Welcome
Wimpfheimer Nursery School at Vassar College
A Laboratory for Child Development and Early Learning and Care

**Directors**
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**Administrative Assistant**
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**Mission**
Our program is a campus laboratory schools for child development, care, and early education. As a laboratory nursery school, we seek to be an institution of growth and innovation. We strive to provide the highest quality of early education and care to young children in our community in keeping with our values on:
- respect for the culture of childhood and the rights of children
- respect for the family
- respect for the interdependency of child, family, teacher, community and planet

**WNS is licensed by NYS Office of Children and Family Services**
Stacey M. Rosborough, Licensing Representative

**NY State Child Care Regulations**- Division of Child Care Services

**Hours of Operation**
Our program allows a variety of schedules to accommodate family needs. Pick up happens at 4 intervals throughout the day. Due to these intervals, we intentionally organize the day to ensure a smooth flow for the children and educators. We depend upon families to adhere to their contract and pick up on time. We plan our teaching schedules and staffing ratios according to each child’s contract.

- **8:15-11:45**
- **8:15-3:00**
- **8:15-4:00**
- **3:15-5:00, 5:15**

School opens at **8:15a.m.** Prior to 8:15 a.m., teachers are busy setting up for the day's activities and meeting with student teachers. If you arrive early, please wait in the library and perhaps enjoy a book with your child.
**Arrival time is from 8:15 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. each morning.** Flexible arrival activities will be open for the children the first hour of school, and teachers will be available to greet children and parents, and help your child settle into the day. Please make every effort to have your child arrive at school no later than 9:15 a.m. We find that children have a smoother transition and greater participation in the planned activities if they are at school when the activities begin. The teaching staff is also much more available to greet children and help them get started if they arrive between 8:15 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

**Covid-19 safety procedures:** Thank you for your understanding and support as we navigate the changing recommendations for providing group education and care for young children. We will keep in touch with families with updates about drop off and pick up procedures depending on the guidance we receive from *The Office of Children and Family Services* and the *DC Health Department*. There may be periods when we do all the drop off and pick up rituals on the patios or playground (outside) to decrease crowds in the building and there may be periods of masking required depending on our local public health status.

**Attendance** When your child will not be attending nursery school, please notify us by calling the school at 437-5630 or emailing our site director, Beth at beserwatka@vassar.edu or our administrative assistant, Kathy at katritschler@vassar.edu. It is helpful to know ahead of time how many children will be absent. The answering machine is on 24 hours daily. If possible, please call or email before 9:00 a.m. so that the teachers may plan their day accordingly.

Per our health regulations, we need to know if a child is ill with a contagious disease (please see Health Policy in the following section).

**Sign IN & Sign OUT**
In each classroom there is a clipboard with a Sign IN Sign OUT sheet. Our licensing and safety regulations REQUIRE THAT PARENTS MUST SIGN IN THEIR CHILD UPON ARRIVING AT SCHOOL. There is a column for comments. If you are going to be at a different telephone number than the ones you provided on the blue cards during the day, please write that number in that column. Parents should use the daily sign in and out time to let us know any pertinent information about your child. We use these important transitions to complete a **health log** on each child and will make note of any changes or concerns in the child’s adjustment and health.

**AT THE END OF THE DAY, PARENTS MUST SIGN THEIR CHILD OUT.** Please review this important policy with anyone who drops off or picks up your child.

**Changes**
Please let us know about any changes in your child's life or routine. Changes in family routines are often reflected in a child's behavior at school (e.g., business trips, houseguests, family illness). This will help us to understand behavior changes and provide appropriate support for you and your child.
Authorization to Pick Up Your Child. Wimpfheimer Nursery School will only allow your child to leave the program with an authorized adult. An authorized adult is one whose name is written on the child's blue or white emergency cards. If an adult is picking up your child on a one-time basis (i.e., a visiting grandparent or friend), you may indicate this in writing in the daily parent notebook next to the sign in/sign out sheet in your child’s classroom. Please inform the classroom teacher of this plan. In an emergency or last minute change of plans, we can accept an email message from your personal account if you also call to confirm your e-mail by speaking with an administrator or leaving a voice message. We can accept just a phone call only if the person picking up your child is already authorized on your white or blue card.

Communication
Teachers and families can touch base daily at drop off and pick up. Sometimes the beginning of the day and end of the day can be challenging though, and parents should know that teachers are always available by email during school hours (8:00-5:15). Please allow for 12-24 hours for an email response from your child’s teacher. The directors can also be reached by phone during the day and can facilitate messages or important communication.

The school has adopted a communication app called Kaymbu which allows teachers send regular logs and updates with child photos and story boards about special class events. Parents will sign a consent to participate in the Kaymbu app which will ease communication for all and support home to school ease of communication. The Kaymbu platform allows teachers to share photos but the photos are private and not shared with anyone outside the classroom community. Look for more information about Kaymbu upon registration.

No Cell Phone
Families, please refrain from using cell phones on our playgrounds or classrooms. It is very important that we have our full attention on the children during the important moments of separation and reunion, at the drop off and pick up times of the day. We encourage you to be fully present and engaged in your daily reunion. Silencing your cell phone or leaving it in the car is an essential step.

Hand washing upon arrival
Please help your child wash his or her hands upon entry into the nursery school program. Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers and children. We wash your hands at transitions throughout the day - upon arrival, after toileting, after blowing nose/coughing, before snacks, before handling food and upon transition from one group to another.

SICK POLICY (24-hour rule): Children may not come to school with fevers or infections including diarrhea, vomiting, extreme coughing, impetigo, conjunctivitis, strep throat, or rashes. Children must be fever free for 24 hours (without fever reducing medication) before returning to school and/or have appropriate medication or medical care specific to the needs 24 hours before returning to school. Parents often report that a child who had a fever or vomiting on Sunday says he feels fine and wants to return to school on Monday (the following day) but our agreement with Dutchess County Health Department requires that the child must be fever free and vomit free for 24 hours before returning. Our goal is to keep our school healthy and reduce the risk of spreading infections. Teachers and children follow hand-washing and sanitation routines regularly throughout the day. (See complete Health Policy in handbook to follow)
**Health records and mandatory paper work:** Children may not be enrolled in the school until the Director receives documentation of the child’s physical examination (on the medical form provided in the enrollment packet) and updated immunization records. The form must be signed and dated by the health care provider. The following items must be on file before children can be dropped off the first day of school:

1. Completed health form from physician (signed within 12 months of start date)
   - Include TB test or note from physician stating that TB test is not indicated at this time
   - Include note about lead testing or lead testing to be scheduled
   - Form must be signed and dated by physician
   - Current immunizations must be included with physical
2. Completed blue and white emergency contact cards
   - All phone numbers for parents current and active
   - Physicians phone number
   - Back up phone number
3. Completed developmental profile filled out by parents

**Beginning Nursery School (Gradual Entry)** The nursery school uses a gradual entry schedule at the beginning of the school year. For the first few days of the semester, children and families will be schedule for orientation appointments in small groups, thus allowing time for parents, children, and teachers to build familiarity. The first day of school is usually just a half day. By allowing for the gradual entry of children, the teachers are better able to meet the needs of individual children on their first days of school.

**Saying goodbye**
We value secure attachment and family bonds and recognize our role in supporting your ongoing secure loving relationship with your child. Learning how to say goodbye and then reunite again after nursery school are important educational and developmental milestones.

**Separation**
Children react to school with a wide range of emotions and behaviors. Some parents and children may find that they can easily say good-bye to each other on the first day. Other parents and children may still be working on separation for many weeks to come. Regardless of your child's reactions, and your own feelings about separation, the teachers, assistant director and director are here to help you make this transition go as smoothly as possible. Please do not hesitate to call on any of us for advice and support. Individualized plans that contain a routine usually work well and your child’s teacher will help design an individual separation plan for you and your child. The teachers are your best resources when making a plan for your child.
Late Pick-Up Policy
A parent is considered late if the teacher has brought the child to wait with an administrator. The time it takes a teacher to collect a child’s belongings and bring a child to the office provides a short grace period from the precise time of pick-up. Parents will be given a verbal reminder about the late pick-up policy on the first late pick-up. If late pick-ups continue, the parents and director will meet to discuss the contract and come up with a plan for the future. When a teacher is left waiting for a parent to pick up a child, s/he is unable to attend to his/her other tasks scheduled, including being with other children who are contracted with a longer schedule agreement. Most important, the child is left wondering why the parent has not come to get them. In addition, late pick-ups may cause us to be out of supervision compliance, as we schedule our teaching staff patterns to match contracts. Each contracted pick up time is matched to teacher schedules and child:adult ratios. We do not have flexibility built in for late pick-ups.

Birthday Book
On your child’s birthday, you are invited to gift a book to our school. We ask that the books be high quality children’s picture books (not containing television or Disney characters). Although families are welcome to donate a book of their choice, we also provide a list of books chosen by the teaching staff and the directors. This selection represents current gaps in our collection that we would like to fill. Our children’s library is truly one of the unique and beautiful features of Wimpfheimer Nursery School. The Harry Ordan Memorial Library is the gift of Mark Ordan, ‘79, in memory of his father. If you’d like to participate in our Birthday Book Tradition, simply purchase the book and bring it to your child’s teacher. We will make sure that a gift plate is affixed with your child’s name, special date, and any other inscription you would like. Please select hard cover books, when possible. When you gift a book to our school, you are also welcome to arrange a time to join the class to hear the new book read to the group - or to be a guest story teller on your child’s birthday.

Birthday Celebrations
Birthdays are very special to young children, and often they want to celebrate with their friends at school. Your teacher will work out a visiting schedule if you’d like to join the class on your child’s birthday for a special snack and/or reading of the “birthday book”. In the tradition of WNS, we take a low key approach to the holidays and ask that parents do not send balloons, candy, party favors or sugary treats. The teacher will work with each family to agree upon a special snack.

Transportation
We do not provide transportation for children at WNS and teachers are not allowed to transport children. Most of our special events are brought into the school (such as special story tellers, yoga, music or dance specialist) thus minimizing the need to travel. Another special aspect of our program includes walking field trips on campus to the many wonderful landmarks such as the lake, museum, library and labyrinth.
**Parent Participation**

There are many ways for parents to participate in our program. We hold about 4-5 parent advisory board meetings each year and this is an opportunity to meet in the director’s office and join committees to help plan events, fundraisers or school improvement projects as well as meet other parents and learn about the inner workings and administration of our early childhood program.

We will have family events scheduled throughout the year that we hope you can join. Some of our traditional events include parenting workshops, fall family festival, winter sing-along, a spring children’s art exhibit and a book fair. We respect each family will have their own way to participate and that during this phase of life raising young children, it is one of the busiest and most exhausting times for parents. We are here for you!

After the children settle into the program, learn to separate from parents, and predict the flow of the day, we are ready to welcome parents to join the class for special activities or visits. Please let us know if you have a special talent you can share with the children. We are happy to integrate family traditions, languages, songs or recipes into the nursery school curriculum. We’d love you to help us with a cooking, art, gardening, wood-working or sewing project. Parents can share a story or bring a musical instrument or just join us for play. See the director or send an email to let us know if you’d like to spend some time with us.

**Parent Teacher Conferences**

We have two parent-teacher conference days scheduled in the fall and in the spring. This allows each family to meet with the child’s teaching team for about 25 minutes to discuss the child’s individual strengths and needs and adjustment to school.

**On-going assessment of child progress**

The teachers all have certificates in child development, early education or related fields. We are trained to assess children throughout the year by observing and interacting and documenting each child’s play themes, skills, interests, and developmental progress. Documentation notes, photos and samples are kept in an individual portfolio for each child and shared with families during conferences. Families will receive written communication at each conference period in the form of Learning Stories. Learning stories focus on the child’s unique identity and on highlighting how we honor childhood during this unique period of life and how children learn through movement, play, art, interaction, and investigation.

**Child Screening**

All children who enter the nursery school are screened in the fall, towards the end of October. Parents will be asked to sign a consent form that allows the children to spend 30 minutes with our special screening team (consisting of a teacher, a speech therapist and a motor therapist). We take a look at each child’s development in the area of motor, language, sensory, cognitive and social-emotional development to better understand the child’s learning style and needs/strengths. The results of the screening will be given to families at the fall parent-teacher conference period. The screening is done with normative developmental screening tools and is conducted through play and conversation in the natural context of the child’s nursery school experience as we interact with children through games, puzzles, pictures.
If screening results reveal a child might benefit from additional support such as speech/language therapy or occupational therapy, the director will refer the parents to seek further evaluations with a specialist in the area of concern. Preschool evaluations are free through your child’s school district. NY State Education Department (SED), Office of Special Education oversees a statewide preschool program with the local school districts. Evaluations and specially planned therapy and services are provided to eligible children. Sometimes after an evaluation, we are told the child does not qualify for any additional support because his or her skills fall within the normal range of development. The second opinion and thorough evaluation from a specialist is helpful in these situations. Other times, therapies are recommended and approved and we are happy to work with specialist to support children’s success within our program. Children at nursery school often receive additional supports such as speech therapy, physical therapy or special education itinerant services which bolsters their success in the early years and sets a solid foundation for future growth.

**Welcoming and including all children**

At WNS we believe in the rights of all children and the rights of children with special needs to be welcomed and to belong in a community of care and learning. To ensure each child’s fullest development and learning in our setting, all IFSP and IEPs and formal assessments should be shared with educational team. Our goal is to work with families and therapist in a collaborative transdisciplinary child honoring approach. We value a diversity of learning styles and are open to modification and adaptations to create the least restrictive environment. Specialized supports such as speech therapy or occupational therapy are free to the child and allow us to design individualized education programs for successful integration and participation in the least restrictive environments. Therapies within the nursery school classroom also serve as a support system for the nursery school teachers who are managing and teaching the whole group.

**Holidays**

We take a low key approach to Holidays at WNS. We want our school to be a place set apart from the busy commercialism and often overstimulating world outside. Learning goals at Wimpfheimer Nursery School avoids the "outer trappings" and commercial aspects of traditional holidays. For example, around Halloween children do not wear costumes to school, as this is often overwhelming/scary for a group of young children. However, classes might carve pumpkins, make pumpkin muffins and read autumn stories. We believe that celebrations at school should be meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and respectful of all the children in the classroom while not overstimulating or distracting from the emergent curriculum.
Campus walks and place-based education
We take advantage of the Vassar campus landscape whenever we can. Some of our favorite places to walk include the labyrinth, Shakespeare’s Garden and Sunset Lake. Developing a love of nature, a sense-of-place, and a comfort in the community and the natural world is a part of a healthy early identity development. We view children as full citizens and participants in the community and we make it a point to get to know the many beautiful landmarks on campus and to develop a relationship with the ancient trees.

Vassar Students
Vassar students often work in our classrooms for short shifts each week as part of the campus employment and work study program. They are never left alone with children, but they offer extra support and act as teacher’s helpers. We are always grateful for the extra set of hands they offer us, but most importantly for the talent, diversity, intelligence and multigenerational energy they bring to our program.