



LOTUS

PRESCHOOL & STUDIO

Family Handbook
2018-2019

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Founder/Director

Written by: Lindsay Loewe (Founder) *Updated July 2018

Family Partnership

Thank you, families, for choosing to become a part of our community; we are so honored! Lotus Preschool & Studio partners with children, parents, and our community to enrich and provide Reggio-inspired education for young learners. Teachers and children co-construct a community within the learning environment, where they learn through observation, plan intentionally, design creative environments, and actively explore materials. Our goal is for each child to develop self-worth and emerge as an emotionally-intelligent, creative citizen who loves learning.

Lotus is committed to building a partnership with parents in order to extend more opportunities to every parent and every child. It is our goal to assist families in their journey of maximizing the potential of their children on the multi-dimensional levels of our existence – physical, intellectual, emotional, intuitional, and artistic – to the best of our capacity.

With the entrance of each child to our program, we embrace a commitment to develop strategies, share techniques and tools to empower families to approach learning and the life experience successfully, while establishing a firm foundation in those qualities and characteristics that enable us to be dynamic and responsible individuals.

To this end, we are continuously developing opportunities to improve our communications and strengthen our ties with your family:

- A Parent Resources:
 - Library books, articles, brochures, and flyers will be available along with a community board. This resource base allows parents to engage in individualized study to further their personal understanding of techniques and approaches to parenting and be better equipped to meet each child's unique challenges or obstacles to school readiness.
- Daily verbal interactive communications with parents.
- Weekly lesson plans, dependent on the children's interests.
- Daily blog post about our encounters and discoveries.
- Take-home folders for the children to share their creations and discoveries throughout their time with us.
- Monthly parent events, including parent coffee, community speakers, and gallery nights. This allows for a chance to speak with the founder and teachers in more detail about any concerns or questions you may have.
- Semi-annual work days to continue building relationships with our community.
- Parent Workshops to address furthering our community's parenting skills or share more about the Lotus Preschool & Studio program.
- Quarterly events such as field trips, fundraisers, service projects.
- Parent Conferences (available upon request, at least one per semester)
- Annual end-of-Summer Celebration

*GENERAL INFORMATION

History

Lotus Preschool & Studio was established in 2016 by Lindsay Loewe. It is the first Reggio-based preschool located in the heart of downtown South Bend, IN. The name of the program was designed to represent the proper flourishing of children and allowing for a positive start in the children's lives. Our primary goal is to provide a quality, developmentally based program for preschool aged children. We are members in the North American Reggio Alliance. Our goal in the future is to receive accreditation from the National Academy of Early Childhood (NAEYC) and Paths to Quality.

Mission Statement

Lotus Preschool & Studio partners with children, parents, and our community to enrich and provide Reggio-inspired education for young learners. Teachers and children co-construct a community within the learning environment where they learn through observation, plan intentionally, design creative environments, and actively explore materials. Our goal is for each child to develop self-worth and emerge an emotionally-intelligent, creative citizen who loves learning.

The goal of the program is to provide a high quality, affordable, ECE program for children 3 to 5 years old, opportunities for parent involvement and high education and training requirements for staff. Building positive relationships is considered fundamental and essential for the well-being of the children. The program supports a strong working relationship among children, teachers, parents, and the community.

For the children: we strive to maintain a safe, healthy and nurturing environment where the developmental needs of the children are addressed.

For the parents: we strive to keep the program affordable and available. It is our goal to serve as a resource for support and education.

For staff: we strive to provide an atmosphere that will attract and retain well-trained personnel by maintaining good working conditions. We encourage a sense of cooperation and open communication among members of the preschool community. The program maintains high educational and training requirements for staff.

Program Philosophy

Lotus Preschool & Studio is founded on the philosophy that children, their families and society benefit from high quality early childhood programs. We believe that there is a critical link between a child's early experiences and later success in life.

Lotus Preschool & Studio has adapted its philosophy based on the principals of the Reggio Approach. This model of education was derived from Reggio Emilia, Italy. Within the Reggio Approach teachers act as guides, resources, problem posers, and partners in learning. Open-ended discussions and long-term projects bring together language activities (using the child's home language if necessary), science, social studies, dramatic play, and artistic expression. The projects are meaningful and relevant to the child's life experiences. They assist the child in seeing the interrelationships of things and ideas. An important feature of the Reggio Approach is the use of documentation of children's work in progress. This serves as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, parents, and visitors to the preschool. The program is based on the belief that children need time to be children and time to experience their childhood. Teaching is the art of providing young children with an environment which encourages active exploration and discovery. Projects are planned, yet responsive to individual needs and environmental happenings. Opportunities are provided for children to take responsibility, make decisions and learn through play in mixed-aged groupings. Children's positive feelings of self-worth must be the foundation of all curriculum development in early childhood. Each child's learning is filtered through his or her unique screen of self-concept. Each child brings his or her own world to us each day. Materials are provided to foster early literacy, math, science, social studies, as well as fine and gross motor skills.

The teaching staff is sensitively aware of how young children learn. Children process knowledge by using their whole self to gather information. Because children absorb what their bodies are experiencing, the more involved the experience, the greater the potential for learning. The cultural experiences and the ethnic values of the individual child must be incorporated into the teaching tools for each child. Good materials should capture interest and curiosity and should challenge the learner.

The Reggio Approach

The image of the child

Rich

Strong

Capable Powerful

Has potential

Desire to grow

Ability to be amazed

Desire to relate to others and to communicate

DAILY SCHEDULE

Core Academic Schedule 8:30am-12pm

8:30am-8:45am: Welcome- Provocation offered to children to learn and explore through loose materials.

8:45am-9am: Morning Meeting (Community Time)-Large group activity which formally begins the day with introductory songs, calendar, weather, news, sharing and discussion of project work

9am-9:30am: Choice Board- Children select from a variety of activity areas including: Art corner, science table, math table, sand or water play, games on the rug, dress up or project work.

9:30am-10am: Morning snack – provided by Lotus.

10am-10:30am: Outdoor classroom/ Large Motor – Outdoor play on playground with a wide variety of age appropriate equipment, games and materials.

10:30am-11am: Creation Time- Children are able to participate in a loosely planned artistic project.

11am-11:30am: Choice Board- Children select from a variety of activity areas including: Art corner, science table, math table, sand or water play, games on the rug, dress up or project work.

11:30am-12pm: Story time/ Free Choice- large group story time

***Parent Information & Guidelines**

What is a “Reggio Emilia-inspired curriculum”? What does my child learn from it?

Lotus Preschool & Studio is inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach. We have embraced this concept because it fosters independence, self-help skills, and creativity.

The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education is named after the town of Reggio Emilia in the Emilia Romagna province of northern Italy. In Reggio Emilia, 54 publicly funded schools provide education for children from birth to six years. These schools have been described as among the best in the world.

The schools of Reggio Emilia began as a parent initiative. With the end of World War II, parents in Italy banded together and, with the proceeds from the sale of surplus war materials, founded the town’s first preschools. They had a vision for a new kind of school where children would be treated with respect and parents would be active participants in their children’s education.

The parents sought the help of educator **Loris Malaguzzi** to set up schools that reflected their vision. From those early schools grew the framework for a new model in education for young children.

Why Lotus Embraces the Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio Emilia approach offers a way for teachers to embrace each child's natural curiosity and creativity by encouraging them to work on projects that interest them. The approach also encourages children to communicate their new-found knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways, often with creative results.

Parents are also encouraged to be actively involved in all aspects of the school and their child's learning.

At the heart of this system is the powerful image of the child. Rather than seeing children as empty vessels that requires filling with facts, Reggio educators see children as full of potential, competent and capable of building their own theories.

Principles of Reggio Emilia:

- Children are strong, interested, capable and curious.
- Children learn best working with others: with other children, family, teachers, and the community.
- Children have "**the hundred languages**" through which they show us what they know in many ways - they move, draw, paint, build, sculpt, do collages, act, sing, play music and more.
- Children learn from the spaces they are in – they need beautiful, orderly space where everything has a purpose and can help children learn.
- Children are capable of long-term, sustained learning when the topics that interest them.
- Teachers listen to and observe the children closely, ask questions, and explore the children's ideas.
- Teachers provide experiences that "provoke" children's thinking and learning.
- Teachers document the children's work so that they can talk to each other and the children. This allows for a better understanding of the children's thinking and education in general.
- Parents provide ideas and skills, which make them active partners in the children's learning.

The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Learning is based on:

- Child-centered learning
- Creativity and aesthetics
- Collaboration
- Environments
- Documentation
- Working in partnership with parents

Teachers incorporating aspects of this approach into their program will:

- Build on the strengths, competencies, and curiosities of the children (the “image of the child”)
- Encourage, support, and develop collaborative learning
- Have less structured rooms, but carefully planned spaces and well-organized materials, so that children are free to spend more time on projects that interest them and are often able to move between activities at their own pace (“the environment as the third teacher”)
- Offer a wide variety of basic art media, including paints, clay construction, drawing, collage (“the hundred languages”)
- Listen to and implement children’s ideas for projects on which to work (“negotiated curriculum”)
- Display the children’s creations and photographs, showing the children at work in the classroom (“documentation”)
- Build a portfolio of children’s work at school (“documentation”)
- Make a great effort to communicate with parents and to help parents feel involved in their child’s project work (“parents as partners”)

Will my child be ready for Kindergarten?

Yes. Our way of teaching, by having the students learn how to learn, prepares them for success in Kindergarten and beyond. They will build the foundation for literacy, math, science, art, fine motor skills, and social skills needed for academic and social success. The difference is that the skills are taught in the context of what is interesting to the children.

***LOGISTICS AND PRACTICAL MATTERS**

What ages do we serve?

Lotus Preschool & Studio begins at age 3 through 5, with hopes to expand to different ages.

Our hours of operation:

Lotus Preschool & Studio is open Monday- Friday from 8:30am until 12pm; with hopes to expand to full days. We will also be offering a program that allows for early drop off in the mornings from 7:45am-8:30am.

*Exception: holidays, please see school calendar for details.

Where to drop off and pick up:

All parents are responsible for bringing and picking up the child to our learning environment . As the parent, you are responsible for signing them in at time of arrival and doing the same at time of departure. Parents will enter through the front door of the Charles Martin Youth Building and enter to our learning environment.

Please remember to turn off your car during drop off and pick up.

The doors will open for school promptly at 8:30. We cannot admit students early, teachers must have appropriate preparation time to maintain the classroom and set up projects.

Pick up time is promptly at 12:00pm. A late fee of \$5/minute applies to all late pickups, which begins at 12:05pm. This will be credited toward your next month's tuition, if you have a need for Extended Day services, please make a request ASAP.

Parking:

Lotus Preschool & Studio uses the main entrance to the building, this location allows for parents to utilize street parking or utilize the parking lot.



Registration Fee:

At time of registration there is a non-refundable \$40 fee that is due. This can be paid in cash or credit. This secures a spot for your child at time of registration.

Who can pick up my child from school?

For your child's security and your peace of mind, you must give written permission for any individual to pick up your child. You may use the Emergency Contact and Pick-Up Authorization form, email or a written note. If you have not personally introduced us to this person, we will ask for identification.

Staff must release a child to either parent/guardian, unless we have a copy of the custody order or court document on file. If there is no court document available and if there is any doubt that the child should leave with the parent, staff may choose to call the custodial parent/guardian/entity and/or the police department. It is in the best interest of the child that parents notify us immediately of any family changes that could be a potential problem. We are bound by confidentiality policies not to discuss or give out information on children to anyone else, but we do ask parents confide in us when necessary.

Does my child need to be toilet-trained?

No. When your child is ready, we work closely with the parent and child through this process, all while teaching the child in a consistent, calming, encouraging manner. We celebrate success and keep a positive upbeat attitude when the child has an “accident.” The parent and school should follow a consistent and similar schedule, or the child’s training will be erratic. Your child’s teachers will keep you posted on progress—please keep us abreast of all news, for example, when your child comes to Lotus with only underwear on!

We ask that all children that are learning about the potty have 3-5 pairs of underwear kept at Lotus with an extra set of clothing.

Lotus Preschool & Studio holiday closings:

The Preschool will be closed for the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Break
- Holiday Break
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President’s Day
- Spring Break
- Memorial Day

*Please refer to our school calendar for further details on exact dates along with duration of time.

***TUITION AND FEES**

Forms of payment for tuition:

Tuition and fee payments are due on the first of every month payable to Lotus Preschool & Studio. Tuition and fees are considered delinquent at 12:00 midnight on the day following due date, unless prior arrangement have been made with Lindsay Loewe. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express or cash payments. A credit processing fee of 3% applies to all credit card payments.

Late charges will be assessed and applied to the family’s account. A fee of \$5 per day will be added to the tuition amount for a total of 7 business days. If tuition and any other outstanding charges are not paid within seven days of the date due (or within five banking days of

notification to you, in the case of a returned check), a meeting will be set up with the family to make further arrangements.

Scholarships or financial aid:

At this time, families in need of financial aid, need to discuss this matter with the director Lindsay Loewe. At this time a meeting will be set up to discuss the agreement along with a contract for each family that is receiving scholarships or financial aid.

***IN THE CLASSROOM**

How diverse is your school? Do you have different types of families (e.g. single parents, same-sex couples, adopted children)?

We welcome all children, regardless of religion, race, family type or cultural background, to experience our exciting, nurturing program.

We have many different types of families at Lotus Preschool & Studio. We are proud of the diversity of the students and their families as we feel it strengthens the program and the children's development.

Nutritional Policy:

Lotus Preschool and Studio follows the child care nutrition guidelines recommended by the USDA CACFP (child and adult care food programs) for all the foods we serve. To provide a healthy and balanced diet this includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and limits foods and beverages that are high in sugar and/or fat, our nutrition policy includes the following:

Fruits and Vegetables

-Please include at least one fruit or vegetable in your child's lunch

Grains

-Please include whole grains: no chips

Beverages

-Please only send water, no juice or pop is allowed in our environment

Fats and Sugars

-Please do not send any sugary food or candy: no fruit snacks, no lollipops, chocolate, etc.

Role of Staff in Nutrition Education

-Our staff acts as role models for healthy eating in front of children

Ideas for lunches: Turkey Roll up, pretzels, cheese stick, cucumber slices and grapes. Whole grain waffle with peanut butter, apple slices and yogurt. Hummus and pretzels, carrot sticks, raisins and cheese cubes.

*Please let us know if you need help with different ideas of what to pack your child.

Meals and snack times are planned so that no child will go more than four hours without being offered food. We provide a variety of nutritionally balanced, high quality each day so please do not send your child with high fat or sugary content.

If your child has special dietary needs or food allergies, please inform us.

Cleanliness:

To decrease the spread of illnesses and germs, general housekeeping chores are part of the teacher's' daily routine and materials are sanitized often. We also take care of cleaning, vacuuming and mopping on a daily basis.

Children to teacher ratio:

The ratio is determined by the age of the children and the size of the classroom.

- For the 3-5's room, the ratio is 5:1. We take strong pride in giving us more time to focus on each individual.

Field Trips/ Community Outings:

Field trips can enhance the curriculum and children's learning experiences. The teachers will arrange several field trips throughout the year, guided by the appropriateness for the age, weather conditions and interests. Parent chaperones will be needed for all of these outing, a minimum of two. Lotus will not be able to host field trips without parent involvement, please understand this is very important.

Permission slips will be due one week prior to our outings, if these forms are not turned in, your child will not be able to participate in the outing.

Discipline and Conflict Resolution Policy:

We believe in "positive discipline," which focuses on good behavior rather than bad, and follow the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices. All families did receive a child behavior guidance policy in the enrollment packet.

Birthdays/Holidays:

Birthdays are an important and significant event in the life of a child. They deserve the opportunity for children to be given special recognition. We will take the time to celebrate each child on their special day, as close as possible to the date. Parents are welcome to come in and celebrate with us.

From birthdays to holidays there are many opportunities for celebrations in our environment. Birthday celebrations will be held based upon the day that is agreed between the teachers and

caretaker of the child. We request that you not send in treats or goody bags but instead send in a birthday book or art project revolving around that child. For holiday celebrations there will be a sign-up sheet with specific foods and beverages that will be placed on the clipboard.

Indoor Shoes:

We ask that each child is provided with a pair of slippers or indoor shoes that can stay at Lotus at all times. Each child will change into these shoes upon arrival to ensure that our learning environment stays clean.

Home materials:

We ask that any materials coming from home be labeled. This will allow for us to keep track of the items and be sure each child has their own things (extra clothing, lovies, etc.). Each child may bring a transitional object to keep on their hook to cuddle as needed. Please leave all other toys and books at home unless you have made special arrangements in advance.

We also provide a lost and found basket, we ask that this be checked periodically by each family.

***CURRICULUM**

Lotus Preschool & Studio's Curriculum:

Our approach to curriculum planning is based on three things:

1. **PLAY:** At the heart of children's learning is PLAY. It is through play that children explore developmental themes and stages leading to physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Children are active, sensory learners and need to be given many opportunities to make choices, explore, investigate, problem solve and interact socially. We are much more interested in the process than in any products they may come up with.

2. The **ENVIRONMENT** is the foundation of our curriculum. This means that it is child-centered with attractive and interesting materials provided in an organized and thoughtful fashion. Materials are included to foster all the key experiences and developmental themes of early childhood. A supply of backup materials is kept in storage and used on a rotating basis or to supplement and extend an investigation emerging in children's play. Some materials are introduced to the class with guidelines outlined on their use. Most are undefined and as open-ended as possible.

3. The **CHILD:** It is the children's interests, not the adults' that we use as the basis of our planning. The teacher's' plans are a thoughtful introduction of materials to stimulate the emergence of an investigation. Teachers anticipate avenues the children may pursue from experience, and they pre-plan and prepare for this with enrichment materials and activity options to add. Occasionally, there may be a teacher-directed plan, but the majority of time

children spend with us is child-centered.

Our team at Lotus Preschool & Studio has spent much time exploring curriculum theory. We have consulted with outside experienced professionals, attended nationally accredited programs, and continually research curriculum literature and theory. The curriculum at Lotus Preschool & Studio is dynamic and ever-changing, and will continue to grow and change along with the most up-to-date early childhood research.



*ADMISSIONS & STARTING SCHOOL

Ages:

We are currently accepting children ages 3-5. Each family will receive an enrollment packet that needs to be filled out and returned back to Lotus, including the enrollment fee. Along with this packet there are state forms that need to be filled out and returned back before your child is able to attend the first day of school.

Mandatory Forms:

*These forms must be updated annually

Lotus Preschool & Studio and the Health Department require the following forms to be on file before your child starts school. Our deadline for all forms is August 20, 2018.

- Health Form for Preschoolers
- Emergency Contact and Pick-Up Form
- Authorization for Child's Emergency Medical Treatment
- Dental Health Form
- Tuition Agreement Form

*HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY

Building Security:

Lotus Preschool & Studio takes security concerns very seriously. We will keep parents up-to-date if specific situations arise.

We have evacuation and emergency response systems in place to best protect the students and staff in our program. We conduct periodic fire/evacuation/security drills for our safety. If you have questions about these and other security systems in place, please contact us.

*Please refer to contingency plan for additional questions or concerns.

Allergies:

Please remember to alert us to any type of allergies. We will offer children alternative snacks if necessary. This is one of the reasons why we do not allow children to share their food.

We post a list of children with allergies in each classroom so that all of the staff is aware of the precautions that need to be taken to protect our children.

Are peanuts allowed in school?

We are a peanut aware school, but we cannot guarantee a peanut-free environment as our building is shared with others.

Protection from Hazards and Environmental Health

Lotus protects children and adults from hazards, including electrical shock, burns, or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep staff and children from tripping.

- The preschool classroom building has been tested for lead, radon, radiation, asbestos, fiberglass, and other hazards that could impact children's health with documentation on file.
- Staff maintains the building's heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in compliance with national standards for facility use by children.

The program maintains facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insect pests, and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children. The program uses the techniques known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) so that the least hazardous means are used to control pests and unwanted vegetation.

Smoke Free Facility

In compliance with the Indiana Smoke Free Air Act, Lotus Preschool & Studio are smoke/tobacco free. A "No Smoking" sign meeting the law's requirements is posted at the entrance to the preschool classroom building to inform people that they are entering a nonsmoking place. No smoking is allowed on the school grounds or within sight of any children.

Substance Abuse

Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be permitted on the premises of Lotus Preschool & Studio. At no time will children be released to a person under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Child Protection Policies

The health and wellbeing of every child in our care is of the utmost importance and the protection of children is our responsibility. An applicant or volunteer for temporary or permanent employment with Lotus Preschool & Studio involving direct interaction with or the opportunity to interact and associate with children must execute and submit an affidavit of clearance from any and all crimes against a child or families. In addition, no person with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect will come in contact with children in the program or have responsibility for children.

The program has written school board policy for reporting child abuse and neglect as well as procedures in place that comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws. The policy includes requirements for staff to report all suspected incidents of child abuse, neglect, or both by families, staff, volunteers, or others to the appropriate local agencies. All teaching staff complete "Mandatory Reporter: Child Abuse Training" at least once a year and within the first month of employment. Lotus Preschool & Studio does not tolerate employees physically, or sexually abusing or harassing students.

Contingency Plan for Emergency Situations

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. **SCHOOL** – The school will retain responsibility of all children on premises until they are released to a parent, guardian or other designated person, or until they have been transported to an official evacuation center, in which case selected staff will remain with the children until they have reunited with their families.
2. **EMPLOYEES** – All employees will remain on the premises as service workers, as designated by law. Such employees will be subjected to whatever tasks are assigned by the person or persons in charge, and may not leave the premises until the same person or persons in charge give them official permission to do so.
3. **PARENTS** – Follow official instructions relayed by officials (Director, Lindsay Loewe) via text or phone. If parents are able to reach the school without danger to themselves or without interference with disaster workers, they should come to pick up their children. Children will be released only to parents, guardians, or other designated on authorization form.

EVACUATION LOCATIONS:

On-site Evacuation

There are several causes for evacuation utilized by the preschool. Safe Room One is the typical on-site evacuation to a Safe Room, where students and staff are evacuated from their classrooms to a central “Safe Room” location in the preschool facility. Safe rooms are located in areas of the building that maximize the safety of occupants. A Safe Room is used when outside evacuation would place students at risk. Safe Rooms may change depending on the necessity and emergency conditions. The most common on-site evacuation would be in response to a tornado warning, structural hazard, or severe outside environmental hazard, outside violence activity. Our designated Safe Room is located in the Director’s Office (basement).

A. In Case Of Fire, Open Shooting Or Bomb Threat:

Fire

1. Save lives- evacuate any persons in immediate danger.
2. Sound alarm- pull on any fire alarms. Supplement with whistle or bullhorn.
3. Evacuate the children and adults out the main entrance of Lotus Preschool & Studio. Meet as a group out the front door on the side of the building using the walking rope. Person in charge (Director or Lead Teacher) is to check for stragglers takes attendance book, emergency contact forms, and makes a head count. Secondary exit plan: out of the back door through the auditorium exiting out toward the back of the building where the large parking lot is located.

4. Report fire: Call 911. Say: "There is a fire at Lotus Preschool & Studio, located at 802 Lincolnway W. South Bend. (Give specifics of where the fire is burning, number of children present, and current
5. Director will meet with the fire officials.
6. Use portable fire extinguisher or wall extinguisher if situation is safe to stay inside area while doing so.