



# PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK 2022-2023

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## **The Spotted Zebra**

**Do zebras have stripes  
And lady bugs spots  
And do fish ever swim in the sky**

**Do puppies bow wow  
And do kittens meow  
Inquisitive youngsters wonder why**

**Every day's an adventure  
Every thing is brand new  
In the eyes of these preschooler tots**

**Hard to make teaching fun  
For folks on the run  
That's the reason this zebra has spots**

Written by N. Jack Townsend  
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## **PHILOSOPHY**

The Spotted Zebra Learning Center promotes a program that reflects a developmental approach to early education. Activities are planned to help every child progress naturally, at his/her own rate, through a predictable series of maturational skills in all areas. Skills are introduced based on children's developmental rather than chronological ages. With most children, growth occurs as they explore materials in activities that increasingly challenge them either through structured activities or through play. At the Spotted Zebra Learning Center, this happens everyday.

The Spotted Zebra Learning Center is designed to meet the needs of all children and truly prepare them for kindergarten and the high learning standards set forth by New York State.

Classes are small and staff highly qualified - each classroom is staffed with a licensed teacher, an early childhood teacher and a teaching assistant. A Speech and Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist and an Occupational Therapist are also on staff to assist in the promotion of language development, gross motor and fine motor skills development.

### ***Classroom Model:***

The developmental approach to early learning encourages children to be active learners by exploring both people and materials in their environment. The daily schedule is a predictable routine that allows children to feel secure and comfortable, and helps them learn to follow directions and participate independently, functionally, and effectively in activities.

### ***✓ Classroom Curriculum:***

The Spotted Zebra Learning Center is committed to using a comprehensive and coordinated system of curriculum and assessment, and aligning its program with the recommended practices for content and pedagogy, as recommended by national professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.

*The Creative Curriculum®* serves as the foundation for learning and is built on the philosophy that young children learn best by doing. It is developed upon theories that all children learn through active exploration of their environment and therefore the environment plays a critical role in learning. The goal of the *Creative Curriculum®* is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive and enthusiastic learners by actively exploring their environment. The curriculum also helps the teacher to take a closer look at each child's unique abilities, interests and needs. *The Creative Curriculum®* serves as the foundation for the learning that takes place at the Spotted Zebra.

The curriculum for the Spotted Zebra identifies goals in all areas of development. This includes:

- *Social:* To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are a part of the group.
- *Emotional:* To help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- *Cognitive:* To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- *Physical:* To help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

All of the activities at Spotted Zebra are designed to give each child a successful start in school.

#### ✓ ***Curious Kids at Spotted Zebra and Afternoon Enrichment***

The afternoons are a special time for preschoolers to add enrichment to their day. Special activities extend the classroom curriculum and provide social experiences with friends.

# PROGRAM OPERATIONS

## *Application and Enrollment*

All children are required to have completed enrollment forms on file in the Center Office prior to their first day of attendance in school. No child is considered fully enrolled until all forms are completed and all fees are paid in full. These forms include:

- Registration Form
- Medical Form signed by a physician
- Current Immunization Records - Updated Annually
- Tuition Agreement

## *Calendar*

The Spotted Zebra Learning Center is in operation 50 weeks a year. In an effort to recognize that families take vacations throughout the year, the Center will be closed the week between Christmas and New Years (Winter Holiday Break) and the week prior to the Labor Day Holiday (Summer Holiday Break). **Parents will not be required to pay tuition for these weeks.**

Other holidays that the Center will be closed are:

- \* Labor Day
- \* Columbus Day
- \* Veteran's Day
- \* Thanksgiving Day
- \* Friday After Thanksgiving Day
- \* Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- \* Presidents Birthday
- \* Memorial Day
- \* July 4<sup>th</sup> Day

Full week tuition is still required when the Center is closed for a holiday. Also, the Center will close two half days a year for staff development training. These dates are indicated on the school calendar.

### ***Hours***

Our hours of operation are from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday. Children are to be picked up NO LATER than 5:30 PM. Please, call if you know you will be late. There is a late pick-up fee for failure to pick up your child by the Center's 5:30 PM closing time. The fee of \$10 for every 10 minutes that the parent is late will be assessed.

### ***Inclement Weather Policy***

Sometimes severe winter storm warnings are issued making travel extremely hazardous. To ensure the safety of staff and children, the management reserves the right to delay the school's opening time, close the school early, or close the school for the entire day. Spotted Zebra will list a closing or delay on all television and radio stations. You can also access school closings online at <http://capitalregion.ynn.com/>. Additionally, the main message on the school's office phone will be changed by 6:30 AM to provide confirmation of a school closing or delay information.

Please know that typically, we will follow the South Colonie School District's lead for a closing or delay as this will mean that the weather has been deemed treacherous and unsafe for travel.

### ***Attendance***

Regular attendance is highly encouraged. Children attending a developmentally appropriate program develop socialization, cooperation, listening, learning, language and motor skills that build a foundation for a successful school career.

If your child will not be attending class, please contact the Center and leave a message.

### ***Clothing and Personal Property***

Clothing needs to be comfortable, washable and easily managed by the child. It gives the child a feeling of self-confidence and independence to be able to manage his/her clothing when needing to use the rest room. Belts, snaps, etc. are hard for

a child to use. Children play hard and get dirty so please dress your child in comfortable play clothing so that they can move freely. Each child is to have a change of clothing, labeled with his/her name left at school. Their shoes should be sturdy sneakers or rubber soled shoes. NO sandals are to be worn at school. They can be dangerous when running, jumping and climbing.

We go outside daily, weather permitting. During the winter please dress your child in clothing that will keep him/her warm and dry. Hats and mittens are required.

If your child is not potty trained, please leave at least two sets of extra, labeled clothing at the Center. You are required to provide enough disposable diapers and wipes to last each day.

ALL CLOTHING AND OTHER PROPERTY COMING TO SCHOOL MUST BE CLEARLY LABELED WITH THE CHILD'S NAME. Items included, but are not limited to, all clothing, lunch boxes, thermos bottles, blankets, etc. We will make every effort to see that each child's belongings are kept safe in the child's cubby. Children should not bring toys from home except for Show and Tell or other special events. Precious toys or other items are difficult to share and they might get lost or broken. Clothing borrowed from the Center is to be laundered and returned in a timely manner.

### ***Snack***

A nutritional mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack will be provided. All snacks have been approved by a nutritionist.

### ***Lunch***

Lunch is to be provided by the families. Families are requested to bring in a healthy balanced meal with a drink, such as juice, milk or water. No soda please.

### ***Arrival/Departure***

Children are to be escorted to and from their classroom and signed in and out by the parent or responsible adult on a daily basis. This is necessary for our state licensing record keeping. Parents are asked to inform staff of schedule changes such as late arrival or early pick-up so they can accommodate the change into the schedule.

No child will be allowed to leave the Center with someone other than a parent or guardian unless the person has the written consent of the parent or guardian and shows proper identification.

Please park in the designated, short-term spaces in the parking lot when coming to the Center. You assume full responsibility for your child when outside of the Center. Do not leave your engine running. Do not leave children in your car unattended. Hold your child's hand when walking to and from the Center. Be alert for moving vehicles.

All visitors are required to sign in and out of the Center, as per the New York State Office of Children and Family Services regulations.

### ***Rest***

All children who spend the full day at the Spotted Zebra Learning Center will be required to rest under the supervision of classroom staff. Children will remain in their respective classroom and be given a mat on which to rest. Depending upon their age, children are expected to rest quietly or engage in quiet activities, allowing those who need to sleep the opportunity to do so.

Children may bring a small blanket for rest time. These should be taken home weekly for laundering. Please be sure to label these items.

### ***Special Days***

**Birthdays:** You are welcome to provide treats for your child's birthday providing they are store bought and wrapped. This is a state regulation. Ingredients containing peanuts or peanut products should be avoided. Accommodations will be made for children with other food allergies and/or dietary restrictions.

**Field trips:** Exploration is just what a young mind needs therefore throughout the school year children will take field trips. Parents will be informed well in advance of a trip. If you would like to help on field trips, please let your child's teacher know.

**Show and Tell days:** Occasionally your child's teacher will designate a day as show and tell day. On these days your child should bring an item to share with the class. Books, records, nature and science materials, mementos from recent vacations, etc. are appropriate.

**Holiday Programs and Parties:** We will have holiday parties and other programs throughout the year. Please observe your daily notes and bulletin boards for information regarding these special events. We encourage children and families to share their family and cultural traditions.

## ***Tuition & Fees***

Fees are based on enrollment, not attendance. Our tuition covers supplies, materials, professional development, parent trainings, and special events.

A one-time \$50 non-refundable registration fee will secure your child's place at the Spotted Zebra Learning Center.

Tuition payments are processed weekly at the close of the business day each Friday for the current week's care. Tuition can only be paid through Tuition Express, an automatic weekly withdrawal from either your checking or savings account. If a payment is returned for insufficient funds in the owner's account, a \$20 service fee will be assessed. Receipts for payment can be accessed online through [www.tuitionexpress.com](http://www.tuitionexpress.com).

Tuition needs to be paid for all absences. Should you decide to take an extended leave from the Spotted Zebra (i.e. summer) a \$20 fee for each day that your child attends the program will be charged in order to hold a day care spot for your child.

One week's tuition is charged as a deposit before a child starts in the school. This deposit will be held until the child leaves the school, at which time it will be applied to his/her final week of tuition. It is due upon the submission of the registration forms.

Two weeks notice needs to be given before withdrawing a child from the school. If this notice is not given, tuition will be charged for those two weeks.

No tuition refunds will be made due to illness, vacations, holidays, school closings or transfer. Days cannot be exchanged or made up.

## ***Understanding and Guiding Children's Behavior***

*The Spotted Zebra Learning Center staff will use a variety of behavior management techniques which focus on positive behavior supports and minimize the need to remove a child with or without disabilities from an activity.\**

An important objective of our school is to help our children feel accepted by others, feel a sense of belonging and comfort in the environment, have a healthy acceptance of self, and be treated with dignity and respect. Children need to develop a belief in their ability to do things and that they are worthwhile. A "can do" feeling encourages them to try new things and go to school feeling confident. We want to be loving, accepting and supportive of all children in our care.

1. We will provide developmentally appropriate environments in which children are actively and meaningfully involved. We will establish routines based on children's needs for eating, sleeping, and play. This approach in itself is a powerful tool in prevention of behavioral problems.
2. We will give children desirable choices whenever possible and accept their choices so that they can learn to make decisions.
3. We will set reasonable limits to ensure the safety and well being of all the children and adults in the classroom and for the protection of property.
4. We will listen to children with patience, interest and understanding.
5. With positive techniques, teachers will encourage children to learn self-discipline and practice a variety of social problem solving strategies. Techniques may include: promoting and rewarding desirable behaviors, modeling appropriate behaviors, giving choices, redirection, reflection of feelings, giving warnings before transitions, self-talk, planned ignoring, shared responsibility for developing simple classroom or play rules, frequent review of established rules, quiet discussion, reminding children to "use your words", facilitating peer mediation, time away from the group so the child can "pull himself together" and using natural and logical consequences. We will also communicate/consult with parents/caregivers for insight and suggestions.
6. For persistent problem behaviors, we will meet with parents/caregivers, conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment and develop an individualized behavioral plan. The purpose of a Functional Behavioral Assessment is to help us understand the function of a child's disruptive behavior. In order to

provide guidance that will be effective for an individual child, it is important to first understand why, and under what circumstances, the child engages in a particular challenging behavior. Staff and parents/caregivers are then better prepared to develop a plan that includes strategies to help the child meet his or her needs more appropriately.

\* The Spotted Zebra Learning Center assures that the New York State Education Department's Procedural Safeguards with regard to the discipline of students with disabilities are adhered to.

### ***Discontinued Enrollment Procedures***

Parents may withdraw their child from our preschool by giving written notice of intent to withdraw at least 14 calendar days before the child is withdrawn. Charges will cease at the end of the 14th day.

The Spotted Zebra Learning Center reserves the right to discontinue the enrollment of any child if:

1. A parent fails to cooperate reasonably with the Spotted Zebra Learning Center in the provision of educational services to their child, in the payment of published tuition fees, or in picking up their child promptly; or
2. The child is dangerous to himself/herself or others, is destructive of school property, or is so disruptive that the education of other students is significantly impaired. As described above every effort will be made to successfully meet the needs of each child within our program. If serious concerns persist, the staff of Spotted Zebra Learning Center will confer with the parents/caregivers, and refer them to resources that can assist them in seeking a more appropriate setting,

## HEALTH POLICY (Updated)

We want to keep all our children healthy, and need your cooperation to maintain a high health standard. Please call if your child will be absent.

Parents are to keep their child home when the child:

1. Requires more care than the staff can provide, or an illness that compromises the health and safety of others.
2. Has persistent diarrhea or liquid stool (two or more bouts in the past 24 hours). The child must be free from diarrhea for 48 hours before returning to the Spotted Zebra,
3. Has had a fever of 100 degrees or more within the past 24 hours or a rash. To return to Spotted Zebra, child must be fever free without the use of medication for a MINIMUM OF 48 HOURS.
4. Has vomiting accompanied by other signs of illness or dehydration or vomiting two or more times in the past 24 hours. The child must be free from vomiting for 48 hours before returning to the Spotted Zebra.
5. Has undiagnosed rashes.

Children will also be excluded from the Spotted Zebra Learning Center until a medical evaluation allows for the inclusion of the following:

1. lethargy
2. uncontrolled coughing
3. persistent abdominal pain
4. discolored urine
5. refusal to eat or drink
6. irritability
7. persistent crying
8. difficulty breathing
9. wheezing

10. green nasal discharge for more than 10 days

11. eye discharge or extreme redness

**If a child is prescribed an antibiotic for a contagious disease or infection, including but not limited to, conjunctivitis or strep throat, the child must remain out of Preschool for 48 hours after the first dose of medication.**

Should your child have an illness diagnosed by the doctor as a contagious disease, you must notify the Director immediately, so that other parents can be informed that their children may have been exposed to a contagious disease. Some of these include conjunctivitis, chicken pox, bronchitis, fifth disease, Coxsackie virus, lice, scabies, measles, mumps and impetigo. We are required to report any communicable diseases to the Albany County Health Department. It is a state regulation that a physician's release is required for re-admittance to the preschool following a contagious illness. If your child is too ill to play outside, please keep him/her at home. Small children do not understand why they cannot play outside when everyone else can.

If your child becomes ill at school, you will be notified immediately and will be expected to pick up your child as soon as possible. In the event a parent cannot be reached, the person listed on the child's emergency form will be notified and asked to come for your child. An ill child may not remain at the Center for any reason. In case of severe illness or injury, the Center staff will call for an ambulance to take the child to the nearest facility, which offers emergency treatment, or to the facility requested by the parents, on behalf of the parents. Parents are to inform the Center in writing when there are changes in address, telephone numbers, or name of persons designated to pick up a child.

## **COVID-19 PROTOCOL**

Please be advised that the Spotted Zebra Learning Center follows the most up to date protocols and procedures generated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for Schools and Daycares. You can find information here: [School Settings | COVID-19 | CDC](#)

**Medications:** It is a state regulation that to administer any type of medication to a child, we must have a *Written Medical Consent Form* signed by the child's physician and parents.

Prescription medications must be in the original container labeled with your child's name, date, directions and the physician's name. We will administer the medication only as stated on the label directions. We will not administer expired medications.

Non-prescription medications are to be labeled with your child's name and date it was given to us. It must be in the original container and administered according to label directions. If label directions indicate "CONSULT PHYSICIAN", we must have directions in writing by a health professional.

Medications requiring refrigeration are to be given to your child's teacher to be refrigerated. NO MEDICATION OF ANY TYPE IS TO BE IN A CHILD'S CUBBY OR BAG. This includes cough drops, etc.

**Mandated Reporter:** As a childcare provider, the Spotted Zebra Learning Center is a mandated reporter of child abuse and maltreatment. Mandated reporters are those individuals who must report, or cause a report to be made, whenever they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them, in their professional or official capacity, is abused or maltreated. The Spotted Zebra Learning follows the procedures and guidelines set forth by the NYS Department of Children and Family Services and Child Protective Services.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

WE ENCOURAGE AND WELCOME PARENT VISITS! We believe parents are the child's first and most important teachers. That is why we embrace family involvement as being a basic component of our program. Research has proved that the greatest benefits are derived when parents and teachers work as partners to guide children in their growth, development and education.

The following are goals that guide our parent involvement program:

- ✓ To help parents understand developmentally appropriate practices.
- ✓ To provide parents with information related to how children grow and learn.

- ✓ To provide support through resources, materials, referrals, and parent conferences.
- ✓ To inform parents about community activities beneficial to families and children.
- ✓ To aid parents in recognizing and coping with stresses related to parenting.
- ✓ To provide ideas and materials for learning at home.
- ✓ To provide family fun in a group setting.
- ✓ To help parents understand the importance of regular consistent school attendance for their child's future success.

### ***Parent Involvement Opportunities***

- Classroom Parent
- Field trips
- Sharing of hobbies or talents
- Sharing of holidays from your culture
- Donating "useful articles" from home
- Parent education workshops
- Family fun events
- Parent volunteering

### ***Parent/Teacher Communication***

Communication between home and school is essential. Parents should feel free to discuss any questions or concerns with the program staff. Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year with additional conferences being scheduled, as needed.

Each child will also be given a "Communication Folder" which can go home at the end of each day. The folder will be used for the parents and teachers to exchange information. Please make sure you check the folder and return it to school every day!

### ***Parent Education***

We have a Parent-Professional Library of books, videotapes, and pamphlets on a wide variety of issues. The resources are in our Conference Room. Take a look!

Parents will also be made aware of any training opportunities and if there are openings, be offered a seat. If you have any ideas, please share them with us!

## ***RECEIPT OF PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK***

I have received and reviewed the Preschool Handbook for the Spotted Zebra Learning Center. This signed statement affirms that I understand all of the policies and procedures stated within the handbook and agree to abide by them.

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Please Print Name

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Signature and Date