

**The Art of Wisdom Family Handbook**

**2019/2020**

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The Art of Wisdom

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**Handbook Revision**

The Art of Wisdom Inc. (“The Art of Wisdom, TAOW”) reserves the right to revise, delete, or supplement any provisions of this parent handbook (“Handbook”) as necessary. Policies and procedures cannot all be predicted and listed here. Policy changes will be posted on the website for 30 days. Any reproduction in whole or in part of this handbook is prohibited without prior written approval. We thank you in advance for your understanding.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

*The Art of Wisdom is an equal opportunity employer and provider.*

*The Art of Wisdom*

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Welcome to The Art of Wisdom!

This handbook was developed for families of The Art of Wisdom to provide information about the policies and procedures governing the operation of The Art of Wisdom. Each family is asked to read the handbook in its entirety required to submit an acknowledgement of the policies and procedures therein. Your family’s involvement directly affects the success of our community school. To demonstrate the importance of families, we share with you a brief history of our school. We hope your experience with us will be rich and rewarding to both your child and your family.

We are a non-profit art-based, mindful community school whose philosophy is based on the Tao Te Ching. The *simplicity of mindfulness, being kind to others, empathy and imagination* is weaved into everything we do.

*​​*

**This is where *Creativity Comes Alive.***

Welcome

# Mission Statement

*The Art of Wisdom (TAOW) is a nonprofit community-based school in East Quogue, New York whose mission is to empower and educate children through a focus on art, imagination, and communication. With an art-based curriculum and lessons grounded in the Tao Te Ching philosophy, TAOW offers a variety of programs, including preschool, summer art camp, after school program and special event workshops.*

# Philosophy

We serve as a place of belonging and empowerment for children, where they can make loving and compassionate choices, and reach their full potential in becoming caring and responsible adults. A partnership of school staff, parents, and community will help prepare students to be life-long learners who can become successful, productive future citizens. Our intention is to nurture the whole child, to make each girl and boy feel secure, loved, and well cared for. A child’s self-esteem and ability to interact with peers and adults are of the utmost importance. We address each child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs through a well-planned, developmentally appropriate program steeped in convictions about community, preferences, equality, and fairness.

Our nurturing environment fosters learning, social, speech, language and motor skills. Opportunities to make choices through integrated cooperative play, develop problem-solving skills, promote independence, and highlight the uniqueness of each individual child.

# Staff

We pride ourselves in hiring—and retaining—a well-educated and experienced staff. Our teachers have degrees in early-childhood education or a related field, as well as years of hands-on work with children. Assistant teachers are encouraged to continue their education and often go on to graduate school. By continually striving for quality improvement in all aspects of our mission, including the foundational finances and facilities, our school exemplifies progressive design in education that can be used by professionals in various disciplines to meet the changing needs of society. All our staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid.

Undergraduate interns and student employees complement our staff, and pre-service teachers from local colleges do field placements or student teaching here. TAOW employees are hired and managed according to the Human Resource policies. They are thoroughly oriented, earn a competitive salary, have paid planning time, and, if working full-time, receive full benefits, including tuition. Our experienced educators participate actively in the local early childhood communities by serving in leadership capacities, providing consulting to other programs, and partnering with high-quality programs to develop new avenues for early childhood professional development. All of our partner organizations are seeking ways to support each other and create synergies between their professional development initiatives that will enhance the quality of reflective training opportunities and serve as a resource for early childhood educators across the broad continuum of professional development.

# Family

## Parent Involvement

We welcome and encourage family involvement in a variety of ways. The Art of Wisdom as a non-profit organization relies heavily on parent involvement in the administration of, fundraising for, and maintenance of The Art of Wisdom. Parents in their involvement help defray operating costs, provide us with invaluable resources, and can influence the direction and purpose of TAOW.

Parents are invited and encouraged to the call the school anytime with any questions or concerns that they may have. While we also invite the parents to plan a visit to the school anytime, we ask that parents are mindful of the children’s schedules and conduct their visits at appropriately scheduled times, as to not interfere with the children’s learning process or other extracurricular activities.

Families are encouraged to participate in the learning process by discussing and expanding on their children’s preschool experience at home. There are many opportunities for you to participate in your child’s school experience: accompanying us on trips, sharing special talents, and attending birthday parties. Please speak to your child’s teacher. We welcome families at many of our special functions throughout the year.

# Curriculum

We follow the most current practices in Early Childhood Education: we embrace and nurture the ‘Whole Child,’ and allow each child to learn at his or her own pace. Any person feels good in an environment that empowers them. Most importantly, we believe that each child is born with at least one special gift, and as teachers it is our job to recognize that gift and help the child to recognize and develop their gift as it emerges. Entering the child’s world right where they are and making learning exciting and fun.

Our curriculum is Art based, encouraging our children to explore the many mediums that art has to offer. We have also found that through art children open up. Our school makes beautiful unique pieces of art from recycled trash. This teaches the child to be conscious of the world we live in, while encouraging the child’s imagination and showing them that you can create from anything. Our program includes music, so our children can embrace their inner soul and express their joy for life through dancing, singing and instruments. Our curriculum includes gardening, so our children can learn about the cycle of nature. Our school makes salt dough from scratch, creating the whole alphabet. We believe that every moment is a lesson, so we are always fully aware of the words we use and the energy we bring to the classroom. We teach our children that we never touch anyone so lightly that we don’t leave a trace.

TAOW includes in its curriculum content and instructional materials that reflect the cultural and racial diversity present in the United States and in our school, and the variety of careers, roles, and lifestyles open to women and men in our society. One of the objectives of the total curriculum and teaching strategies is to reduce stereotyping and to eliminate bias based on sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, and physical disability. The curriculum fosters respect and appreciation for cultural diversity and an awareness of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of everyone as a member of a multicultural non-sexist society. Since all children are unique, lesson plans allow access to the curriculum for all children by including adaptations or modifications for differences in age and ability, developmental stage, family’s needs, and other factors.

Lesson plans are prepared weekly based on the monthly and weekly theme. There is a balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Our classrooms are set up in learning station configurations which allow each child to choose his/her activities in the different areas. The activities in each station are planned by the teachers to facilitate discovery learning and reflect the weekly theme. Our daily schedule includes large group, small group, and individual activities as well as learning station times. The children are guided and encouraged to learn new self-help skills, think for themselves, make choices, experiment, explore, make mistakes, and have a lot of fun in the process.

Teachers adjust lesson plans to the interests and input of children in the class. For example, if the children are particularly fascinated by the solar system, the lesson will be expanded. Curriculum goals and objectives and goals align with teachers' ongoing assessment of each child's progress, and assessment information is considered when planning for learning experiences through which curriculum goals will be achieved. Choices of activities relevant to the curriculum are offered to the children, and curriculum materials are always freely accessible. A family's culture and a child's experiences outside the school setting as shared by the parents are recognized as being important pieces of the child's growth and development and are considered by teachers during lesson planning. Each child's developmental needs as well as parent concerns and goals for that child are also part of lesson planning for the class. Curriculum will be planned with goals in mind for the knowledge and skills important to children's development, learning experiences linked to these goals, and details about how learning experiences occur throughout the day.

# Admission/Inclusion Policy

We have an open enrollment policy. Our services are offered to everyone regardless of race, creed, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. By enrolling your child at The Art of Wisdom, you as a parent or guardian give permission for your child to be involved in the activities and events at The Art of Wisdom. We do not have translation services available. Parents of a special need’s child attending our school are asked to give a written description of procedures to be followed for the child’s care. A copy of the evaluation form from the psychologist or therapist and any other diagnoses should be provided to the classroom teacher and the school director. These evaluations will be held in the strictest confidence and used only to educate the teachers who work with the child. We can only help your child when we have full knowledge of learning styles and needs. Although rare, a situation may arise in which it becomes evident that the needs of a child cannot be met effectively by our school. A decision to dismiss a child will only happen after we feel every option has been explored. Every measure will be taken to meet the needs of the child in question. Our Director will assess each dismissal not only regarding the individual child’s needs, but also the needs of all the children served. The parent will be a central figure in the discussions regarding this issue, but the decision to dismiss a child must be left to the discretion of our Director.

# Developmental Screening Referrals

We encourage and support families to make the primary decision about services that their children need, and we encourage families to advocate to obtain needed services. We are happy to provide parents with a list of service providers as well as to provide guidance on the procedures involved in obtaining a referral for any suspected developmental delay. Should the classroom teacher suspect a child has a possible developmental delay, she will document concerns through observations and anecdotal notes. The Director will also observe the child to validate the teacher's concerns. The teacher will be in continuous communication with the parents about what she is observing in the classroom to see if parents are witnessing the same behaviors at home. The teacher and parent will meet to discuss new strategies that can be implemented to help the child progress. After the application of new strategies and further observation, if there is no improvement, then there are referral options that the teacher and Director can share with the parents. Screening information can also be obtained by the East Quogue Elementary School.

The teachers can share information about the child's developmental levels for the referral process. Before any information would be shared in a referral, parents must give written consent. Professional evaluators can observe the child in the classroom environment with the parents' permission as part of the referral process. Knowing that this can be a very stressful situation for a family, all concerns are addressed in a very gentle, non-judgmental manner where everyone can focus on the needs of the child. Any conversations with parents about their children are held in the strictest confidence and are not shared with anyone beyond the family, classroom teachers, and administrators. The school expects the family to share any information learned about the child's development through the referral/evaluation process so that we can try to accommodate the child's needs in the classroom where possible. When space and schedules permit, children may be able to receive some therapy services at the school from the professional provider. We will try to provide any additional information that we may have about special services for which a child may qualify or about area schools that may be suited to the learning needs of the child. The classroom teacher can attend the IEP meeting for a child to support the family with information about the child's progress in our classroom if requested by the family to do so.

# Registration Requirements

TAOW and NYS policy requires that the parent complete and submit the following forms to TAOW prior to your child’s first day at the school.

1.Identification and Emergency Information

2. Physician’s Report (child’s pre-admission health evaluation including vision and hearing screening)

3. Consent for Emergency Treatment

4. Parent’s Report (child’s pre-admission health history)

5. Immunization Record

6. Permission to Participate (program activities)

7. Enrollment Contract

Failure to provide the required forms may result in delaying your child’s participation in the program.

# Hours/Arrival and Dismissal/Tuition/Late Fees/Scholarships

## Hours

TAOW is open from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. No sessions are held on Monday to allow time for parent discussion, parent conferences, preschool and daycare visits, team meetings, and staff development. TAOW does not allow parents and children into the school prior to 9:00 a.m. and parents must pick up children by 3:00 p.m., or at the end of their scheduled class time. If you are unable to pick your child up by your contracted time, a late fee will be charged beginning at your child’s dismissal time and will increase in 5-minute increments. Parents and children are not allowed into the school until their scheduled class time.

## Arrival and Dismissal

It is important that your child’s day begin on a positive note. Please share any information with your child's teacher that might be relevant to your child's success that day such as changes at home including sleep issues, family situations, etc. Upon arrival, make sure your child’s teacher knows your child has arrived so that she may mark the attendance roster. An authorized adult must accompany a child into and out of the building. The adult bringing and picking up the child each day must contact the teacher. No child is to be dropped off or picked up in the parking lot or at the door. Parents are responsible for their children en-route to and from the school.

If your child does not show up for their scheduled class within 15 minutes of the start time, TAOW staff will call the parents first to find out where the child is. If they cannot contact either parent, they will call the child’s emergency contacts. If 30 minutes pass without the child’s whereabouts being known, TAOW will contact the police. In the light of recent events of children being forgotten in cars, we appreciate your understanding and cooperation. Parents must notify staff if they expect to be late for pick-up. Failure to pick up your child by their scheduled end time without notification will result in the same procedure as above.

From time to time, your child may experience some separation anxiety. This is normal. Experts suggest that you hug and comfort your child, let them know you are leaving and will see them later, and promptly leave the classroom. While leaving a crying child can be a difficult thing, most children stop crying within five minutes. Lingering in the classroom most often makes matters worse. Feel free to call us later if your child is upset when you leave, and we will let you know how he or she is doing.

Conversely, you should not pick up your child prior to 3:00. If an earlier pick-up time is necessary, please be sure to give the staff ample notice so that they can plan in their schedule. When you enroll your child at TAOW, you are required to provide contact numbers for people authorized to pick your child up from the center. These should be people who live locally. Please keep this information current. If at any time during the day, another person will be picking up your child, you will be asked to inform the staff in writing, by text or e-mail. Children will not be released without this information. In addition, please inform any person who may pick up your child that the teacher/staff may ask for a photo ID to verify his/her identity. A minor (anyone under 18 years old) cannot be responsible for picking up a child.

During departure, it is also important to follow a set routine. We recommend that when you arrive, you greet your child and the teachers, and let your child know how much time he or she must wrap up the ongoing project or activity. While your child is finishing up is a good time to talk with the teachers to discuss your child’s day, but this is not the time to have a full conference with the teachers. If you feel you need a conference, please ask the teacher to set a separate time for you to meet. On the way out, check your child’s cubby. Be sure and say, “Good-bye” to your child’s teachers, so they know you and your child are leaving. Once you have reunited with your child and begun departure, TAOW is no longer responsible for your child’s safety. Please be sure he/she remains with you both inside and outside of the building.

## Tuition

Tuition is due the first of each month. Each family will receive a grace period of five (5) days. If you are unable to make this date, please contact as soon as possible to make arrangements, or your account will begin to accrue late fees at the rate of $5 per day that tuition is overdue. If payment is not received by the 10th business day of the month, your child will be dropped from the program. Siblings receive a 10% discount. If tuition is paid in full for your child for the regular school year by August 31, 2019 (that is, excluding any extracurricular programming), you will receive 10% off your total rate if paying with cash or check, 7% if paying with a credit card.

Tuition is payable and due even for days when the center is closed for bad weather, holidays, teacher training days, or if your child is absent for illness or personal reasons, or any other occurrences outside of the school’s control. The school also reserves the right to charge minor, miscellaneous fees in connection with its programs (for example, the cost of field trips or late pickup fees), which are called Incidental Billings.

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## Scholarships

When extra funds become available from fundraising or grants, we will let our enrolled families first of the opportunity to apply for scholarships. Scholarships are awarded based on financial need. They may pay partial or all tuition for the child’s year. Any family that receives a full or partial scholarship will be made aware when their tuition will end, and the amount due on the first of the month following the month that the scholarship has ended (i.e. scholarship runs out in May, monthly tuition payment starts June 1.) If scholarship funds are available, previous recipients will be encouraged to reapply, and will be considered for funds in the order their application was received and/or need.

## Parent Responsibilities

* No smoking is permitted on the premises.
* No firearms, shotguns or rifles are permitted on these premises.
* Children, whether students or siblings and regardless of age, may not be left unattended on these premises and they must always be kept in an adult’s line of sight.
* Children may not be left unattended in cars in the parking lot.
* The following items must be used and stored in such a manner that they are not accessible to children: handbags, backpacks or briefcases belonging to adults; plastic bags; and toys and objects small enough for young children to swallow.
* No child can be released from the child day care center to any person other than his or her parent, a person(s) currently designated in writing by such parent to receive the child, or another person authorized by law to take custody of a child.
* In accordance with the provisions of Sections 413 and 415 of the Social Services Law, child day care center staff must report any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment concerning a child receiving child day care to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, or cause such a report to be made, when such staff have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their capacity as child day care center workers is an abused or maltreated child.
* No child may be accepted for care in a child care program unless the program has been furnished with a written statement signed by a health care provider verifying that the child is able to participate and currently appears to be free from contagious or communicable diseases. The written medical statement from the health care provider must also state whether the child is a child with special health care needs and, if so, what special provisions, if any, will be necessary for the child to participate in child day care.

## Parent Code of Conduct

We expect parents to observe a certain standard of conduct. The following items are not acceptable in the preschool:

• Physical or verbal punishment of their children

• Physical or verbal punishment of other children

• Threatening, harassing or otherwise disrespecting staff, other parents or other children

• Swearing/cursing or threatening/obscene gestures

• Quarreling with other parents or staff

• Making negative or disparaging comments regarding the school to staff, parents or anyone other than Administration (including outside of school)

• Not following policies designated to protect the safety and security of everyone at the School

Any violation of this policy will result in the immediate withdrawal of the child from TAOW.

# Child Health and Safety

## Health and Safety Records

Health and safety information collected from families will be maintained on file for each child in the office. Files are kept current by updating as needed, but at least quarterly. The content of the file is confidential but is immediately available to administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records; the child’s parent or legal guardian; and regulatory authorities, upon request.

Child Health and Safety Records will include:

* Current information about any health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency
* Results of health examination, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results
* Current emergency contact information for each child, that is kept up to date by a specified method during the year
* Names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child
* Instructions for any of the child’s special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes)
* Individual emergency care plans for children with known medical or developmental problems or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergy, asthma, seizures, orthopedic or sensory problems, and other chronic conditions; conditions that require regular medication or technology support
* Supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family’s beliefs. Staff implements a plan to exclude the child promptly if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program

## Preventative Measures

Our goal at TAOW is to keep all our students as healthy as possible and able to attend school daily. We follow the NAEYC daily cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting table (https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/clean\_table.pdf) in our classroom as well as NYS regulations. In addition to our custodial services, teachers clean and sanitize toilet seats, toilet handles, toilet bowls, doorknobs or floors immediately if visibly soiled. When a spill occurs, the area is made inaccessible to children and is cleaned immediately with detergent followed by water rinsing. After cleaning, teachers sanitize nonporous surfaces by using the procedure for sanitizing designated changing surfaces described in the Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table. Contaminated materials are disposed of in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in a closed container. Staff members clean rugs and carpets by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning. Toys that have been placed in a child’s mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion will be removed immediately and disinfected after they are cleaned with soap and water. Ventilation and sanitation (rather than sprays, air freshening chemicals, or deodorizers) control odors in classrooms and custodial closets. Surfaces in the school that may come in contact with potentially infectious body fluids are disposable or made of a material that can be sanitized. Teachers use barriers such as gloves as well as techniques that minimize contact of mucous membranes or of openings in skin with potentially infectious body fluids and that reduce the spread of infectious disease.

We currently use Shaklee Get Clean H2 Organic Super Cleaning Concentrate that is a proven safe, effective, all natural, powerful all-purpose cleaner. This product produces no harmful fumes, is biodegradable, contains no chlorine bleach, ammonia, phosphates, or nitrates, and is not tested on animals. We also use Seventh Generation Disinfecting Multi-Surface Cleaner as an EPA approved alternative to bleach when disinfecting and sanitizing.

## Handwashing Procedures

The Art of Wisdom has a strict hand-washing policy for all staff members, children, volunteers, and parents to help reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. Children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught how to wash their hands effectively and are periodically monitored, while those who are not yet developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are assisted in hand washing by a staff member. Posters of children using proper hand washing procedures are placed by the sink. Every child and teacher are required to wash hands:

∙Upon entry into the classroom

∙Before and after serving, preparing, or eating food

∙After using the restroom or assisting a child in the restroom

∙After blowing noses or handling any bodily fluid

∙After leaving the playground

∙After handling pets or other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that may be contaminated by contact with animals

∙After using items shared by two or more people such as Playdoh or sensory tables.

## Illness Policy and Exclusion of Sick Children

For the health and safety of all the children, it is mandatory that sick children are not brought to school. If your child has any of the following symptoms during the night, he or she will not be admitted the following morning for the safety of the other children:

•fever greater than 100 degrees F

•vomiting

•diarrhea

•pink eyes with drainage

•cough with congestion and excessive nasal discharge

TAOW’s established policy for an ill child’s return:

•Fever free for 24 hours

•Chicken pox: one week after onset (or when lesions are crusted)

•Strep: 24 hours after initial medication

•Vomiting/Diarrhea: 24 hours after last episode

•Conjunctivitis: 24 hours after initial medication or when without drainage

Upon arrival at school, each child is observed by teaching staff for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child’s ability to participate comfortably in the daily activities. Children will be excluded when a child is not able to participate comfortably; if the illness requires more care than staff are able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group; or if keeping the child at school poses an increased risk to the child or to other children or adults with whom the child will come in contact. When a child develops signs of an illness during their day at preschool, parents, legal guardians, or another person authorized by the parent will be notified immediately to pick up the child. For this reason, please be sure that we have current, accurate phone numbers for you, your authorized emergency contact person and your child’s pediatrician. In the meantime, we will provide the child a place to rest until the parent, legal guardian or designated person arrives under the supervision of someone familiar with the child. If the child is suspected of having a contagious disease, then until she or he can be picked up, the child is located where new individuals will not be exposed.

Reporting Communicable Diseases

Staff and teachers provide information to families verbally and in writing about any unusual level or type of communicable disease to which their child was exposed, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at the program and that the families should implement at home. The program has documentation that it has cooperative arrangements with local health authorities and has, at least annually, contacted those authorities to keep current on relevant health information and to arrange for obtaining advice when outbreaks of communicable disease occur.

## Dress Code

## Clothing

Your child’s clothing should be weather appropriate, washable and suitable for ACTIVE play. Clothing may become stained by paint, markers, dirt, etc. so please do not send your child in any clothing that is unsuitable for preschool activities. LABEL ALL CLOTHING! THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST ONE SET OF SPARE CLOTHES IN CASE OF ACCIDENTS OR SPILLS FOR ALL CHILDREN, TODDLERS SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST TWO SETS OF SPARE CLOTHES. Clothing needs to be easily accessible in the cubby. For the preschool children, TAOW staff may request the child to retrieve their own clothing. As such, if clothing is stored in a bag, the child should be able to access the bag without assistance. TAOW staff will bag all wet or soiled clothing and place in your child’s cubby to go home. TAOW staff requests that parents check their child’s cubby daily for any soiled clothing.

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### Shoes

TAOW does not allow open toed shoes such as Thongs or “Jelly shoes,” ballet slippers or slick bottomed party shoes on the play yard. These types of shoes are not safe in the play yard and can create a danger to the child. TAOW recommends sneakers or closed toed shoes as they are the most comfortable and safe and allow for uninhibited outdoor active play. If your child cannot tie shoes, it is recommended that they wear sneakers with Velcro or slip on shoes (slip on shoes must have a full back).

## Meals and Snacks

Keeping our children safe is our number one priority. We currently do not offer meals or snacks so that allergy sensitive children can bring healthy snacks for themselves. We also ask that other families be aware that we may have allergy sensitive children in our program, and do not send in any meal or snack that contains nuts. We also ask that each family sends their child in with a spill-proof cup that we will use to give them filtered water during snack and mealtimes instead of juice boxes or the like. Please do not send in any food item that can be regarded as a choking hazard such as grapes.

First Aid Kit

A first aid kit is in the preschool classroom next to the door. It is inaccessible to children, but readily available for adult use. It is fully equipped according to NYS OCFS standards. Following each use of the First Aid kit, the contents will be inspected and missing or used items replaced immediately. The First Aid kit will be inspected monthly. The first aid kit is taken to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.

Fire Safety

A fire extinguisher is in the preschool classroom with a tag indicating its annual service date. The fire alarm system is serviced annually. Smoke detectors, fire alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly. A written log of testing dates and battery changes is maintained and available upon request. Fire drills are conducted monthly and recorded on a log.

## Transportation Safety

Per NY State Motor Vehicle Safety Restraint laws for children, every child released from our custody must be in a child safety seat. NYS requires:

* all children under the age of 4 ride in child safety seats
* all children ride in child restraint systems until their 8th birthday

Safety seats and child restraint systems must be certified according to Federal Motor Vehicles Safety Standard 213. Follow the instructions of the manufacturer of the seat or system, and make sure you install and use the seat or system correctly. The Governor's Traffic Safety Committee website has a [list of permanent child safety seat fitting stations in NY State](http://www.safeny.ny.gov/seat-per.htm). (NYSDMV, 2018)

Please refrain from allowing your vehicle to idle during pick up and drop off times except in cases of extreme cold and heat.

## Supervision

TAOW employees will follow all written instructions as described in this policy, and in section 418-1.8 of OCFS regulations.

Staff will always be scheduled so that there are no discrepancies in staff to child ratio. No staff member or volunteer without proper clearances as described in TAOW’s Employee Evaluation Policy will be permitted to supervise children. No staff member or volunteer under the age of 18 will be permitted to watch children alone, even in cases of emergency. TAOW will always arrange to have staff on a stand-by schedule so that in cases of emergency, there is proper coverage.

Staff to child ratios and maximum group sizes that currently pertain to TAOW’s programs:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| AGE OF CHILDREN | TEACHER/CHILD MAXIMUM RATIO | MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE |
| 3 years | 1:7 | 18 |
| 4 years | 1:8 | 21 |
| 5 years | 1:9 | 24 |

Each age group will maintain proper staff ratios during arrival and departure times, mealtimes, and nap times. No staff member will be permitted to leave their group of children without proper coverage. No child will be able to go from any transitional areas such as from the classroom to outside play area without proper supervision.

Each child will be required to be signed in at the beginning of the day to account for attendance, and no child will be permitted to leave until signed out by a parent, a person designated in writing, or a law enforcement official.

No child will be left unsupervised while attending school. The teaching staff who are responsible for the care of the children enrolled in the group must be aware of where children are always. Children are never allowed to go into a classroom or school area outside their classroom without teacher supervision. Staff will supervise children primarily by sight. Supervision for short intervals by sound only is permissible if teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight but in the same room (i.e., those who can use the toilet independently, who are blocked by furniture, etc.). Teachers may monitor the 3's and Pre-K children by sound only for up to 5 minutes before regaining both sight and sound observation. Teachers will constantly move throughout the room to maintain visual supervision of all students. Throughout the day teachers will regularly count children. Each time children transition from one location to another, i.e. classroom to playground, the teacher will be responsible for counting the number of children, name to face, whenever leaving one area and when arriving at another to confirm the safe whereabouts of every child always. Teachers must be able to state how many children are always in their care.

Children like to test their skills and abilities. This is particularly noticeable around playground equipment. Even when the highest safety standards for playground layout, design, and surfacing are met, serious injuries can happen if children are not adequately supervised. Adults who are involved, aware, and appreciative of young children’s behaviors are in the best position to safeguard their well-being. Active and positive supervision will involve:

∙Knowing each child’s abilities

∙Establishing clear and simple safety rules

∙Being aware of and scanning for potential safety hazards

∙Standing in a strategic position

∙Scanning play activities and circulating around the area

∙Focusing on the positive rather than the negative to teach a child what is safe for that child and for other children

∙Teaching children the appropriate and safe use of each piece of equipment

Children need spaces, indoors and out, in which they can withdraw for alone time or quiet play in small groups. Program spaces shall be designed with visibility that allows constant unobtrusive adult supervision.

# Child Abuse

* As mandated reporters, all TAOW staff is required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect and can be held criminally liable if they fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect.
* Report any actions by TAOW staff that you deem inappropriate to the Director. If these actions involve suspected child abuse, contact the Child Abuse Hotline immediately at 1-800-342-3720.
* TAOW will not release a child to a parent or designated pick up person if, in the judgment of the staff, the person is acting in a way that is consistent with the inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol. While we cannot hold a child against his/her parents will, TAOW staff will be required to contact the local police and CPS.

## Family Language

We take the language that our children use for their anatomy and how they feel seriously, as to relate to how the children communicates how they need to go to the potty, and how they may be physically and emotionally feeling. If we do not pick up on how the child communicates their bodily functions, feelings, as well as familial terminology, we will directly ask their caregivers for those terms.

## Child Release

Per OCFS regulations, no child can be released from the child day care center to any person other than his or her parent, a person(s) currently designated in writing by such parent to receive the child, or another person authorized by law to take custody of a child.

Upon enrollment, verification of identity is required for at least one parent and the child. For identity of a parent or court-appointed legal guardian, one of the following items is required:

 a. Driver’s License (or government ID card)

 b. Current Passport or Permanent Resident Card

For identity of a child, one of the following items is required:

 a. Official or Certified Copy of Birth Certificate

 b. Current Passport or Permanent Resident Card

 A child may not start without verification of identification from at least one parent. If none of the child’s documents are available by the start date, the child may start, and enrollment will be considered “provisional” for a period of 90 days. If after 90 days we have not received verification of the child’s identity, the child will be immediately withdrawn. Please note that a hospital “Record of Birth” is not an acceptable means of identification for the child.

## Permission to Pick Up

We maintain a strict policy regarding the individuals to whom we will release a child. Enrollment forms require a parent to specify individuals to whom the child may be released. Advance authorization is required for a child to be released to an individual other than those already listed. It is recommended that parents name everyone who might pick-up their child when enrolling and update this information regularly. Only in cases of necessity or emergency should a change be made over the telephone. When notified by telephone, we may request that certain family information be confirmed for verification. The person picking up the child will be required to present identification when arriving at school.

Should a person other than the child’s parent(s) or those indicated on the application arrive to pick-up the child, a parent and/or the first available person on the emergency contact list will be notified and the child will not be released until proper authorization is received. Should an unauthorized person become confrontational or uncooperative with our staff, we will immediately notify the police. We will not release a child to any parent, relative or other authorized adult who appears to our staff to be impaired using drugs or alcohol. In the event this situation occurs, a telephone call will be made to the parent, emergency contact person and/or police.

## Custody, Court Orders and Changes of Family Status

TAOW encourages parents to be actively involved in their child’s care and education. In providing care for a child, continuing and meaningful contact with both parents is required. Therefore, the school will not prohibit parents from accessing records, attending activities or participating in conferences pertaining to their child unless otherwise required by court order or law. The school denies a parent access to their child only if there is a legal document which addresses that denial. In these circumstances, we require (1) a certified copy of the current court order which mandates the rights or restraints, (2) a letter from the custodial parent stating that the non-custodial parent is not allowed to pick up the child, and (3) a photo of the non-custodial parent to help us with identification. We cannot accept information regarding the validity of orders over the phone; only written information will be accepted.

Visitation schedules and parenting plans are agreements made between parents and are not binding to the school. The school will release a child to either parent in accordance with school policy unless otherwise directed by a valid court order. Visitation with the non-custodial parent will not be permitted to take place at school.

The school discourages parents from involving school staff in disputes over custody, visitation schedules, child support and other related issues. Staff members must stay focused on providing children with the highest level of instruction and care. To do so, they must maintain good relationships with both parents and should not be asked to support one parent over another. Staff will not testify or otherwise participate in a custody dispute in their capacities as school employees unless served with a subpoena. Often, child records can provide the same information as the testimony of a staff member, and parents have access to child records by law. Parents are encouraged to use records rather than staff testimony in resolving these types of disputes.

Child Guidance (Discipline) Policy

Parents will be asked to read and sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand our Behavior Management Policy. Pursuant to the regulations of NYS OCFS, our program chooses to implement and follow this plan for behavior management and will attach any additional information as needed. Valuable information is available from our local childcare resource and referral agency and other resources. Information is also available on the agency website: ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare

The program is responsible for educating all staff on this plan upon employment and as needed. The program must supply copies of this plan to all staff and parents of children enrolled in the program.

A child may only be disciplined by the director, group teacher, assistant teacher, provider, substitute, and/or assistant.

A very important part of the preschool experience is helping children learn how to get along in the world, enjoy being with other children, and follow the direction of an adult other than their parent. Our goal is to help children develop self-control and responsibility for their actions. We maintain a positive, conscious discipline policy, which focuses on prevention, redirection, consistency, and firmness. The rules of their classroom are explained frequently so that children are all familiar with the guidelines. Please keep in mind that there WILL be disagreements between children. Young children have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit, throw toys, bite, etc. We will try to prevent problems, redirect when appropriate, discuss inappropriate behavior, encourage making amends when offense involves another person, and sometimes withdraw privileges based on the principle of natural consequences. An example might be where a child is misusing a toy, then he/she will not be allowed to play with that toy for a period. We do not use time out where a child is removed from the group; rather, if a child is disruptive and needs a brief “cooling off” period, he/she will sit apart from the group with a teacher who will reinforce and explain the rules.

In the event a child loses complete control and is harming himself, others, or disrupting a learning experience for the class, he/she may be taken out of the classroom/ playground to the director’s office to “calm their body” and regain control before rejoining the other children.

Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, name calling, psychological abuse, coercion, or isolation used by staff. Threats and derogatory remarks about children are never tolerated. Neither food, drink, sleep, outdoor time, nor bathroom time will ever be withheld from children as a means of punishment. Bathroom accidents are never punished. Staff will never shame children in any matter. Children will never be forced to perform an action such as sitting down.

TAOW staff will work with parents on discipline problems for each individual child. We strive to work as a team with families, ensuring that a consistent message is delivered at school and at home. In the case of a child with a challenging behavior, teachers will observe the child and collect anecdotal notes, then discuss the problem with the child, and then contact the parent either via phone call, email, or face-to-face, to come up with a plan together. Our teachers recognize that a child's culture and experiences outside school may affect the child's behavior and take such information into consideration when disciplining the child. The teachers identify events, activities, interactions, and other contextual factors that predict challenging behavior and may contribute to the child's use of challenging behavior. Teachers structure their classrooms to minimize challenging behavior and create better chances for positive behavior (for example-having multiples of toys to avoid fighting over a specific item). Teachers note patterns in children's challenging behaviors to provide thoughtful, consistent, and individualized responses. They address challenging behavior by assessing the function of the child's behavior (what the child is trying to achieve). If a discipline problem arises that does not respond to the above-mentioned techniques, we will hold a conference with the parents. Together we will try to find a solution. You may be called in extreme circumstances to remove your child if his/her behavior prevents us from being able to properly care for the other children. Our program will do its best to find an alternative placement and/or accessing services. For children with persistent, serious, and challenging behavior, teachers, families, and other professionals will work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

Challenging behavior is defined as any behavior that (1) interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play; (2) is harmful to the child, other children, or adults; or (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. Examples of challenging behavior include physical aggression (hitting, biting, shoving, whacking with toys), relational aggression (verbal bullying), tantrums, whining, testing limits, and refusal to follow directions or observe classroom rules.

TAOW adheres to all federal and state civil laws.

Discipline Guidelines

∙Reasonable limits are set and explained to the children (i.e., “Please walk in the classroom so you do not bump into the furniture.”)

∙Inappropriate behaviors are responded to consistently and firmly.

∙Respect children’s feelings and help children express emotion in acceptable ways.

∙Adults model appropriate behavior.

∙Prepare a safe, interesting, developmentally appropriate environment.

∙Look for positive behavior and make a positive comment.

∙Refrain from discussing a child in his/her presence.

∙Avoid labeling (positive or negative) or shaming a child.

∙Give guidance as needed but try not to interfere with a child’s activity.

∙State expectations positively (i.e., “The blocks are for building” rather than “Don’t throw the blocks.”)

∙Conflict is an opportunity to teach children.

## Parent Statement of Handbook

# Acknowledgement/Preschool Policies

I have received a copy of The Art of Wisdom’s Handbook. I understand that it provides guidelines and summary information about our preschool policies and procedures at The Art of Wisdom.

I also understand it is my responsibility to read, understand, become more familiar with and comply with the guidelines established by The Art of Wisdom. I further understand that The Art of Wisdom reserves the right to modify, supplement, or revise any provision or policy, with or without notice, as it deems necessary or appropriate.

Please sign below:

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, parent of

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read the The Art of Wisdom Handbook and understand all the policies and procedures detailed in it. If I did not understand part of the The Art of Wisdom Handbook, I have asked the policy director and clarified the matter. I now stand in full knowledge of the policies and procedures outlined in the The Art of Wisdom Handbook.

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Signature

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Date