



## **The Community Preschool, Grace Cathedral “Welcoming all of San Francisco’s Children”**

### **Background**

In the fall of 2005, it was suggested that Grace Cathedral look into the possibility of opening a preschool that would serve children of Tenderloin families who did not have the financial means to afford preschool. A committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of the preschool project. The committee solicited advice from several experts and made site visits to schools that might provide a model for the Preschool.

Since the cathedral had recently remodeled its Sunday school classrooms, and since they were not used during the week, the issue of appropriate indoor space was easily solved.

Research into the pedagogy of preschool education led the committee to change its initial ideas about having only non-paying students. The study found that there were pedagogical advantages to mixing socio-economic classes. In light of that finding, the committee supported a new plan: one third of the student body would be full-pay, one third partial-pay and one third on full scholarship.

Because of the special mix of children at the school, the committee believes that the level of each family’s interest is critical. We are seeking to enroll children of families who whole-heartedly believe in the program’s structure and philosophy.

### **Philosophy Statement**

The Community Preschool’s belief is that a positive early childhood education plays a strong influence on a child’s overall growth and development. We believe a child’s experience with early learning is at the core of building a positive self-image, and enthusiasm for school success. Through cooperative team efforts of parents and teachers, this early education center operates on a team philosophy to enhance the potential of each child. This learning environment is a developmentally appropriate program of teacher and child guided activities that prepare one not only for Kindergarten success, but for the journey of life itself.

### **Mission Statements**

- The Community Preschool will provide a balanced educational learning experience for children of ages three through five and their families.
- Children from all socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, religious traditions and places of national origin will benefit from a program that addresses the emotional, social, artistic and academic growth of every child.
- The school will celebrate the religious and cultural traditions of all members of the community.
- The school will prepare students and their families to meet the high standards for success in elementary programs in both the private and public sectors.

### **Admissions Statement**

The Community Preschool, Grace Cathedral seeks to enroll children who will benefit from its purposes and programs. As stated in the preschool's mission, the program seeks to develop a diversity of population by enrolling families from varied socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, religious traditions, and cultures represented in the city of San Francisco. In order to accomplish that goal, the preschool will enroll one-third full fee paying, one-third partial fee paying, and one-third full scholarship families. The school will reach out to the neighboring Tenderloin community for children who would be unable to attend preschool without full tuition help. When making admission decisions, the school will give attention to the level of family's interest in the school's mission and their willingness to participate in this mission with enthusiasm and sensitivity.

### **Program Information**

The Community Preschool, Grace Cathedral is a 12 month program, open Monday through Friday from 8:00am-6:00pm. The program closes at 1:00pm on the first Friday of each month for Staff Development, and for a full day quarterly for teacher in-service. In addition the program observes twelve holidays a year, and is closed for Winter break, Spring break, and a three week summer recess in mid to late August.

### **School Year**

All children are enrolled from 9:30am-3:30pm, five days a week from early September through the second week of August. There is an optional early care (8:00-9:30am, and extended care 3:30-6:00pm) for full-time working families. We do not offer part-time preschool at this time.

### **Ages of Children Served**

Children range in age from 3-5. They must be within this age range by September 1 of the program year. We enroll a balance of ages, and all children are co-mingled in the same classroom. Children must be able to use the bathroom independently, and wear regular underwear. No diapers or "Pull-Ups". We enroll between 18-21 children.

### **Tuition**

For the 2009-2010 school year: \$1,313.00 per month. Tuition includes a morning snack, a healthy lunch, and afternoon snack.

### **Food Service**

All food provided to The Community Preschool is made on-site from scratch by Acre Gourmet. This food is inclusive for all students from September-June of the program year. Acre Gourmet offers an organic and sustainable approach to nourishing students by using local ingredients, grass-fed meats and free-range poultry free of hormones and antibiotics. Acre Gourmet pays special attention to dietary/allergy concerns and vegetarian options.

## The Staff

The teachers are the members who provide the environment and experiences from which children learn. Our staff represent a diversity of talents and have been selected for their professional skills and commitments to the education of young children. We focus on maintaining excellent standards of professionalism. Our staff is sensitive to the needs of the children and families, and committed to quality education. All preschool staff have health and security clearance from the State of California as mandated by childcare licensing.

## The Curriculum

We are a play-based preschool, and believe since children learn through play, we plan our time, classroom, and outside time to encourage this activity. Through play, children re-enact experiences, try out different roles, express ideas, process information, widen their world view and relate to each other. Children learn by doing, so we provide first hand experience as a basis for expanding knowledge about our physical world.

At the Community Preschool, we implement developmental curriculum based on age-appropriate activities that enable each child to learn according to their level of readiness. Concepts are adapted to age-appropriate levels to increase understanding for the child. Learning occurs through discovery and activities that challenge growth physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. The classroom is set up with Interest Areas that promote the development of specific skills. The Interest Areas include: Art, Dramatic Play, Literacy, Science/Discovery, Sensory, Fine Motor, Music/Movement, and the Building/Block Center.

## We are closed for the following Holidays/Observances

Labor Day	-	September
Thanksgiving Thursday & Friday	-	November
Winter Break	-	December/January
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day	-	January
President's Day	-	February
Spring Recess	-	March/April
Easter Monday	-	March
Memorial Day	-	May
Independence Day	-	July
Summer Recess	-	August/September

In addition the preschool closes at 1:00pm on the first Friday of each month, and a full day each quarter. This time allows the preschool staff to attend staff meetings, trainings, workshops, and other professional growth opportunities. A detailed calendar will be distributed during the enrollment period.

## Application and Enrollment Process

**Tours:** The Community Preschool is a small program with a limited number of slots available. Slots will be filled with children varying in age from 3-5. Therefore, small group tours are given between the months of October and December on Wednesdays from 10:00am-11:00am. Tours are given by advance reservation only; limited spots are available and are scheduled on a first come – first served

basis. Please call the preschool after September 1 to schedule a tour. Children must be at a minimum age of 2.0 (by September 1 of the tour season) for families to schedule a tour.

**Application:** Families will be given an application during the tour. As the application window opens, those families may then mail their application directly to the preschool. When submitting the application, we require a non-refundable \$50 fee. Applications are **not** ranked in the order in which they are received.

**Scholarships:** When making admission decisions, we seek to enroll a diverse socio-economic group of families who will best fit the program structure. Based on our admissions statement, our enrolled families will be one third full-fee payers, one third partial-fee payers, and one third on full scholarship. Families who reside in designated areas of the 94102 zip code may be eligible for full scholarship. Partial scholarship awards are determined by eligibility (gross household income and family size), and need (parent employment, school, or other activity). Decision letters are sent to families in early March.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How old does my child need to be to be accepted into your preschool?**

The Community Preschoolers need to be able to use the bathroom on their own before they begin the school year, and children will need to be at least three years old by September 1 of that year. On occasion we may enroll a child mid-year upon their third birthday, if space becomes available.

**Will you make an exception on the age requirement for my child?**

No. The Community Preschool is licensed to serve children between the ages of 3 – 5.

**Can I put my name on a waiting list? My child will be ready for preschool in two more years.**

The Community Preschool does not maintain a waiting list. Please contact the program in the fall of the year prior to the year when your child would be eligible to enroll to start the admission process (i.e., if your child is eligible to enter our preschool in September 2010, call the preschool to schedule a tour in September 2009).

**I would like to tour the school and visit the classroom. Am I able to do that any time?**

We are a small program whose entire staff (including the Director) is in-ratio with the kids during the day. In order for the Director to guide a tour, prior staffing arrangements must be made. The first step of our application process is for parents to contact the program to schedule a tour between the months of October – December. We apologize, but due to limited tour dates, tours are available for parents of age-eligible children only.

**What kind of admission test is administered at the preschool?**

Our program does not test children. Our application process includes a time for your child to visit the school. All visits are scheduled during January and February. Preschool applicants and their parents visit our preschool classroom and meet our preschool teachers in small groups for 45 minutes on a Friday afternoon.