

**PS 261
PTA Sponsored
After-School Program
Family Handbook
2008-2009**

For Distribution to all families with children enrolled in PS 261 PTA sponsored After-School Program
Revised August 2008

Introduction

This PS 261 PTA Family Handbook was designed for you, as a family of a child in the PS 261 After-school Program (“the Program”). It includes information about our program, our expectations for employees and important policies and procedures. It is intended as a guide for your use in the event of questions regarding the Program.

These policies were adopted by the PS 261 After-school Committee (“The Committee”), and were developed to be in accordance with federal, state and local laws and policies of the School Administration. ***At any time, final decisions by the School Administration supersede all other decisions.***

Mission

The PS 261 PTA After-School program will provide high-quality, affordable, and diverse after-school care for all participating children, featuring an array of age-appropriate program options that reflect children's interests. In doing so, it will provide peace-of-mind to working families, who will know that their children, after a long school day, will be in a caring, safe, secure and fun environment run by highly professional and enthusiastic Teachers, Program Administrators and Counselors, assisted by an enthusiastic support staff. This PTA-sponsored program, unique in Brooklyn, will maintain an open channel of communication between families and staff, be responsive to families' needs, and ensure that all staff members understand their roles and program expectations and are accountable for their performance. Perhaps most importantly, the program will be an enriching experience, culturally, academically and socially, for all participating children.

Program Governance

The PS 261 After-School Committee has the ultimate responsibility for establishing the program's vision, mission and programmatic direction and for adopting all the policies and practices necessary for the overall operation and administration of the Program.

The Director, who reports directly to the Committee, is responsible for implementing the policies, programs, and decisions of the Committee; managing the day-to-day operations and program staff; ensuring compliance with School Administration policies and procedures and communicating with families, as well as the Committee and School Administration.

Teachers will report directly to the Director. Counselors will report to the Teacher to whom they are assigned by the Director.

At any time, final decisions by the School Administration supersede all other decisions.

Professional Standards and Practices

As a family, please be aware that the following goals and responsibilities have been made priorities to all employees of the PS 261 After-School Program, in regards to the care of your child:

Primary Goals and Responsibilities of Staff:

Your first responsibility is to ensure the health and safety of the children in your charge as well as any other children when they are entrusted to your care. It is expected that you will always be alert to any safety hazard and that you will avoid even the appearance of a safety hazard, which includes inattentiveness or the poor supervision of children.

Your next responsibility is the positive development of each child, which means helping children in their social-emotional, physical and intellectual development as well as encouraging good habits and positive

attitudes. In addition, as an After-School employee, you also have a responsibility to ensure that the families feel confident and informed about their child's care, so that they do not worry about their child's safety, health, happiness, or development when enrolled in our program. Beyond that, the entire PS 261 After-School community, including the Administration, fellow teachers, and families count on you for the professionalism, knowledge, support, and encouragement you bring to your role and your direct assistance in raising and nurturing the children in your care.

PS 261 is proud of its inclusive and diverse environment and you are expected to be accepting of families with differing life styles and ethnic backgrounds and cultures. In addition, we expect you to keep in mind that different families have a variety of goals and expectations for their children and themselves, and that some of them may be dealing with personal family matters and transitions. We encourage teachers to discuss any problems or concerns with family members directly, particularly as they relate to family/teacher communication and the child's well being.

We all have a serious responsibility towards the program, the school, our colleagues, the children, and the families, and we need to work together in order to ensure the program's success.

Extreme or Chronic Behavioral Issues Protocol

Every effort will be made to place every child in an appropriate class that works for that child, the other children and the teacher. The Director will work with the child and the teacher and will reach out to the family, if necessary. The after-school program will use the Department of Education policies as a guide for behavioral problems.

- Teachers refer all behavioral problems to the Director once she/he determines that the child is disrupting the whole class and efforts such as "time out or restricted playtime" have been deemed ineffective.
- A child who is disrupting an after-school program class will be sent to the Director.
- The Director will contact the child's family and report the problem.
- The Director will develop a plan with the family and the child will again be allowed to attend the activity.
- If the behavioral problem continues, the teacher will again follow the procedure described above, but the child will not be allowed to return to that class. The School Administration will be consulted by the Director and the child may be removed from the program. If for any reason this happens, the family will be reimbursed for the balance of the program for which they may have paid.

Program Hours

The hours of program operation are Monday through Friday, from the end of the regular school day to 6:00 p.m., following the Department of Education Public School Calendar. ***When the Department of Education calls for ½ days where the school remains open, the After School Program runs, for an additional fee, until 6:00 PM. All children scheduled for the day may stay as part of their regular enrollment until 3:00. Children who stay for the "double session" will be charged an additional fee at the daily rate.***

Use of Cell Phones, IPOD's, MP3's and other electronic devices -

Use of cell phones (either receiving or sending calls) or other electronic devices during program hours is strictly prohibited. There are no exceptions. All phones should be turned off throughout the program hours.

GENERAL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM PROCEDURES

Child Pick-up Procedures

Families or other caregivers who pick children up are required to sign children out on the daily attendance sheet. It is imperative for staff to know who is authorized to pick children up and to ensure that children leave

only with adults the families have authorized on their registration form. ***It is each family's responsibility to keep Afterschool authorized pick-up form up to date.***

If a staff member is unsure if the person claiming to be authorized is, it is the staff member's responsibility to check the formal documentation submitted by the family and ask the person for identification. The staff member needs to inform the Director in such a circumstance where the party is unknown.

Communication with Families

The Director will issue a complete daily schedule to families for each child at the beginning of each trimester, as well as periodic newsletters that highlight Program activities and introduce staff members and new course offerings.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

Pre Notification Policy

In March or April of each year a survey to families will be distributed to begin to compile a summary of families' needs for after school care for the upcoming year.

A separate survey will be distributed to the all PS 261 staff, asking them about their interest in teaching, number of days, and get feedback on how to improve existing program.

A survey similar or same to one distributed to teachers will also be sent home to families asking if any adults have interest or expertise that they would like to teach a class in the after school program.

Family Notification Policy

In early June of each year the Director will distribute a letter and application to all PS 261 families describing the program and asking them to register for the fall. Outreach is also made to incoming pre-K and kindergarten families. ***The fall program schedule may be ready at that time. Families will be asked to select classes at time of registration.***

If a family wants to register and hold an after school slot for child, it must complete an application with a registration fee within the specified time frame. If registration is not received by the specified deadline (before end of school year) a late fee may be charged.

PS 261 Staff Notification Policy

The After School Director will work with the After School Committee to develop a survey and information form that will be distributed to all. There will be additional outreach to families that may have adults interested in teaching in the After School Program. Letters of interest will be collected from all interested in teaching in the after school program by a specific deadline date.

Pre-K Kindergarten Notification Policy

In early June of each year a letter and application for the Pre-K and Kindergarten after School program is distributed to every student in Pre-K. Same letter and application is mailed to every incoming Pre-K family.

The Pre-K kindergarten program is self-contained and operates out of the pre-school trailers. In 2008 it has been incorporated into the regular program, "Creative Explorers." There is particular emphasis and focus on Pre-K children but families are able to enroll their 5 and or 6 year olds in the Creative Explorers. Creative Explorers operates under the same rules as the regular After School Program.

Summer notification

A mailing may go to all registered families in August updating them on the after-school program. If the Program schedule is ready, it will be included in this mailing. Families can return the forms once school begins. The program will attempt to serve all interested families. To that end, there will be no waiting list. Every effort will be made to prioritize attendance for after-school classes in the following manner. Children attending five (5) days will get at least three (3) of their first choices; children attending four (4) days will get at least two (2) of their first choices; children attending three (3) days will get at least one (1) of their first choices. Every effort will also be made to give children attending one or two days their top choices. There will be a deadline for submissions determined in the letter that goes to families.

Packets will be distributed during the first week of school for specific program/activity sign up. The Director and volunteers will be at After-School Program table during first week of school to distribute packets, collect registration forms, collect enrollment forms and answer any questions.

In order to give families ample time to register and the Director time to make the schedule and assign the children to their preferred classes, individual classes will not be scheduled during the first two weeks of school.

Ongoing Schedule

The program will operate in trimesters.

Payments, Delinquent and Late Payments

The PS261 PTA Sponsored After School Program operates with fees collected from participating families. The Director, teachers, counselors, supplies, snacks and any other program related expenses are paid for directly with the fees paid by participating families. If families don't pay, the program – and pay timely – the entire program is jeopardized.

The program director, staff and volunteers will make every effort to follow the payment procedure outlined below. However, if you are participating in the program, it is your responsibility to pay according to the policy outlined below.

- ***Bills will go out to after-school program families two weeks prior to the first of the month.***
- ***Payment is due on the 1st of each month.***
- ***If payment is not received by the 7th of the month a reminder notice will be sent to those families who have not yet paid. Reminder notices will be at the front desk at sign out, via email and telephone calls. The Director or his staff will make every effort to contact families, but again, if a family has children enrolled in the program, it is your obligation to pay.***
- ***If payment is not received by the middle of the current month the Director will notify the family via note at the table, email and phone messages that the child will be removed from the program immediately. Continued enrollment and future enrollment will be jeopardized unless the program receives full payment.***
- ***There is financial assistance available to some degree. If families need financial assistance, they must speak to the Director who will in turn consult with the Committee PRIOR to building up arrears.***

All families must be paid in full or on an approved payment plan prior to enrolling in the upcoming session. The Director will speak to families before payments fall more than one week behind. In some cases families may be referred to the scholarship committee. If families do not respond to outreach efforts and fall more than two weeks behind, they will no longer be able to participate in the program.

Ratios

The minimum ratios are as follows:

Minimum class size 15

Maximum class size of 20

For each class/activity with 15-20 participants, a Teacher and Counselor will be assigned. If there are more than 20 participants a second Counselor will be assigned to the class or activity. A teacher must be present in his/her classroom at all times while s/he is on duty

Snacks for Children

A program-sponsored snack will be provided to children between 3:00 and 3:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. Teachers are expected to ensure that refuse is thrown away and tables are wiped clean at the end of snack time.

After School Program snacks are relatively healthy. If your child can't eat the snacks provided, or if you want your child to snack on something specific, you may send a snack for him/her.

Coverage after 6:00 p.m.

Families are expected to pick their children up no later than 6:00 p.m. Each week, a teacher or group of teachers will be assigned to work in the event late coverage is needed.

Every family who is late will be charged \$1 per minute. Families are required to sign an attendance register and the Late Pickup Form that verifies the time of pick up. If a family consistently (more than 3 times in any given session) picks up children after 6:10 PM, they will be identified and charged \$2 per minute.

In the rare case where a child has not been picked up by 7:00 p.m. and Program staff cannot reach a family and/or other authorized emergency pick up person, a teacher, with the consent of the Director, may take the child to local Precinct.

Inclement Weather

The Program follows the New York City School procedures for closing during inclement weather. If the NYC schools are closed; the After-School Program is closed. During inclement weather, when DOE has cancelled after school programs in general, The PS 261 After-School Program, at the discretion of the Director, together with the Principal will keep the program running. Efforts will be made to reach out to families and ask them if possible to pick their children up early. However, as courtesy to our working families, all efforts will be made to maintain the program operation.

Health and Safety

Reporting accidents and/or Injuries:

Every time there is an accident in which a child is injured at the Program or at any program-sponsored event, a written Accident/Incident Report must be completed and given to the families on the day of the incident. For serious wounds, such as a cut, possible sprain or fracture, a bump on the head, or loosening of teeth, you must notify the Director first, call the family immediately and then complete an accident report.

No child should ever go home with an injury without the families having been informed. The Accident/Incident Report must be completed for all incidents. After all details on Accident/Incident report are recorded, the teacher who writes the report needs to sign the form. The form should be given to the Director for his/her signature, and a copy should be made for the Program file. Then, the Teacher will provide the Accident/Incident report to the family on the day of the occurrence.

Serious Injury Procedures

In the event of a very serious injury, such as a potential broken bone, you should contact the Director immediately, who will then contact EMS (911). The Director shall contact the families and make any necessary arrangements for care of the child such as contacting a doctor. If a child needs to go to the hospital, a representative from the Program should accompany the family and child. If the classroom teacher is not able to accompany the child, the teacher must then follow-up with a call to the families to find out what happened. All calls must be reported on the Accident/Incident Report.

Any Program representative who accompanies a child to the hospital should bring the child's most recent Medical Record and a signed familial consent for emergency treatment by EMS personnel.

Medical Emergencies – follow DOE and Chancellor's Regulations

Emergency Evacuation/Fires – follow PS 261 School Safety Plan-

Discipline of Children

The program is committed to the principle of guiding our children in a respectful way. Adults are expected to interact with children in a way that supports self-discipline and in a manner that seeks to assure their compliance and cooperation with necessary procedures and proper behavior. Positive means, such as providing examples, offering clear directions, reasoning, presenting distractions, using reflective language, and questioning, may be used.

Sick Children

If a child gets sick during the program, teachers should first inform the Director and Director will call the child's families to come and get the child. Children who are sick or injured should rest in an isolated area of the Office.

FAMILY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I have received and read the PS 261 PTA Sponsored After School Program Family Handbook. I understand and agree to comply with the policies stated in the Handbook. I understand that if I have any questions about any program policy, I should immediately consult with the Director or the After School Committee. Any violation of the policies in this PS 261 PTA Sponsored After School Program Handbook, may result in discipline, up to and including discharge.

Signed: _____

Date: _____