



Family Handbook

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Basic Information

- Give tuition to director before the 1st of the month
- Your child must be picked up by 12 (noon)
- If your child is sick they cannot come to school
- Please tell us if your child is sick or will be absent for any reason (text the teacher or email classroom@globalrootsplayschool.org)
- We close when the public school is closed or delayed due to snow
- First days of school:
 - Stay with your child for at least 4 days.
 - The teachers will let your child play. Please let them explore the room and engage with other people as they are comfortable.
 - As your child gets more comfortable with the room and other children the teachers may start to play with them more.
 - We will talk after 4 days to make a plan.
 - You cannot leave until we have all forms signed and turned in.
 - When you first leave the teachers need to be able to reach you by phone so you can come back quickly if your child needs you.

Part 1: Important Information and Policies

Tuition

In the United States, most small schools for children under age 5 are funded only by the tuition that is charged to families.

Global Roots Play School is committed to being affordable to all families so we provide scholarships with a sliding scale to all families. To do this, Ithaca Welcomes Refugees and Global Roots raises funds through public fundraisers, grants from foundations, and donations from people in the Ithaca community.

Your help in determining a fair tuition rate for your family to pay is greatly appreciated.

Please pay your agreed upon tuition to director Bronwyn before the first day of the month. If you are unable to pay for any reason, please talk to the director.

If you need a receipt, please tell us and we can give you one.

Enrollment Policy

If you will be withdrawing before the end of the year or plan an extended absence please let director Bronwyn know as soon as possible.

Snow Days/Emergency Closings

Global Roots Play School will close for snow days when Ithaca City School District closes or delays.

Drop-off and Pick-up

The outside doors are always locked. The teachers will give you the code to open them on the first day of school. Please be sure not to let anyone you don't know in. If someone does come in, tell a teacher.

Do not park in the spaces in front of the building that say "No Parking." You may get a ticket. Aurora Street between Farm St and the building has 2 hour free parking. If you need to park more than 2 hours Linn st has all-day parking.

You can bring your child to school any time after 9:00 and must pick them up by 12:00.

We are only allowed to be open for 3 hours and **it is very important that you arrive to pick your child up on time.** If your child will be absent please inform us before class starts. You can send us an email at classroom@globalrootsplayschool.org or call us at (607) 398-0467.

Only people you have authorized will be allowed to pick your child up. The teachers may ask them for identification.

Sick/illness/COVID policy

If you, your child or anybody in your home is sick follow these steps:

1. **Keep your child home.**
2. When symptoms go away, take a COVID test. Stay home until test results are negative and everyone is healthy.
3. If your test is positive continue to stay home and tell Bronwyn director@globalrootsplayschool.org
4. Return to school only after symptoms are gone and COVID test is negative.

If a close contact* of a member of your household has COVID:

5. Stay home for at least 6 days.
6. Take a COVID test 6 days after you were exposed

7. If anyone in your household develops symptoms at any time, keep your child home and follow the **"If you, your child or anybody in your home is sick "** instructions above.

*A close contact is a person who was less than 6 feet away from you for 15 minutes or more. This includes anyone who lives in your house and classmates.

Symptoms you must keep your child home for:

- they have had a fever (oral temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater) in the last 24 hours.
- they are too sick to participate in school activities
- they have lethargy (very sleepy), difficulty breathing or signs of serious illness
- they have vomited or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- they have begun treatment for a contagious illness within the last 24 hours
- they have a bad cold (runny nose that is yellow or green and productive cough)

If your child is diagnosed with any of the following diseases, please tell us so we can let other families know. **Please keep them home until they have been symptom free or on antibiotics for 24 hours.**

- Strep
- Coxsackie (Hand Foot and Mouth)
- Staph infection
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Norovirus
- Fifth's disease
- Lice
- Ringworm
- COVID-19
- Any childhood diseases that children are immunized against.

School staff will never tell all school families the name of a child who is sick to protect privacy. We only tell families the sickness that is found in a child at school, so families can watch their own child for signs of sickness.

School staff do not give children medication.

Global Roots requires medical forms filled out for each child by the child's doctor. In accordance with New York State Public Health Law 2164, Global Roots Play School requires that every child who attends GRPS be fully immunized. Exceptions can be made for children who are medically exempt from being vaccinated. New York State does not allow for philosophical exemptions from vaccinations.

For further information about New York State Immunization Law or other healthcare questions contact the Public Health Nurse at 607- 274-6604.

If you do not have health insurance the Ithaca Free Clinic (607-330-1253) can help.

Accidents/Illness at school

If your child is ill or has an accident during school hours, a teacher from the school will call you or your emergency contacts, provide basic first aid, and/or take your child to an emergency room.

We will call you first, then the contacts on your emergency list. For parents who are at ODE, we will call the ODE office if we cannot reach you directly.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

Teachers practice fire drills with children four times a year. In the event of a fire, the staff and children will walk to and exit the building by the front door. If the front door is unsafe, we will exit through the backdoor in the room behind our classroom and go down the fire escape. If it is safe to be in the backyard, we will go to the northwest corner of the playground. A teacher will take attendance. If the backyard is unsafe, we will walk the children to the ODE classrooms on the third floor of the First Presbyterian Church (315 N. Cayuga St) and contact parents from there. We will alert parents through email and phone calls or text messages.

Reporting Misconduct

Ithaca Welcomes Refugees (IWR) and Global Roots Play School (GRPS) want to keep all children safe. IWR does not allow sexual abuse or misconduct in the classroom, on IWR/GRPS property, or during any IWR/GRPS activity.

Corporal punishment (hitting a child) is strictly prohibited by any staff member, volunteer, or parent at Global Roots Play School. We respect children and their bodies. Any acts which frighten, demean or humiliate a child are prohibited.

Reporting Procedure

Any parent, volunteer, staff member, Board member, or community member who suspects that any person from IWR or Global Roots Play School has been sexually abusing or mistreating a child should report this directly to the IWR Board Chair

Doug Stayman

dms43@cornell.edu

As a parent, if you suspect child abuse, you do not have to directly confront or speak to the person who you believe is abusing a child before notifying IWR leadership.

Investigation

Ithaca Welcomes Refugees will take all allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct seriously and will promptly, thoroughly and equitably respond to determine whether misconduct has taken place. The organization may utilize an outside third-party to conduct an investigation of misconduct.

Ithaca Welcomes Refugees is committed to following the state and federal legal requirements for reporting allegations or incidents of sexual abuse or misconduct to appropriate law enforcement and child or adult protective services organizations.

Part 2: About Global Roots Play School

A Note on Separation and Starting School

Starting school is both exciting and scary for young children. Children can feel safe in a new classroom environment and with new people if they see that their parents are comfortable in the environment, too. If the children see their parents anxious to leave too early, it can make them nervous and take longer to feel comfortable. The fastest way to get your child comfortable (and for you to get to class!) is to relax and enjoy the classroom with them. The teachers at ODE know and understand that you need to help your child before you come to school.

We welcome parents to stay in the classroom for as long as it takes for your child and family to feel comfortable. We look forward to building a relationship with you based in trust and mutual learning.

We recommend bringing a **stuffed animal** or other special object from home for your child, and we ask each family to provide family photos for us to hang on the classroom wall. We ask parents to provide some **important words in the child's home language** to help teachers communicate with each child. These comforting reminders of home can help children to feel more confident separating and saying goodbye for the morning.

You know your child best, please let us know how we can support you and your child with the transition to a new environment.

- Stay with your child for at least 4 days.
- The teachers will let your child play. Please let them explore the room and engage with other people as they are comfortable.
- As your child gets more comfortable with the room and other children the teachers may start to play with them more.
- We will talk after 4 days to make a plan.
- You cannot leave until we have all forms signed and turned in
- When you first leave the teachers need to be able to reach you by phone so you can come back quickly if your child needs you.

A Day at Global Roots

Children can arrive anytime after 9. We start the day in the classroom or outside. Children play guided by their own interests and the invitations of classmates. They are given time to explore their interests and relationships deeply, without a schedule imposed on them.

We offer books in many languages, open art supplies, blocks, cars, a water table and many other toys.

A healthy vegetarian snack is offered around 10 or when the children ask for it. We help them to invite the rest of their classmates.

We then often go to play in the gym or outside where children are picked up by 12.

Social-Emotional Learning

Global Roots Play School is a safe, nurturing place. It is a place to learn, play, and form relationships. The teachers are warm, loving, protective and supportive and help the children in the hard work of making friends, learning independence and navigating conflict.

For most children, this is the first time they experience being in a classroom. Young children are just beginning to develop social awareness, self-regulation, and the ability to communicate verbally instead of physically. Social-emotional learning is at the core of what we do at Global Roots Play School.

The most important work of children this age is to learn how to work together and be part of a community.

Teachers are there to support children when they navigate strong emotions, conflicts, and distress. **These behaviors are a way children this age communicate.** While teachers do

address socially unacceptable behavior (such as hitting, pushing, or shouting) and redirect children to more acceptable behavior, we go beyond simply responding to the behavior and try to understand the deeper underlying feelings and needs that each child has and the support they need to navigate through them.

We help children to develop self-awareness by connecting their behaviors to their thoughts and feelings. We do this by talking openly about conflicts and big emotions that come up in the classroom, often using pictures to communicate with children.

Global Roots teachers view conflicts as learning opportunities, and rather than separating two children when they have a conflict, we aim to allow children to learn from conflicts by giving them a safe space to experience their emotions and guiding them toward communicating effectively with one another. In this way we help prepare children for their next experience beyond our small classroom and give them foundational tools they will need to succeed as they grow.

Teaching Philosophy and Practice

Our approach is founded on the following core beliefs:

We believe that children are capable. While providing a safe and supportive classroom, we leave room for the children to make decisions and take control of themselves and their environment. Materials are kept on low shelves so that children can choose what they want to play with on their own. Their exploration leads to mastery, and we strive to let that process unfold as naturally as possible.

We believe that children are unique learners. Our role as educators and caregivers is to support their discovery process. We provide a well-rounded array of materials for children to explore and we act as guides to extend children's thinking. We meet all children where they are developmentally.

We believe that children learn through relationships. We form trusting relationships with children by providing a safe, inviting, and predictable environment, and by providing warm and empathetic care. We support children's complex emotions and value their life experiences. We support children as they develop relationships with one another and we give them space to explore interactions at their own pace.

We believe that play is essential. Play is the natural mechanism for learning, and as teachers we encourage and nurture playful interactions among children, as well as with staff and family. Much of the work of nurturing play is spent observing and providing opportunities.

We are part of a community caring for children. We believe that diversity enriches the lives of all. Global Roots is a community with many origins, cultures, ethnicities, languages, and customs, and we are grateful to be a part of our expanding community.

Parent and Family Involvement

Global Roots Play School values all families and welcomes parents to be part of our classroom community. Family members can **visit and stay in the classroom as much as they want to**. We have had parents who stay in the classroom for the entire year with their children and others who have volunteered once a week throughout the school year.

At the beginning of the year we hang family photos on our classroom wall. Children are comforted by the presence of their family photos at school, and delight in exploring one another's family photos and showing their family members to teachers and classmates.

Teachers schedule **two parent-teacher conferences** during the school year. These meetings are an opportunity to learn about your child from you, to hear your hopes and dreams for your children, and to listen to any questions or concerns you have about school. It is a chance for teachers to share stories with you about your child's school experience, and to work together to best support your child's growth. Teachers are also available throughout the year for meetings and conversations beyond these two scheduled conferences. We welcome phone calls and emails from parents.

Global Roots values communication with families and we make an effort to share photos and stories from the classroom with parents throughout the year. We also plan family gatherings to come together as a community.

Global Roots Play School Mission and History

Global Roots is a program of Ithaca Welcomes Refugees whose mission is to partner with newly arrived refugees and immigrants as they rebuild their lives in Tompkins County.

History:

Global Roots Play School started in September of 2017 as a project of Ithaca Welcomes Refugees (IWR). IWR is a volunteer-led initiative, founded in December 2015, as a result of collective community reaction to the global refugee crisis. IWR set out to open an early childhood program that would provide child care during Adult ESL classes so that parents could attend class more easily. Global Roots Play School values building an interconnected community, and Ithaca families who do not attend ESL classes are also welcome to enroll.

If you ever have any questions or concerns about Global Roots Play School that you would like to discuss with Ithaca Welcomes Refugees, Casey Verderosa, IWR executive director can be reached at caseyv@ithacawelcomesrefugees.org

Our classroom also welcomes special education service providers including teachers and therapists, and student-teachers from Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College.