills such as cooking, kneading dough, setting the table, and folding napkins. Sweeping, raking and general tidying of the playgarden is welcome and a task we perform at the end of our playtime and our day as a group. These activities are often accompanied by rhythmical song, bringing contentment and joy to our work. As we sing “good morning” to the earth and the sun and the birds and the bees; as we sing our blessing for the food we eat, we honor our relationship and offer gratitude to the world of nature and life itself.

## **FESTIVALS**

Throughout the year, we celebrate festivals to connect us with the cycle of nature, establish a yearly rhythm for the children, and strengthen our community. In the Fall we celebrate Halloween with our Halloween Journey and Martinmas with a Lantern Walk. In the Winter the children will do a spiral walk, and our final festival of the year is our Spring Egg Hunt. Even through the pandemic, we have been able to celebrate these festivals outside with our small group. It has been such a treasure to maintain these traditions in these otherwise difficult years.

It is important that your child attend our festivals. As a group, we do a lot of work leading up to our festivals which often include learning songs and crafting. All of the children greatly look forward to sharing the culmination of their hard work with their families.

Waldorf Festivals are made possible when our entire school community comes together and contributes their time and skills. It is expected that all of the families participate in the festivals by contributing where help is needed.

## **Parent Evenings and Conversations**

A unique part of the Waldorf approach to Early Childhood Education, is how the teacher and the parents work together to support the child. Four Parent evenings are held seasonally to offer parents an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding about Waldorf Education, positive parenting approaches and discuss topics around supporting your child during the early childhood years. These parent evenings are held in the Playgarden on a Tuesday from 6:30-8:00pm. Parents are asked to attend all four parent evenings (Orientation, Fall, Winter, and Spring) with both parents attending at least one. Please see 22/23 Calendar for dates and times.

Twice per year (Fall and Spring) Teacher Amy holds parent/teacher conversations. During these meetings I will give you a picture of our day and how your child participates. These are not formal assessments, but more of a casual conversation to offer a peak inside your child’s school day. During this time you will share with me what life at home looks like and we’ll discuss any areas in which they need more support or guidance.

Both parents are required to attend parent/teacher conversations. In order to provide some conference options that include childcare, and others that occur outside of regular work hours, Parent/Teacher conversations are held on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 9-1p, once in the Fall and once in the Spring. Meeting in the Fall and Spring allows us to see the growth your child has made over the course of our school year. Please see 23/24 Calendar for dates. A sign-up sheet is sent out one week prior to conference week for parents to pick a time slot.

### **REQUIRED FORMS**

These forms must be completed and returned on warming day. Once your deposit has been paid, a link to these forms will be sent so you are able to download and print them from home. To help you keep track of all of the forms, there is a checklist of the end of the handbook.

Forms to be completed are as follows:

- ☐ **LIC 627** Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
- ☐ **LIC 700** Emergency Contact Information Sheet
- ☐ **LIC 702** Child's Preadmission Health History
- ☐ **LIC 995A** Parents' Rights
- ☐ **LIC 613A** Personal Rights
- ☐ **LIC 9150** Parent Notification Additional Children in Care
- ☐ Photographic Release Form
- ☐ Hiking Permission Slip
- ☐ Healing Basket Permission Slip
- ☐ COVID Liability Waiver
- ☐ Vaccination Records

### **TUITION, DEPOSIT AND BILLING**

At Song Sparrow Playgarden we strive to have an economically and racially diverse program. To make this possible, a sliding scale is offered. Please keep in mind, your tuition payments go towards paying your child's teachers as well as improving or adding to the existing infrastructure at the playgarden. We count on your honesty to choose a scale that works best for your family. The hope is: others pay more, so others can pay less. It takes a village!

For new students, families are asked to pay a one-time registration fee to guarantee their child's place in the upcoming school year. This is not applied towards upcoming tuition payments. For continuing families, a deposit equal to your first month's tuition is paid during open enrollment (usually February). The deposit for continuing students is applied towards your first tuition payment of the upcoming school year. An annual supplies fee of \$250 is due on August 1st, 2022. These will be billed through Brightwheel.

Tuition must be paid on the first of every month. All Billing is handled through Brightwheel. To ensure being prompt with your payment, families are required to sign up for Auto Pay through Brightwheel. If for any reason this payment method is inconvenient, please discuss this with Teacher Amy, and she will try to accommodate you.

There will be no refunds or partial credits given due to closures resulting from COVID, smoke days or other reasons outside of Teacher Amy's control. For more information, please see details about Air Quality and COVID below.

### **Holidays and Vacations**

There are no reductions in tuition for school breaks, vacations that your family takes during the school year, or for sick or absent days. Please review the school calendar at the end of the handbook. Please be sure, if there are items of clothing or gear you need during your vacation, that you let Teacher Amy know so they can be ready for you to pick up prior to leaving for vacation. Please respect our school breaks by refraining from retrieving personal belongings from Song Sparrow Playgarden during the school breaks.

### **GUIDELINES**

#### **Snack Time & Lunch**

Healthy, organic whole grains and fruits are provided in the morning for snack. Please let me know if your child has any food allergies. Because of our weekly snack menu, Song Sparrow Playgarden is unable to accommodate children with egg or nut allergies. All of our snacks are vegetarian and gluten free. Regarding lunches, please send fresh, simple, nutritious meals, rather than processed foods in a backpack with an insulated water bottle. Please try to limit packaged food that is difficult for your child to open. Also, in support of our environment and as a good example to the children, please place your child's food in containers that can be washed and reused, rather than those that need to be thrown away. Your child should bring one full sized-placemat, and one cloth napkin in his or her lunch. Please be sure that your child can open any packages or containers that are sent with them on their own. There is a water filter at the teacher sink to refill water bottles throughout the day.

### **Clothing**

Children should have a complete change of clothes at Song Sparrow Playgarden. If these extra clothes go home with the child one day, please make sure that his or her extra clothes bin is restocked the next day of attendance. It is your responsibility to keep the proper amount of clothes in your child's bin at school. Teacher Amy is not able to take regular inventory. Please be sure all items at school are labeled clearly with your child's name.

Items to be included are as follows:

- Two shirts (one long sleeve and one short sleeve-depending on the season)
- Two Long pants or shorts (depending on the season)
- Two pairs Underwear (depending on how new your child is to potty training)
- Two pairs of Socks

Sun hat for the fall/spring seasons

Warm hat, rain boots and rain gear beginning mid-October

Please make sure your child is warmly dressed in layers that can be peeled away as needed. The temperature is often drastically different here in this little Valley, with much cooler mornings and much hotter afternoons. In the Fall and Spring, children should arrive in sleeves such as a hoodie, or sweater that they can take off if it gets warmer. Have this under a heavier coat during the winter months. Base layers such as wool and silk help to regulate body temperature all year long.

Hats are an important accessory in Waldorf Early Childhood. We always wear hats when we are outside of the playgarden if it is sunny, and all day when it is cold. Have your child arrive with a warm hat that covers the ears and boots in the winter and a sun hat in fall/spring. Because we do a number of activities in which the children's clothing may get stained or soiled, please dress your child in sturdy play clothes. Shoes should be appropriate for running and climbing. Please refrain from slip-on shoes that may come off easily. Once your child is 5, you may have them begin wearing lace-up sneakers to Song Sparrow Playgarden if they've been practicing at home so we can begin to learn the practice of tying shoes.

I also ask that you send your child to school without jewelry or other adornments and in clothing that is free of slogans, cartoon caricatures, advertisements or images from the media. Also, please refrain from sending your child to school in shoes with flashing lights. These parameters around clothing allow the children to more freely and naturally relate to one another, rather than to their things. Thank you so much for your help on this!

Rain gear should be purchased at the start of the school year. Teacher Amy asks that all children wear rain bibs. This allows for the most versatile weather conditions.

### **DAILY RHYTHM**

8:45 and 9:00	Children arrive/staggered drop off
9:30	Morning Circle
10:00	Snack
10:30-12:00	Daily Activity/Free Play
12:30	Lunch
1:00	Story time/drawing/early pick-up
1:45 and 2:00pm	Goodbye!

### **COMING AND GOING**

#### **Drop-off and Pick-up**

Transitions can be challenging for the children. The more routine and rhythmical we can make drop-off and pick-up times, the easier it is for everyone. Children are expected to hold your hand until they have been allowed inside the gate. The following are my guidelines in this regard:

### **Staggered Drop-off (8:45 and 9:00am)**

1. Please plan to arrive at your designated drop off time and sign-in by scanning your QR Code with the Brightwheel App on your phone. We will discuss drop-off times during our parent evening prior to our first day together.
2. Have your child place their things on a hook. Walk them to the sink and wash your hands with your child's hands before sending them off to play.
3. It's very helpful to let me know if there is anything I should be aware of that might affect your child's day (lack of rest, parent out of town, etc.) If you don't see me at drop off, you can do this through Brightwheel. Please tell me if there are arrangements for someone other than parents to pick up your child. You can also do this during check-in using Brightwheel.
4. Please do not bring up other, more-involved matters that you would like to speak to me about during drop-off. Instead, please e-mail me and we can set up a time over the telephone to speak more in depth.
5. Parents should keep socializing in the driveway to a minimum to make space for the next round of drop offs. I highly encourage parent only hikes in Briones!

You are welcome to help your children into the transition of the school day by accompanying them to an area where they may want to play or having them hold my hand to say goodbye. Please bear in mind, though, that this transition should be brief. When you decide to leave, please try to do so quickly, with the knowledge and confidence that your child will be in caring hands, and have a wonderful day ahead of him or her.

### **Pick-up (1:00, 1:45 and 2:00p)**

1. Pick-up times are 1:00, 1:45, and 2:00p. If you are picking up after 1p, please wait until 1:30 as to not disrupt our story time. If you are picking up at a time different than your usual pick-up time, please let me know by noon so I can remind your child during lunch and have them ready when you arrive.
2. Unless I have instructed you to come in, **please wait outside the Sparrow Gate until your child has been dismissed.** I will have your child gather their belongings and wait for you to scan the QR code for check-out and ask you if you are ready to take their hand.
3. Please remember that your child is your responsibility from the time you arrive.
4. Parents should keep socializing in the driveway and front yard to a minimum to make space for the next round of pick ups. Please make sure that you can see your children, and that they are safe (drivers drive very fast on our road). Please establish the understanding with your children that they must hold your hand once they exit the gate on the way to their car.
5. Pick-up times are staggered, therefore it is important that people arrive at their assigned times and leave promptly. When people arrive late, or early or stay to socialize, cars get backed up in the driveway a.
6. nd are unable to enter. If you feel the urge to connect and chat, I encourage arranging time to do so at a local playground. (we have a few really nice ones nearby)

### **Parking**

Please **ENTER** the driveway on garage side and **EXIT** opposite side (driving through driveway so house is on your right). Park in the area in front of the fence; Facing your car so that the fence is to your right. Please do not park in front of the garage. Please park in the drive-through part of the driveway; stopping at the second maple tree ONLY if there is no more space in the area next to the fence.

### **Parent Visits**

Please feel free to visit your child at Song Sparrow Playgarden. I only ask that you wait until your child has been with me for at least three weeks, for this gives the children and I time to form our group together and establish a rhythm. It works best if you let me know ahead of time when you wish to visit, but if you wish to drop in, please be respectful of the type of activity going on. For example, if it is story time, I may ask you to wait until the story is over so as not to disturb the mood. Because our group is small, the children will feel that someone “new” has entered the environment and their attention will partly be on you as long as you stay. It can take them a while to get back to whatever activity they were previously engaged in. Also please understand that I will be focused on the children and that too much adult conversation can be disruptive. For this reason, when you drop by for a visit, please do one of two things:

- take your child into a private area where you can have some quiet, one- on-one time or
- if you prefer to see how your child is interacting with the other children, please observe quietly. Bring some reading, knitting, or sewing with you, or ask what work activity you might take up. Children enjoy seeing the adults in their lives engaged in meaningful, physical activity. It also gives them greater freedom to continue their play with friends.

Parents are always invited to bring a special activity to Song Sparrow Playgarden to do with the children—a woodworking project, craft, etc. however, I do need some advance notice so we can plan accordingly. Let me know if you have something you’d like to share with the children.

Parents are invited to join our hike days after we’ve been hiking for a few weeks so that the children have a chance to get acclimated to hiking without parents. A sign-up sheet will be sent out for parents to indicate when they’d like to join us. We ask only one parent join us at a time.

### **Parent/Teacher Communication**

It is expected that both parents thoroughly read all of the communications sent by Teacher Amy and Song Sparrow Playgarden. Email and Brightwheel messages are the most efficient way to communicate policy and procedural changes or important reminders to thirteen families. The smoothness of how things run is dependent on reliable parent/teacher communication.

Please use Brightwheel for all communications with Teacher Amy. I receive notifications on my phone so it acts similar to text. I strive for strong parent/teacher communication. If there is anything you’d like to speak with me about, send me a message on



Brightwheel and we can set up a time to chat on the phone. The one time that I ask that you not bring up more involved matters is at drop-off or pick-up time, for there is just too much going on then. Please only text me if you have something cute and sweet to share. More serious matters should be handled over Brightwheel or a scheduled phone conversation.

Please be advised, unless it is an emergency, I may not return a message on Saturday, Sunday or during school breaks as I try to reserve this time to be with my family. Please do not text me during these times, unless it is an emergency. If there is something you would like to notify me of please send a message through Brightwheel or Email. Mondays until 3p is often used as my admin day in front of my computer so it is a great day to get in touch with me.

On the days I am with the children, I will not answer my phone between the hours of 8:00 am and 3:00 pm. If you need to report an absence or tardiness please do so over Brightwheel. Please also know, I receive Brightwheel notifications on my phone, so I will see it but most likely will not respond right away. Unless I'm taking a photo, my phone is often left on the counter by the sink.

### **Policy on the Use of Electronic Media**

For the purposes of this policy, Electronic Media includes: television, movies, video games, computers, cell phones, and internet.

Song Sparrow Playgarden follows developmentally appropriate practices and a Waldorf approach to Early Childhood Education. I have found that most families who are interested in enrolling their child at Song Sparrow Playgarden come with a consciousness around media use in regards to their young children. In a typical Waldorf setting, it is strongly encouraged that children in the early childhood programs, enjoy a media-free childhood. However, I am aware that streaming shows occasionally, is a normal part of most people's lives with young children these days, especially since being asked to Shelter-In-Place because of COVID. I ask, at the very least, families eliminate screen use on the days their child is at Song Sparrow Playgarden to provide your child the space to process all that they have experienced during their busy school day.

Ideally, movies or shows are used on special occasion versus part of the daily routine. Limiting electronic media allows the young child to utilize their imagination with limitless possibilities through their play. A great deal of healthy processing occurs through this play, and the ability to form one's own imaginative pictures, reflecting what is resonating in their hearts and imagination. This lays the foundation for later learning. Outside influences such as television, videos, and computer games inhibit this beautiful and important process.

Childhood is a time for play, simple pleasures, and a protection from images that may influence unwanted behavior. Many of the children in our school have never

experienced electronic media or have very limited exposure. I wish to support all of our families with this endeavor.

If limiting electronic media is something that might be challenging for you or your family, I'd be happy to work with you to make this possible.

## **HEALTH CARE POLICY**

If your child will be out for the day, please send me a message through Brightwheel and be sure to include the reason for the absence. Currently, I am asking children be tested for COVID if they have missed school for an illness. Please text or email me the negative test by 8am if you'd like your child to come that day.

It is not unusual for children to have fevers, colds, or common illnesses such as chickenpox. Such illnesses can help to build the natural immune system, while fever can help to fight infections. However, children should remain home in certain circumstances.

### **1. Respiratory Illness and Colds**

If your child has a runny nose and the mucus is CLEAR, they've tested negative, they have had no fever and their energy seems normal they can come to school. I will call you to pick up your child if their mucus is green or if the amount of mucus is unmanageable for the teachers to keep it wiped and/or off clothes, hands or face.

### **2. Diarrhea**

If a child has had two or more watery stools in a 24-hour period, he or she should not return to school the following day, and may only return after the child has had at least one normal bowel movement.

### **3. Fevers**

If your child has a fever of 100.4 or higher, your child should remain home for 24 hours.

### **5. Conjunctivitis**

Children with conjunctivitis (pink eye) must see a doctor and may not return to school until they are symptom free.

### **6. Head Lice**

Hair should be free of nits and lice in order to return to school.

### **7. Other symptoms**

Other symptoms which might warrant exclusion from school include earaches; red or watery eyes; unexplained rashes or sores; vomiting; croupy coughs; unusually tired, irritable, atypical behavior.

Please use your common sense when it comes to illness and your young child and understand that young children need to stay home and rest if they are ill. If they seem like they have a mild cold, and you don't think they need to stay home and rest, please

send them. I don't like kids missing school for colds. But if their energy is low and they don't seem like themselves, please make arrangements for them to have a rest day at home.

### **Dispensing Medications**

As mandated by the State of California, I may only give prescription or over-the-counter medication to a child only with a note from the physician stating the name of the child, the name of the medicine, the amount to be given, and how often.

- Please note that Tylenol, ibuprofen or aspirin will not be dispensed to any child for fever because children with a fever need to be at home.

### **Minor Injuries**

When a child receives a minor injury, I will soothe the child with a hug and wash any open wound with Neosporin antibacterial foam and apply a band-aid if needed, then encourage the child to return to what he or she was doing. Parents will be notified through Brightwheel as soon as possible regarding the nature of the injury.

### **Allergies**

It is the responsibility of the parent to provide Teacher Amy with information regarding your child's allergy on the application. In addition, parents are required to notify Teacher Amy if any incidents have occurred outside of school that have resulted in a more serious reaction and/or hospitalization. Teacher Amy will ask that all parents who have children with allergies make a sign to hang up near the kitchen area in the playgarden with the description of the allergy and the child's name.

### **AIR QUALITY**

With our program 100% outside, we must take air quality into consideration, especially during fire season. If the AQI as measured from the purple air sensor at SSPG exceeds 101, then Song Sparrow Playgarden will meet inside that day. Hike day will be cancelled if the AQI is 101 or above.

### **COVID POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF OUR COMMUNITY**

Gathering during the COVID Pandemic carries risks. During this time, we have had to trust in people we do not yet know very well in our school community. I am asking that all families enrolled at Song Sparrow Playgarden continue to consider their actions in their personal lives and its impact on our school community as we continue to move through this next phase of the pandemic.

Information regarding COVID, variants and guidelines in childcare settings are always changing. We will follow the most current guidelines for childcare as stated by the county health department, state public health department, or the CDC, whichever is most specific and updated most recently.

## **EMERGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Fire, Earthquake Evacuation. Each child should have an earthquake kit, which I will keep in my office inside the house with other emergency kits and fire extinguisher. It should be a large, zip-loc bag labeled with your child's name, filled with foods that may be kept for a year. Foods such as small, pull-top cans of tuna, applesauce, unsalted nuts, and energy bars work well. 2-3 small cartons of water or juice should also be included. It should also include an N95 mask in the case we have to evacuate during a smoke day. Please also include a photo of your family and a little note that may be read to your child to help soothe him or her in the event of such an emergency. To insure readiness in case of an emergency, occasional fire and earthquake drills will be conducted.

## **EVACUATION LOCATION**

In the case of a real emergency, and in the event that we need to leave the premises, we will walk to the home of my neighbors, John and Sharon Trebino at 2615 Reliez Valley Road (the big beige cement fortress looking home with a steel picket fence diagonally across the street). If local lines are tied up, my out- of-town contact person, who will take messages from me and relay them to parents will be my close friend Amber Arnold in Connecticut. Her cell phone number is (914) 217-6091 Emergency Medical Services will be provided by John Muir Medical Center Emergency Room in Concord. Located at 2540 East Street, Concord, CA 94520

# PARENT CHECKLIST

## REQUIRED FORMS

	Admissions Agreement
	<b>LIC 627</b> Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
	<b>LIC 700</b> Emergency Contact Information Sheet
	<b>LIC 702</b> Child's Preadmission Health History
	<b>LIC 995A</b> Parents' Rights
	<b>LIC 613A</b> Personal Rights
	<b>LIC 9150</b> Parent Notification Additional Children in Care
	Photo Release Form
	Hiking Permission Slip
	Handbook Acknowledgment Form
	Vaccination Record
	COVID Liability Waiver

## ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE LEFT AT SCHOOL (brought on warming day)

	Sun Hat
	Warm Hat
	Change of clothes: 2 pants, 2 long sleeve shirts, 2 pair socks, 2 pair underwear (shorts and t-shirts in warmer months)
	Earthquake Kit (see handbook)
	Rain Gear: Boots, Bibs and Rain Coat (this can be brought once rainy season starts)



## **Song Sparrow Playgarden Parent Handbook Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I have read the Song Sparrow Playgarden Handbook in its entirety. I further acknowledge that I understand and agree to follow the policies outlined in this Handbook, and that I understand what is expected of me as a parent/guardian.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date signed: \_\_\_\_\_