

Arts Readiness Training School
Academy A.R.T.S.
Academy of Movement and Music
www.academyoakpark.com

Parent Handbook

2026-2027

605 Lake Street • Oak Park, Illinois 60302 • 708•848•2329

academyofmovementandmusic@gmail.com

ABSENCES/ILLNESSES

Please observe the following Protocols:

- Parents must monitor their child for fever, illness, etc. before coming to the Academy.

DO call the office -

- if your child will be absent or on vacation
- to report a contagious illness ~ we send home “health notices” to alert parents of any infectious or contagious disease that they may have been exposed to
 - **in the case of covid positivity** of your child or a family member please contact us as soon as possible*
- if you are going to be early or late picking up your child
- if you have problems or questions



Reasons for sending a child home –

- fever of 100 F or more
- diarrhea and/or vomiting

Covid Positivity

If a positive case is identified at school or in a preschool family, all families will be notified. Based on current advisories, if you test positive, stay home for 24 hours until you are fever-free without medication and symptoms are improving. Then take added precautions for the next 5 days (wear a mask), according to the CDC guidelines.

REMINDERS

1. **DO have your child wash his/her hands after eating and before coming to school – especially if the food has contained any nuts/peanuts or nut/peanut oils.** Even skin contact can trigger anaphylactic shock.
2. **DO check your email** for A.R.T.S. correspondence regularly.
3. **DO label everything!** Remember to do so at each change of seasons and/or as your child grows.
4. **DO NOT** bring any snacks to school.
5. **DO NOT allow** your child to bring toys, blankets, pacifiers, jewelry, money, gum, candy or other snacks into the Academy. Assure your child that these treasures will be waiting at home or in the car after school.
6. **DO bring any** medication that might be needed during school such as an EpiPen or inhaler **to the office. Label these clearly.**
7. **DO NOT** send children to school until they’ve been fever-free for 24 hours or have been on a full course of prescribed antibiotic for 24-hours or in the case of families affected by covid, a negative test result.

YOUR CHILD'S DAY

There are 2 classrooms downstairs. Studio 1 is used for Creative Movement. Studio III is the Art, Music, and Montessori classroom. This is where the students begin their day.

Creative movement classes work on basic motor and dance skills, as well as on problem solving using movement in space through time. Props can include rhythm instruments, puppets, scarves, and beanbags.

The Art, Music, Montessori classroom offers a variety of different activities. There is a book corner, shelf work, imaginative play area, pre-writing table, game table, construction table and a blue carpet area with materials such as Brio train, Playmobil 1-2-3 buildings and figures, and blocks to share. The children usually participate in art projects on Monday and Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday are for practical life experiences. The hour of activities concludes with our music circle.

During the course of the year, we work on thematic units that usually last about 3 weeks. In the Art, Music, and Montessori room, the items in the green circle, imaginative play area, books, puzzles, shelf work, art and music vary with each unit. These themes are also incorporated into the activities in the Creative Movement room.

The teacher/child ratio varies from room to room. There is one teacher and one aide in the Creative Movement classroom. One teacher and one aide are always present in the Art, Music, and Montessori room.

Children 3 ½ (by September 1st) and older are eligible to participate in our Friday STEAM class that is held in our large open upstairs classroom.

Children 4-5 enrolled in Academy A.R.T.S. spend time in a multi-age space with their younger classmates, sharing art, free play and Montessori activities. 4-5 year-olds also spend time in a space just for them, which adds creative arts & crafts, cultural awareness, children's literature, and science.

PEANUT POLICY

We have students at the Academy with life-threatening allergies to **PEANUTS, NUTS, and all PEANUT/NUT PRODUCTS**. Please be sure that before coming to school your child washes his/her hands after eating – especially if the food has contained any nuts/peanuts or nut/peanut oils. Children may snack or eat breakfast on the way to school; please realize that nut allergies can be triggered by skin contact. Use wipes before exiting the car on arrival at school. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.



IMPORTANT

CLOTHING FOR SCHOOL

• CASUAL, LOOSE-FITTING CLOTHING •

- Simple shorts, leggings, or sweatpants with a T-shirt or sweatshirt work best. Dresses get in the way during our more active classes. If dresses are a must for your preschooler, they need to be worn over leggings, bike shorts, or tights. No jewelry please as this also gets in the way. Our art experiences are frequently messy, so please dress your child in something washable.

• SHOES •

- Children are **required** to have **leather ballet slippers**. It is dangerous for children to run and dance in gym shoes or bare feet. Heavy shoes can hurt other children; bare feet are cold, and socks are slippery on the floors. Children will bring their ballet slippers back and forth to school in their backpack.



• HAIR •

- Long hair needs to be tied up so that it's not in the way while they do physical fitness class. Please also be mindful of bows, headbands and barrettes that easily come out. They can be distracting to your child and easily get lost.

• CHANGE OF CLOTHES •



- Occasionally accidents happen at school and clothing becomes wet or soiled. Please keep an extra set of clothes in your child's backpack. Staff will change your child's clothing and send home the soiled clothing in a plastic bag. Just wash and return a set of clothes the next time your child comes to school.

• LABEL EVERYTHING! •

- Ballet slippers must have name and telephone number written on the inside of the shoes so we can contact you if they're lost. Children need to have their shoes, boots and outer garments labeled as well. Many children have similar boots, sweaters and jackets. As the seasons change and children grow, please remember to label all new clothing.

DROP OFF/PICK UP PROCEDURES

Safety

- Illinois law requires all children to ride in age- and weight-appropriate car seats or safety restraints.
- Staff cannot place a child into a vehicle that does not have the required safety restraints. If your vehicle is not properly equipped, please park and come inside to pick up your child.

Carpool procedures begin the first Wednesday of classes.

You may park and walk into the building to drop-off/pick-up your child or use the carpool service.

Carpool Drop-Off (8:35–8:50am)

- Please do not arrive more than **10 minutes before class** (8:45 a.m. start).
- Pull forward to the utility pole so two cars can unload at the same time.
- Have your child seated on the **passenger side**.
- Remain in your vehicle while a greeter assists your child into the building.

Carpool Pick-Up (10:55-11:15am)

- Each child will be assigned a **Pick-Up Number**.
- Please arrive **no more than 5 minutes before dismissal** to avoid traffic issues with our neighbors.
- Display your Pick-Up Number outside your driver's window as you enter Academy Drive.
- A greeter will bring your child to your vehicle.
- Pull up to the utility pole when directed.
- Remain in your vehicle to help keep the line moving.
- For safety, place your child's car seat on the **passenger side** whenever possible.

Additional Reminders

- If you need to pick up your child early, please call the office in advance.
- Do not park in employee spaces or on Bishop Quarter Lane.
- When walking, please use the sidewalk along the fence.

Authorized Pick-Up

Children may be released only to a parent, legal guardian, or another person authorized by the parent or guardian. Authorization should be provided in writing using an Academy form or a signed note. Phone authorizations may be accepted at the discretion of the Academy office.

DAILY SNACK

A mid-morning snack is served. If your child has a food allergy that prevents him/her from having pretzels or graham crackers, please let the office know.



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



We will celebrate birthdays by recognizing the child with a special sticker, singing happy birthday during circle time and also reading the birthday child's favorite book to the group which they are welcome to bring from home. You are invited to bring a treat to share. Birthday napkins are a big hit, but no cups please. They are too big for many children to hold. Please keep the snack simple - no gooey frostings. Goldfish crackers, fruit, simple sugar cookies, or mini muffins are always enjoyed.* Please call ahead to let us know what date you will be providing snack. We can then let you know if there are any conflicts as well as information about class size and possible allergies. Snacks are served at 9:50 AM.

***Please consult Handbook page 2 for important information concerning food allergies and prohibited snacks.**

SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS



Seasonal celebrations will be observed. The children will be invited to wear a special costume to school for Halloween. We will invite parents and caregivers to join us for some special activities as well as an opportunity to take some photos. Staff will also take pictures of the children to share with parents.

We celebrate Valentine's Day in our classrooms. The children bring valentines for each of their classmates. More information to follow later.



RECOGNITION DAY/"GRADUATION DAY"



At the end of May children share music and stories with family and friends and receive certificates recognizing their participation in the A.R.T.S. Program.

COMMUNICATIONS

• COMMUNICATIONS •

Your first line of communication is to call or email the office at 708-848-2329, academyofmovementandmusic@mail.com; office staff will then contact the appropriate staff member.

• OBSERVATIONS •

You may observe in the classroom at any time after November 1st. We will make every effort to accommodate your schedule, but ask that you please make an appointment through the office at least 24 hours in advance. We need to limit the number of parents in any given classroom for the least amount of disruption. You are welcome to bring your infant of six months or younger when you come for observations. Please make child care arrangements for older siblings. It is difficult to get a good idea of your child's classroom behavior if you have to supervise other children.

• CONFERENCES •

Conferences are scheduled during the month of November. Conferences give you an opportunity to get to know your child's teachers, to ask questions and to get an overview of your child's participation in class. These are team conferences that include some of the teachers who work with your child. Childcare is provided for the November daytime conferences. You may also request a phone conference in the Spring after you receive your written evaluations.

Conference time is limited, so we ask you to make a separate appointment if you have serious concerns about your child or the school. Information about conferences will be sent out to you later this fall.

EMERGENCY CLOSING PROCEDURES

The Academy has only closed a few times in thirty years due to bad weather. If we can't get snow-plowed, we can't open. Should this or any other emergency occur (i.e., loss of power), you will receive an email to advise you of the closing, unless you have indicated that you prefer to be telephoned. **Do not assume** that if Oak Park Public Schools are closed that the Academy will be closed. We are registered for school closings due to inclement weather at www.emergencyclosings.com. Enter "Academy of Movement and Music" to check our status.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

What is the Academy's discipline policy?

This is a question many new parents ask us when they are considering the Academy for their child. One of our goals as early childhood educators is to provide a safe environment for learning self-discipline and self-control. These concepts show up in a preschool setting as sharing materials, respecting others' personal space, waiting and taking turns, listening and following directions, and using language to express feelings. These growth opportunities are present throughout your child's day in our program, and we provide the guidance needed to develop these social skills.

A foundation of our approach is to acknowledge and reinforce positive behaviors in the classroom. However, it is natural and expected that children will sometimes make inappropriate choices. Most times, this can be resolved with a simple one-on-one where the teacher explains why the choice is inappropriate and offers better alternatives. Occasionally a child is asked to sit to the side with the teacher and observe what the other children are doing. The teacher can then point out what others are doing that is appropriate, and how the observing child can also do those things.

When an inappropriate behavior is repeated or becomes harmful, or a child becomes very upset, the next step is to remove them from the situation. The child will go with the teacher to another area in the room or another quiet space away from others. Together with the teacher, the child has an opportunity to calm down and regain control. The teacher can then identify and acknowledge the child's feelings. Many times this is enough to support the child's return to the classroom.

What is the Academy's Policy around more serious behaviors (i.e. hitting or biting)? Our top priority is the safety and well-being of every child in the Academy's care. We take incidents of intentional hitting or biting seriously. Parents of children involved in either type of incident are given a written report at dismissal time. Parents are also welcome to arrange to talk with teachers about what happened. In cases of persistent, unresolved physical aggression, teachers will meet with parents to discuss options and share resources and also determine whether our environment continues to be appropriate for the child.

Intentional hitting:

Staff attends to the needs of the child who was hit, then addresses the behavior of the child who did the hitting. The teacher will first determine whether the event was accidental, then follow up on intentional hitting using the discipline process described above.

Biting:

Biting must be taken seriously, but with understanding. It can be a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that resolves with age. While it can be scary, frustrating, and stressful for children and parents, it is not helpful to assign blame to anyone when it happens.

If there is a biting incident, the biter is told immediately to "Stop – biting hurts." The bitten child is comforted and assessed for injury. Any injury is treated according to standard first aid protocols; cleaning the area and applying a cold pack for swelling or a bandage if necessary. The biter is removed from the situation and engaged by the teacher as described in the discipline procedures above.

In an effort to prevent further biting, teachers review the context of each incident to identify precipitating conditions and look for any patterns. Going forward, staff will work with a biting child more closely, teaching ways of managing conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Each child grows in a unique way and has special talents and abilities. At times, there are areas of development where some children need extra support. Frequently, the preschool years are a time when challenges in a particular area of development are first identified.

The Faculty at the Academy of Movement and Music are invested in providing a stimulating environment that enhances the child's development. We have been participating with the Collaboration for Early Childhood in the community, and we are strong supporters of the village wide effort to provide Early Intervention Services. Please contact the Family Support Coordinator or ask in the office for a list of service providers in the area. Studies have shown that Early Intervention is very effective at assisting children in maximizing their development. If a child is experiencing ongoing challenges with an activity, skill, or transition, the teacher will discuss this with the parent.

A.R.T.S. Faculty

Academy Administration

JP Tenuta, Director

Kari Farkvam, Office Manager

Rachel Gorgol, Business Manager

A.R.T.S. Administration

Maureen Fahey, Director, Downstairs A.R.T.S. Program

Nathalie Yanguas, Curriculum Coordinator for 4-5 year olds

Faculty

Maureen Fahey, Art, Practical Life, Montessori

Heléna Gorgol, Creative Movement

Grace Lu, Creative Movement

Nathalie Yanguas, Art, Creative Art, Cultural Awareness, Literature, Montessori

Classroom Aide

Jennie Hills

Sasha Gillett

ACADEMY A.R.T.S. STAFF BIOS

J.P. Tenuta grew up dancing at the Academy of Movement and Music in Oak Park under Stephanie Clemens. He graduated from Northern Illinois with a degree in dance under the tutelage of Randall Newsom and Judith Chitwood. He danced for Nashville Ballet, Luna Negra Dance Theater and danced as a principle for the Lyric Opera of Chicago for 11 years. He currently is the Director of the Academy of Movement and Music where he has taught for the last 21 years. He guest teaches all throughout the Chicago land area. He would like to thank his mom for making him dance and his dad for making him laugh.

Maureen Fahey, Downstairs A.R.T.S Director, joined the Academy family in 2004 when her two sons began attending preschool. In 2009 when her daughter started preschool, she became the Practical Life teacher in the Art/Music/Montessori room. She enjoyed learning more about the Montessori method and introducing the children to new ideas each week at the practical life table. Maureen loves the unique preschool experience that the Academy offers families in the community. She studied Family and Consumer Science at Eastern Illinois University and worked in management and consumer relations after college. In her free time Maureen enjoys reading, yoga and spending time with her family especially outside in nature! Maureen lives in Oak Park with her husband and three kids and is excited to begin her 10th year as Downstairs A.R.T.S Director.

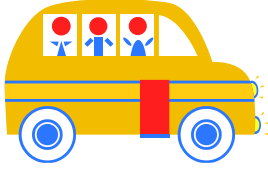
Nathalie Yanguas, Curriculum Coordinator for the 4-5 year olds, is originally from Switzerland. She has an MA in Egyptology from the University of Geneva, Switzerland. Before moving to the United States in 2015, Nathalie taught French for 11 years, working primarily with adults and teenagers, in particular immigrants and refugees. She now lives in River Forest with her husband and her daughter. Nathalie started at the Academy as a parent volunteer when her daughter was in preschool, then as an aide in 2017 and as a French teacher in 2018. She has worked in all the A.R.T.S. classes, from Art, Creative Art and Literature & Culture to Music, Creative Movement, Physical Fitness, and Science. She also teaches French at Lincoln Elementary School in River Forest and works from time to time as a freelance translator. She is looking forward to her sixth year as Upstairs A.R.T.S. Director.

Sasha Gillett is currently working towards a dual bachelor's degree in early childhood and elementary education at National Louis University after earning her associate's degree in early childhood education from Triton Community College. Since middle school, she has worked with children of all ages from newborns to elementary school, starting out as a mother's helper and eventually developing into an experienced babysitter for families in the neighborhood. For as long as she can remember, she has been passionate about teaching and taking care of children. Sasha feels it is very exciting to encourage their development, curiosity, and trust in themselves. She is truly enjoying every second of being a member of the Academy family and is excited about continuing to develop as a teacher and positively influence the lives of the children she interacts with.

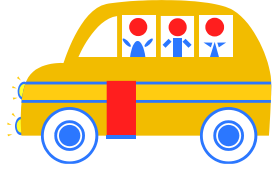
Heléna Gorgol is a graduate of The University of Illinois (2022), holding a BFA in Dance. She attended pre-school and dance at the Academy and continued until her high school graduation in 2018. The Academy helped her cultivate a love for children and teaching as early as 10 years old, when she began demonstrating for ballet classes. She has been an Academy A.R.T.S. staff since college, and taught ballet at the Champaign Park district for two years while in school. Helena is passionate about being a positive influence on children during their first school experience, and nurturing their early development.

Jennie Hills, born and raised in Oak Park, attended Irving School, Asension (1988), OPRFHS (1992), Utah State University (1995). Growing up in Oak Park, she was the neighborhood babysitter, and her first job was at a daycare center. Jennie loves helping kids grow, discover, learn, and have fun. She has two daughters, her oldest is an OPRFHS grad (2022) and graduate of Upper Iowa University in Fayette, Iowa, Her youngest daughter is a senior at OPRFHS. Jennie's hobbies include reading books. Her favorite place is the Book Table. She enjoys backyard gardening and raising butterflies in the summer. She's creative so she's always doing something "Art" – chalk drawing, painting rocks, coloring and lettering, anything she can. Jennie's also into food. She loves to cook family recipes and she's a huge fan of fresh fruits!

Grace Lu is a performing artist, educator and early childhood professional. In education she has worked as a literacy coach with the Illinois library system, private tutor, classroom aid and art room assistant 1st - 8th grade at the Green House school, Wheaton, IL. She studied Early Development and Psychology at College of DuPage before moving into Theater, graduating from the Acting Conservatory program at Black Box Chicago. She has loved her time as an Actress and PA working in Theatre, film and TV. Grace also grew up dancing! studying different styles of dance, her favorite was Hawaiian dance, which she performed professionally with the Hawaiian style dancers of Chicago. She is coming back for her sixth school year with the A.R.T.S. program. She is excited to share her love of the arts with the youngest and most creative members of our community.



See page 6 & 7 for Traffic Regulations specific to Preschool A.R.T.S.



Traffic & Parking Policy

Important Drop-off/Pick-up Information

For the safety of the children and to help us stay on good terms with our neighbors, please follow the guidelines below.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Do:

- **Do** park (on North Blvd., Lake St., or East Ave.) and **walk your child into the building if they are too young to get out of the car by themselves** to walk into the building.
- **Do** use the sidewalk to walk up to the building.
- **Do** drive only 5 mph in the driveway.
- **Do** wait in your car alongside the sidewalk for your turn to pull up to the utility post to pick up your child when they come outside.
- **Do** yield right of way to neighbors attempting to pull in or out of their driveway.
- **Do** observe traveling one way on Bishop Quarter Lane.
- **For A.R.T.S. families ONLY** – **Do** utilize our carpool system (details provided upon registration).

Don't:

- **Don't** walk down the middle of the driveway or the neighbors' courtyard, use the sidewalk.
- **Don't** park on the Academy parking pad or next to the building (this is reserved for Academy staff).
- **Don't** park in the U-shaped drive north of our building off of Lake St., this is our neighbors private property (you may be towed).
- **Don't** arrive earlier than 5 minutes before class dismissal to pick up your child – to help prevent a traffic pileup with overlap of arriving and dismissing students.

A.R.T.S. Calendar 2026-27

Sept. 18 – Playdate in Lindbergh Park following preschool dismissal

Oct. 13 & 14 - Fire Drills

Oct. 23 – Playdate in Scoville Park following preschool dismissal

Oct. 28 & 29 – A.R.T.S. Halloween celebration

Nov. 23 & 24 – A.R.T.S. Conferences

Nov. 23 - 27 – No A.R.T.S. Classes

Nov. 26-29 - No School - Academy Closed Thanksgiving

Dec. 21 – Jan. 3- Winter Break

Jan. 18 - Martin Luther King Day - Academy Closed

Feb. 10 & 11 – A.R.T.S. Valentine Exchange

Mar. 22 – A.R.T.S. Evaluations mailed out to parents

Mar. 29 - April 4 - Spring Break - Academy Closed

May 20 – A.R.T.S. Recognition Day/Last Day of ARTS