

Preschool Parent Handbook



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Flow of the Day

- 8:45 am - Drop off at Cameron Park
- Load into vans. Children are loaded into one of our two Pathfinders vans. Each child can select a "stuffy" to accompany them on the journey.
- 8:55 am - Depart and wave goodbye to parents. (The tinted windows make it difficult for you to see them, but typically the children will wave until their parents are out of sight.)
- Arrive at destination for the day, orient/play.
- Circle time. Teachers provide a small snack such as rice cakes and fruit, songs and stories are shared, and each child receives a job for the day.
- Adventure around the destination for the day
- Lunch. Each child brings their own trash-free lunch and we eat together in a circle.
- Explore and play before making our way back to the vans.
- Closing circle. Each child shares a "thank you" for the day and we sing a closing song.
- Load back into vans
- 1:00pm - Pick up at Cameron Park. Please arrive at 12:55pm so you can be there to greet your child upon their return from our great adventure!

Arrival and Departure

- Arrival and departure is from Cameron Park, 2101 Wellesley Street Palo Alto
- Please plan to have your child at Cameron Park at 8:45am every morning. Although teachers may be present before 8:45, we will be planning our day and cannot supervise children. Please plan to care for your child until their transition to the van.
- A timely arrival will maximize the children's time in nature, so please arrive on time so we can depart promptly at 8:55am.
- Pick up will be at Cameron Park at 1pm every day. Please plan to arrive by 12:55 so you can greet your child upon their return. There are no late pick-ups. If you are aware that you may be late, please arrange to have another parent or designated person care for your child until you arrive.
- Late Pick-Up Fees: Late arrivals will be penalized \$10 after 1:05pm and an additional \$15 for every 10 minutes after 1:15pm
- Teachers are available for brief parent check-ins until 1:10, at which time teachers meet to debrief our day and plan for our next outing.

First and Last Day of Pathfinders

On the first and last day of the school year, Pathfinders families are encourage to participate. On the first day, you will help your child adjust to the new environment and routine. On the last day, there will be a ceremony to celebrate children who will be graduating from the program.

What to Bring

In order for your child to be adequately prepared for the day, please plan to have the following items in their **child sized backpack**:

- **Minimum of one 16 oz water bottle.** Please pack **water** for your child. Please do not pack milk, soda, or other sugary beverages as these may lead to an increased risk of dehydration.
- **Trash-free lunch.** Please pack a nutritious trash-free lunch for your child. Many of the wonderful places that we adventure to do not offer trash bins, and it is very inconvenient for your child to repack unnecessary or messy debris.
- **Ziplock bag with a change of clothes.** As Pathfinders consists of many nature adventures, your child may get muddy, wet, or otherwise dirty. It is always necessary to have a complete change of clothes including socks, underwear, and a jacket in cooler months. Please check this bag at the end of each school day and refill the bag if necessary.
- **Any necessary medication or emergency items for your child.** If your child has any medical needs or threatening allergies, please send your child with the necessary medication in case of emergency. We are often more than 10 minutes from emergency or medical locations.
- **Seasonally-appropriate clothing.** Please check the weather for the day so your child will be comfortable. Layers are always a good idea. Check the Pathfinders' website for more information.

What Not to Bring

At Pathfinders, we enjoy the unique and fascinating surroundings of the natural world. Please **do not pack toys from home, electronic devices, or any other similarly unnecessary items.** These can distract from our adventures in nature. If you need your child to carry some form of electronic device for safety purposes, please inform a teacher so that we can make a suitable arrangement.

Please do not send valuable items with your child. **Keepsakes, jewelry, or other important items may be lost or damaged.** If your child would like to bring a special book, please inform a teacher in advance so that we can preview the book and work it in to the day's curriculum.

Some children have difficulty riding in the van. If your child would like to bring one stuffed animal that can easily be held in the hands for their comfort in the van, this is permissible as long as the item does not leave the van for the day.

Pathfinders is not responsible for the loss or damage of any personal items.

Hazards

- **Dehydration.** It is important that your child is prepared with enough water for the day. We suggest drinking plenty of water at home before the start of the day.
- **Sunburn.** Sunburns can happen any time of the year, including cloudy days. Please apply sunscreen before drop off. Sun hats, long sleeves and pants are encouraged.
- **Poison Oak.** This is a common hazard at all times of year. Please dress your child in long pants and sleeves in case they come into contact with this plant. We will inform you if we think your child may have touched poison oak. Wash immediately with cool water and soap.
- **Ticks.** Ticks are common year round, but especially in the fall and spring. Long sleeves, pants, and closed shoes are the best prevention. Please check your child for ticks at the end of every day. Ticks in our area can carry Lyme disease. If you do find a tick on your child, remove it right away. You can keep the tick and send it in for testing.
- **Wildlife.** Although very rare, there is a potential to encounter rattlesnakes, bobcats, coyotes, or mountain lions. In the rare case that we do encounter one of these animals, teachers will be sure to avoid all possible dangerous interactions.

National and Local Emergencies

There is a potential for national or local emergencies. The most likely emergency situation to impact Pathfinders is unsafe road conditions due to high winds, flash flood or other flood warnings, fires, smoke, or earthquakes. Pathfinders staff will notify families as quickly as possible if we need to cancel class for the day. If you have questions or concerns about sending your child with Pathfinders in particular conditions please feel free to reach out the teachers and determine the best course of action.

Parent Participation

Parents are invited to come out the Pathfinders once or twice in the school year. Be sure to check in with the teacher prior to your outing if you have a specific plan that you would like to do on your parent outing day. You are welcome to bring books, tell stories, lead a game or art project. All activities must receive teacher and directory approval and should be directed toward the outdoors and nature. On a parent outing day, you will operate as another staff member and will be asked to assist all of the children with the activities of the day. Your role is to support the whole group, to gain insight into the program, and to get a new understanding of your child's adventures.

Note on Children's Birthdays. If you would like to do something special on the day of your child's birthday, you are welcome to. Please reach out the the teacher in advance in order to coordinate the celebration.

Child Sick Policy

The child sick policy is in place the protect the safety of you your own child as well as other children in the program. If your child exhibits any of the symptoms listed below, your child will bot be able to attend Pathfinders that day. Please be aware that as illness is unanticipated, no refunds will be offered. If your child is sick and cannot attend, please inform a teacher well ahead of our 8:45am departure time. In order to guarantee a timely departure, please send a text message by 8:00am.

Please keep your child home if they are experiencing

- A fever of 100 degrees or higher.
- A runny nose with thick green or yellow mucus.
- A cough with mucus secretion.
- Contagious skin ailments such as cold sores, ringworm, fever blisters, or lice.
- Recurring diarrhea.
- Continued vomiting, or vomiting paired with a fever, stomach ache, sore throat, or fatigueab.
- Pink eye.
- Any contagious diseases.
- Jet lag.
- Allergic reactions.

Upon completion of a complete day of wellness, or confirmation by a medical professional, your child may return to Pathfinders. If you are unsure about any condition not listed above, please call or text a teacher in advance in order to determine the best course of action for your child.

Staff Sick Policy

The child sick policy helps to ensure the wellness of our teachers. On the rare occasion that the teachers are unable to host a Pathfinders session, you will be notified a minimum of 12 hours in advance, assuming there are not sudden medical emergencies. If this does occur, please understand that your child will not be cared for by the Pathfinders Staff on that day. As these days are unanticipated, there will be no refund offered. We will make all efforts to avoid class cancellations.

Parent Teacher Conferences and Communication

Parent Teacher Conferences

- Conferences will be held twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring.
- Fall conference will help the teachers gain a stronger sense of your child. This will be an opportunity for you to share information about your child and understand how they are adjusting to the program.
- Spring conference will focus on your child's development over the course of the year as well as kindergarten readiness, if appropriate.

Communication

- Email is the preferred method of contact for questions that do not require immediate response.
- If you prefer to have a phone conversation, please call before 6pm. After 6pm, please send an email.
- If your child will not be attending the following day, please send an email the night before. In the event that you do not have this much notice, please send the teacher a text message by 8am on the morning of your child's absence.
- In cases of medical emergency, please do not hesitate to call at any time.