



Parent Handbook



Zoo Sprouts Preschool at Sunset Zoo

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for registering your child for fun-filled, educational days at Sunset Zoo's Zoo Sprouts! Sunset Zoo's mission is "to inspire conservation of the natural world." The Zoo's Education Department strives "to inspire action in conservation of the natural world."

Each year we work with feedback and examine current trends in zoo education to improve our programs. As the national movement to get kids outside continues to grow, Sunset Zoo is enhancing and increasing its program engagement with the outdoors. Zoo Sprouts is a nature-based preschool program. Thus, it is imperative for you and your child to have a good experience that you understand our recommendations for clothing. We highly recommend that children come in clothes they can get dirty, develop grass stains, and get wet. We will explore the natural world and the animal kingdom through hands on exploration, which will lead to messy/dirty activities.

We strongly encourage that you take the time to go through this handbook with your prior to your child's first day at Zoo Sprouts. That will help us to provide your child with the best possible experience.

If at any time you have questions, please feel free to contact the Sunset Zoo Education Department at (785)587-2737.

Sincerely,

Jared Bixby
Curator of Education/Program Director
bixby@cityofmhk.com

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Zoo Sprouts nature-based childcare program believes a child develops best through personal connections with nature's building blocks. Zoo Sprouts children grow up with the knowledge, passion, and ability to save the natural world around them.

Educational Philosophy

We believe that children are intrinsically motivated to learn, which is enhanced in natural surroundings. Adults facilitate learning by:

- Providing a natural environment which encourages discovery, experimentation, and the opportunity to see the results of one's actions;
- Developing nature-based activities to take children to the next level of understanding and development based on the children's abilities and interests;
- Encouraging divergent thinking and reflection by asking open-ended questions and providing information in response to children's ideas, insights, and concerns;
- Assisting children in their interactions with each other and offering opportunities for cooperative learning;
- Teaming with families to understand children through the wisdom of their first teachers—their parents;
- Appreciating the individuality of children and celebrating their uniqueness.

The Zoo Sprouts nature-based childcare program provides children with special opportunities to learn about themselves, the world around them, and life. By connecting young children with the natural world, we inspire a love of nature, foster an environmental ethic and encourage a caring attitude to follow them throughout their lives.

Children Immersed in Experiences

We offer the experiences typically found in child-centered early childhood education programs. Children have opportunities to:

- Make discoveries and learn through play;
- Make choices and follow their own interests and agenda;
- Use their senses, and large and small muscles;
- Express themselves creatively and use language in its many forms;
- Make friends and learn about the social world;
- Problem-solve and find solutions to what puzzles them.

Zoo Sprouts provides many of these experiences through interacting directly with nature. Children develop physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and spiritually in a dynamic and stimulating natural environment.

Inspired by Nature

Nature permeates the children's experiences. Nature-based activities happen indoors and outdoors; in whole groups, small groups, and individually; as planned teacher-facilitated activities, child-initiated interests, and spontaneous pursuits; in the classroom, outdoor playspace, and throughout Sunset Zoo. Children can look at their experiences through the lens of a naturalist, zoo keeper, and conservationist as they are given encouragement to:

- Make observations and discoveries;
- Interact with animals;
- Satisfy their natural curiosity;
- Hike on trails and climb on logs;
- Appreciate the beauty of nature;
- Build understanding of themselves, as they relate to others, and to the natural world;
- Experiment;
- Communicate about nature.

Overall, Zoo Sprouts promotes environmental and conservation awareness, self-direction, social skills, language development, intellectual growth, and parental involvement.

CURRICULUM

The Zoo Sprouts program fulfills its educational philosophy through a strong nature-based and child-centered curriculum. Our unique curriculum is based on national programs, such as Growing Up Wild, Project Learning Tree Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood, Zoo Phonics Language Arts Program, and Creative Curriculum.

More information on the programs that we use can be found at the following websites:

Growing Up Wild—www.projectwild.org/growingupwild.htm

Project Learning Tree—www.plt.org/environmental-education-for-early-childhood

Zoo Phonics—www.zoo-phonics.com

Creative Curriculum—www.creativecurriculum.net

We value spontaneity in activity and take advantage of the Teachable Moment. We also know that many people, especially young children first experiencing regular activity away from home, benefit from knowing what will happen next. We maintain a loose but structured schedule, with predictable events throughout the day (such as snack and group experiences).

Throughout the day, we offer experiences that may be different from other child-centered preschool programs in that:

- Children have daily experiences with plant life;
- We grow plants in the classroom and out
- We maintain and care for our playspace flower beds and rain garden
- We explore wooded and grassland areas
- Children have daily experiences with animals;
- We will visit animals in Sunset Zoo
- We will assist zoo keepers in the care of animals
- We will experience small animal visitors in our classroom

STAFF

Our child care staff is experienced, trained professionals chosen for their warmth, creativity, experience with children, love of nature and commitment to excellence. We employ people who are nurturing, who understand child development, and who respect each child as an individual. We seek employees who value working as a team with parents, colleagues, and volunteers. Our staff environment encourages mutual respect for each individual's personal characteristics and teaching style, opportunities for shared leadership, and provision for providing professional growth. We are committed to ongoing training and professional development of our early education staff, and all staff participate in yearly training and in-service workshops.

The Zoo Sprouts has one full time lead teacher and one full time assistant teacher. Both the lead and assistant teacher exceed KDHE licensing requirements for teaching staff. Both hold program director certifications from KDHE. In addition to the lead and assistant teachers, Zoo Sprouts also has several part-time program assistants that will serve as teacher aides and substitutes. Visit our website for staff bios.

All program staff have passed a background check through KDHE as well as a health assessment and TB test. All staff are certified in Pediatric 1st Aid and CPR and have attended trainings on Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect, Signs and Symptoms of Childhood Illness, Basic Child Development and Medication Administration.

All teaching staff are mandated reporters of any suspected abuse or neglect under Kansas Statutes Annotated (K.S.A.) 2010 Supp 38-2224. They are required by law to report any suspected abuse or neglect.

Zoo Sprouts will ensure that there are always a minimum of two teachers in the classroom at all times. For a majority of the day, there will be at least three staff/trained volunteers present. KDHE requires a maximum ratio of 10 children to every 1 teacher. Zoo Sprouts will have a ratio of 6 children to every 1 teacher for much of the day and will never exceed 8 children to every 1 teacher.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Zoo Sprouts direct classroom number is 785.587.2792. Please call this number to reach a teacher or if your child will be arriving late or absent. Teachers will check messages when they first arrive in the morning and throughout the day.

Sunset Zoo Main Number 785.587.2737

Jared Bixby, Education Curator/Program Director bixby@cityofmhk.com

Janet Silva, Lead Teacher

Brooke Young, Assistant Teacher

ENROLLMENT

Families interested in enrollment will need to complete the Application Form. Additional forms are required once a spot is available and must be returned prior to your child's first day.

Children of any race, color, sex, national origin ancestry, and religious faith are admitted to all the programs and activities available to the school. Staff training and facilities limit our service to non-handicapped children.

Children may be enrolled who are 2 ½ through five years old and not in kindergarten. Zoo Sprouts has a maximum capacity of 15 children.

RECORDS & CONFEDENTIALITY

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

The following forms are required to be completed and returned to the program prior to your child's first day of attendance:

- Application Form
- Contract for Care
- Medical Record and History of Immunizations
- Emergency Medical Release
- Health Assessment completed by doctor
- Pick up Authorization
- Parental Permission Form
- Release and Assumption of Risk Form
- Photo Release Form
- Art Work Release Form
- Child and Family Questionnaire
- Parental Permission form for Off-Premises Trips

Complete child files are required for KDHE licensure. Any changes to family contact information, persons authorized to pick up your child, or additional immunizations should be updated with program staff immediately.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

All children's records, forms and information, will be confidential and are available to parents and guardians upon request. This information is used only by the appropriate Sunset Zoo/Manhattan Parks and Recreation Staff in compliance with KDHE for licensing and to provide your child with the highest quality of care.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Children and families who attend Zoo Sprouts may be photographed, videotaped or filmed. Your child's enrollment to Zoo Sprouts serves as permission for use of your image by the Sunset Zoo.

FINANCES AND FEES

Zoo Sprouts is an educational program run by the Sunset Zoo. It is financed by tuition.

If a spot is available at time of submitting an enrollment application, tuition is due in full on/or before the first day of attendance. If a spot is known to be opening up, half of the first month's tuition will be required to reserve that spot.

Tuition is \$765.00 a month. There are a few limited number of MWF or TU spots available. Tuition for MWF is \$550 a month. Tuition for TU is \$350 a month. Part time spots are not guaranteed and there must be another family willing to take the other days to make a full time spot. The family is responsible for the full tuition in the event that the other family drops out of the program.

Unless you have made other arrangements with the program director or program administrator, please pay each month's tuition by the 1st Monday of the month. Late payments will have a \$10.00 late fee added. We reserve the right to refuse attendance if payment has not been made by the 15th day of the month. Please let us know if you have circumstances that may prohibit you from paying on time.

Personal checks, cash or credit card can be used to pay tuition at the Sunset Zoo Education office. Checks or exact cash may also be paid in the classroom.

No refunds can be made for days missed due to family vacation, illness, and regular school holidays.

PROGRAM TERMINATION

If your child will be leaving the Zoo Sprouts program, please ask program staff for a "notice of termination form". When a student is withdrawn from enrollment, 21 days advance notice is required to allow the program to contact those families on the waiting list and fill the opening. Tuition will be charge for the 21 days regardless of whether your child attends. Tuition will be charged for either a half or whole month. Tuition will not be broken down by the day and refunds cannot be given. Please talk to the program administrator or program director if you have questions regarding program termination.

HOURS & OPERATION

PROGRAM HOURS

Zoo Sprouts is open from 7:30am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday. The program is open year round.

Zoo Sprouts will be closed for the following holidays: Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July.

Zoo Sprouts may also be closed periodically for teaching staff to attend continuing education and trainings. You will be notified at least one month in advance of any training closure days.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children may be dropped-off in the morning as early as 7:30 am, and picked up until 5:30 pm. You must sign your child in and out every day in the classroom attendance binder. To ensure your child's safety, please designate on the Authorized Pick-up Form and Health History Form all people who have permission to pick up your child from Zoo Sprouts. There has to be someone identified on the Health History Form in this section other than a parent per KDHE requirements just in case of an emergency. Your child will not be released to persons not on the authorized pick up list or without ID. Please make sure anyone picking your child up has a photo ID with them.

During zoo hours, you must enter through Ticket Booth and meet the class at their location. They will let you know if the classroom is in the classroom or on the grounds. Teachers can NOT leave the other children to drop-off or pick-up children separately.

If you are dropping off or picking up your child before or after regular zoo hours, please go directly to the classroom. In the event that the class is not in the classroom, please check with the front office for the classroom location. If no one will be present, the teachers will also leave a note on the sign in/out station with the classroom's location. You must escort your child to the classroom's location. Teachers cannot leave the children to pick up your child nor do we believe an activity should be stopped so the group can pick up your child from the Ticket Booth.

LATE PICK-UP

Pick-ups after 5:30 are considered late. A fee of \$5 will be charged for every 5 minutes you are late; after 6:00pm may be grounds for suspension from the program without a refund.

SNACKS AND MEALS

Zoo Sprouts serves morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack every day. Morning snack is served throughout the morning as children are hungry until about 9:30am. Lunch is served between 11:45-12:15. Afternoon snack is served as children wake up from nap between 2 and 3pm. A menu is posted in the classroom.

Snacks and lunches are made by program employees..

We will do our best to accommodate all food allergies and special diet requests. If your child has any special dietary needs please discuss these needs with the lead teacher so that arrangements can be made. All food allergies and special diets will be posted in both the kitchen and the classroom to alert all staff.

Zoo Spouts will implement a peanut sensitive policy should a child enter the program with a peanut allergy. In that instance, we will not serve any items containing peanuts and will not allow any food items containing peanuts in the classroom, i.e. special birthday snacks. However, we will be in the public areas of the zoo on a daily basis and cannot guarantee that children will not visit spaces that may have come in contact with peanuts. If your child has a peanut allergy, please alert program staff immediately. It is your responsibility to make sure that staff have the necessary medications in the event of an emergency.

NAPTIME

We provide a quiet rest or naptime for all children. Naptime is roughly 12:30-2:30pm. Some children may need sleep; others may only rest. We will try to accommodate each child's sleep needs. Your child is welcome to bring in a comfort item to help them sleep. Children who cannot go to sleep will be given a small bag of nap toys or books to play with by themselves while others get to sleep. Once all napping children are asleep, teachers will provide quiet activities at the table for non-napping children. Please inform the teachers if you have specific napping requests. We will try to accommodate parent requests whenever possible.

HEALTH

ILLNESS

If your child will be absent, please notify the teacher so that plans can be made accordingly. Please notify the teacher if your child has any communicable illness or any symptoms of illness. We are required by licensing to notify all families of any illness that their child may have been exposed to. Notifications will be sent to all parents anytime your child may have come in contact with a communicable illness.

If a child becomes ill at school, the parents or guardian will be notified for the child to be picked up. In the event that parents or guardians cannot be reached, we will contact emergency contacts listing in your child's file. All sick children must be picked up within an hour. A child who cannot comfortably participate in preschool activities, and could possibly compromise the health and safety of the other children, should be kept at home.

Signs or symptoms which require exclusion (recommended by the KS Dept. of Health and Environment):

1. Oral temperature of 101 degrees or greater.
2. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness (such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing or any unusual signs).
3. Uncontrolled diarrhea.
4. Vomiting (two or more episodes in the previous 24 hours).
5. Mouth sores
6. Rash with fever or behavior change
7. Pink or red eyes with white or yellow discharge
8. Untreated scabies, head lice, or other infestation
9. Known contagious diseases while still in the communicable stage.

INJURIES AND EMERGENCY CARE

The health and safety of the children in our care is our top priority. Even with watchful eyes, young children are often testing their physical limits making injuries inevitable. A report will be filed when an accident or injury occurs during the program. The incident/accident form will be given and explained to the parent at pick-up. It will be signed by the parent. The form will remain in the child's enrollment file. If you would like a copy of the form to take home, please notify the teacher.

If the child is seriously injured while at school, the parents will be notified immediately. If they can not be reached and the child needs emergency medical care, an ambulance will be called and the child will be taken to the hospital emergency room. The emergency medical care form will accompany the child. The adult who accompanies

the child to the emergency room will stay with the child until a parent or guardian comes to assume responsibility. Please keep your child's enrollment information up-to-date on phone numbers, emergency numbers, and other pertinent information so that you can be reached if necessary.

MEDICATIONS

The program will administer prescription medication, with the prescription label, or over the counter medication with a doctor's note. The doctor's note must include: name of medication, dosage, intervals, and reason for medication, start date and stop date. An Authorization for Medication form must be completed by the parent prior to any medication being administered. Medication will only be administered by staff members who have completed medication administration training. All medication will be kept locked in the classroom emergency backpack and returned to the parent when treatment is complete. Medication will only be given exactly as prescribed. All medications must be kept in the original container.

TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training is a skill that must be learned like other developmental tasks. It normally occurs between the ages of 2 and 3 ½. Parents must allow for individual differences. If your child is not yet toilet trained, the teachers will work with you and your child. It is your responsibility to provide pull-ups and wipes for your child. The teachers will let you know when your child is getting low.

If your child should have an accident at school (we know this happens occasionally), we do have a change of clothes which we will put on the child and will send home the soiled ones in a plastic bag (The soiled clothes will NOT be washed or rinsed before being placed in the bag due to the possibility of spreading germs). Please wash the school clothes and have your child return them the next time they come to school. All children are required to have at least 3 sets of seasonable clothes at the zoo at all times.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

CLOTHING

The best clothes for children to wear are comfortable play clothes that the child can take care of him/herself. Art projects (painting and playdoh) as well as nature based play can be messy, so we do not encourage children wearing their “finer things.” We will go outside every day except for lightning and extreme wind chill or heat index. Please make sure your child is appropriately dressed for the weather (jacket, coat, hat, gloves, snow pants, etc.) Comfortable tennis shoes are also recommended. Closed toed shoes are required (no flip flops). Essentially, be prepared for your child to get dirty, wet, or otherwise messy at any time while attending Zoo Sprouts.

Three extra full sets of weather appropriate clothing are required at all times as well as 1 extra pair of shoes. Any soiled clothes will be sent home with your child at the end of the day. Please make sure you bring a replacement back the next day. Having extra clothing is a licensing requirement and failure to provide clothing after several reminders may result in your child’s termination from the program.

SUPPLY LIST

Please bring the following items with you on your child’s first day. Please make sure all items are labeled with your child’s name. It is your responsibility to make sure that your child has all of the items on a daily basis. Teachers will remind you as things are running low. If items are taken home, please make sure they return the next day. Extra clothes and weather appropriate items are a licensing requirement and failure to have these items may result in exclusion of care until items are provided.

- 3 complete sets extra of weather appropriate clothing (shirt, pants/shorts, socks, underwear)
- 1 extra pair of shoes
- Pillow for naptime
- Comfort item if needed (stuffed animal, special blanket)
- Bug spray (if wanted)—a medication authorization form must be completed
- Sunscreen (only if you want a specific kind, otherwise we will use sunscreen provided by Zoo Sprouts)
- Lotion, chapstick that you want used on your child (optional)
- Pull-ups and wipes (if needed)
- Hat, gloves, coat, snow pants (seasonal)
- Toothpaste
- Box of tissues

Zoo Sprouts will provide the following items:

- Water bottle
- Toothbrush
- Sunscreen
- Cot sheet and blanket

The following items are not allowed and should be left at home:

- Money
- Handheld gaming devices or other electronics
- Food (unless medically necessary and approved by Zoo Sprouts staff; items containing peanuts are strictly prohibited); Zoo Sprouts will provide breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack.
- Sandals, flip-flops, or other open-toed shoes
- Toys (other than comfort items and on show and tell days)

SHOW AND TELL

Show and tell is a wonderful time to learn and use new vocabulary! Please do not send items that are fragile or family heirlooms. Children will not be permitted to play with their show and tell at school. Pictures (photos, art, postcards from family trips) are great show and tell, toys are also acceptable. Show and tell is on Fridays.

BIRTHDAYS

You may bring special healthy, store bought treats to share with the class at snack time on your child's birthday. Please consult with the teachers several days in advance to get all snacks preapproved. Please do not bring balloons, piñatas or wrapped gifts to school. Teachers cannot give out contact information for other families for invitations. If you would like to bring in invitations for your child's birthday, please make sure all children in the classroom receive an invitation. Teachers will put invitations in children's mailboxes. Birthday party announcements via our closed Facebook group are also welcome.

FIELD TRIPS

Zoo Spouts does not take field trips. We have access to our classroom, nature-based outdoor playspace, nature trails, open fields, and all the exhibits and animals that Sunset Zoo has to offer. We do not need to leave zoo grounds to find adventure. We are the field trip!

DISCIPLINE

A positive approach in which each child can develop a good self-concept will be the basis for maintaining the classroom atmosphere. Young children are in the process of learning a lot about themselves, others, and group situations. Misunderstandings will be handled on an individual basis as a “Learning Experience.” Sunset Zoo believes in Conscious Discipline®, which is a form of classroom management based on current brain research, child development information, and developmentally appropriate practices. More information on Conscious Discipline can be found at www.consciousdiscipline.com. The intent of all consequences used at Sunset Zoo is to teach.

Our teachers, with patience, warmth, and respect, redirect children to help guide them toward controlling their impulses and behaviors. Our methods of guidance and discipline used shall be positive, consistent with the developmental needs of the children and applied with the full knowledge and understanding of the parents.

Staff use the following techniques to guide your child’s behavior:

- Set clear, consistent, and appropriate limits for classroom behavior.
- Value mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Redirect children to more appropriate behavior or activity.
- Make eye-contact and listen when children talk about their feelings and frustrations.
- Guide children to resolve their own conflicts and model skills that help children solve their problems.
- Patiently remind children of class rules and their rationale as needed.
- Use effective praise that is immediate, sincere, and specific.

There shall be no use of hitting, corporal punishment, aggressive language, ridicule, or harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or another kind of child abuse/neglect, or exploitation. Discipline shall not be associated to children in regard to rest, toilet training, and food. Children shall not be isolated without supervision. Discipline shall not be associated with the withholding of emotional response or stimulation and shall not require the child to remain silent for long periods of time. If ongoing problems do arise, teachers will work with parents to determine an appropriate course of action. We believe discipline works best when consistent practices are used between home and school.

However, we do realize a time may arise that the following may take place:

- If the unacceptable behavior continues beyond interventions, Sunset Zoo Education Staff will contact the child(s) parents.
- Continued misbehavior and misbehavior that endangers children, staff, volunteers, zoo guests, or animals could result in suspension from the program.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

COMMUNICATION

We believe that parent communication is key to a successful early education environment. Please check your child's mailbox regularly for information on upcoming events, newsletters, and your child's completed projects.

Please allow time to talk briefly with the teachers during drop off and pick up to make sure all necessary information is exchanged. We may also communicate with parents via email if that is an acceptable and regularly used form of communication for the parents. The Lead and Assistant Teachers may send emails to families reminding them of important events and communicating any program changes. In order to receive emails, please be sure to provide your current email address upon registration and notify us of any changes.

Twice each year we will hold parent/teacher conferences, typically in October and April. These conferences will help inform you on what your child is demonstrating in class. You may request additional conferences at any time.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

A majority of communications will be distributed to families via our closed Facebook group. Families with children are encouraged to search for Zoo Sprouts and request to join the group. If you do not have regular access to Facebook, please speak with the lead teacher to arrange other communication strategies. We will occasionally print communications and place in your child's classroom mailbox.

PARENT INVOLVMENT

Zoo Sprouts encourages an "open door" policy that includes visitation and observation. Parent activities, talents and skills are always welcome.

There will be many times and ways you can get involved in your child's preschool experience. You are welcomed and encouraged to participate in any or all of these. Some examples of ways to be involved include:

- Lending objects for units of study
- Coming and talking about your job
- Helping your child at home with the concepts we are studying here
- Helping your child prepare for "Show and Tell"
- Coming in to read to the class
- Volunteering to help with projects or games
- Sharing hobbies and interest with the children

Please speak to your child's teacher about becoming involved and he/she will set up a schedule for you.

EMERGENCIES AND WEATHER

INCLEMENT WEATHER

When USD 383—Manhattan/Ogden School District is closed for inclement weather, Zoo Sprouts will be closed. When Sunset Zoo is closed for inclement weather but USD 383 is open, Zoo Sprouts will still be open. However, we will not be able to visit all areas of the zoo so lesson planning will be changed. Sunset Zoo has several sidewalks that are heavily shaded and snow and ice is not able to be fully cleared. It is always your judgment as to whether you will attend school on inclement weather days we are open. Please notify the teachers if your child will not be attending.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DRILLS

Fire and tornado drills will be held at varying times during the year at a minimum of one fire drill per month. The program director will maintain a record of all drills.

In addition, Zoo Sprouts will also participate in zoo wide monthly animal escape drills. A fire alert and weather emergency plan, including evacuation routes, is posted in each classroom.

CONCLUSION

Zoo Sprouts at Sunset Zoo will provide all teaching supplies. Personal toys should not be brought to school except on designated show & tell days.

Parents are invited to visit the classroom at any time. Questions and suggestions are welcome! Conferences about your child may be arranged on request and also will be conducted in the fall and spring.

We are looking forward to working with your family and hope to make this experience a fun, memorable learning experience!