



Monkey Tail Gang Afterschool Program

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Schuylkill Center Afterschool Program's purpose is to improve children's quality of life through increased access to nature, extending and enriching out-of-school-time learning activities, unstructured free play in the out of doors and increased physical activity. By just having kids in nature and exploring their own natural curiosity, we are fostering more environmentally conscious adults.

PHILOSOPHY

The Schuylkill Center Afterschool Program's philosophy asserts that activities involving continued access to nature, in both a structured and unstructured environment, can be as important to children's growth and development as time spent in the classroom. This environment allows children to step out of their comfort zone in a safe atmosphere to explore new fields of interest, invites children to interact with both sibling and friends, allows older participants to become mentors for younger participants and allows children to use their imagination.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Schuylkill Center uses the following guiding principles to establish and ensure high quality, safe programming.

- Schuylkill Center Afterschool staff build and maintain positive relationships with children, families, local schools and each other.
- Program space is welcoming and engaging, allowing children to feel emotionally and physically supported.
- Indoor space is appropriate for the range of activities the program offers and is properly maintained. Ample space is provided such that active indoor play does not impact quiet activities.
- Outdoor space is maintained appropriately for the range of activities the program offers (i.e. hiking, free play at various locations on the property, sports activities). Trails, trees and streams are maintained and kept safe at all times.
- Activities promote personal growth and development in a physically and emotionally supportive environment.
- Program activities are diverse and supportive of all youth regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.
- A healthy snack and physical activity is included in program activities each day.
- Afterschool Program Staff are highly qualified, offered continuous support and opportunities for professional development.
- Constant, interactive supervision of children is crucial and staff to child ratio is maintained at 1:10 or lower.

ACTIVITIES

The Schuylkill Center is committed to offering a safe, engaging, and active afterschool program. Monkey Tail Gang uses both indoor and outdoor space for its program and invites children to explore the natural surroundings in both structured and unstructured free play. Daily outdoor activities may include; hiking, climbing trees (at appropriate heights based on age), exploring streams and ponds, canoeing and

exploring the forest. All safety equipment for specialized activities (canoeing or field trips) is provided and these activities will be communicated to the parents before the day of the program.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Schuylkill Center Afterschool Program staff will accommodate children with special individual needs during all activities, within reason, provided that these needs are communicated to our staff as soon as they are known. Families are encouraged to provide staff with any information that they feel will help the Schuylkill Center support their child. All information will be considered when planning indoor and outdoor activities.

DISCIPLINE

Schuylkill Center Afterschool Program staff will treat each child with respect and set clear expectations and boundaries each day. Children are expected to show respect to their peers and staff, as well as treat the facilities with care. Failure to adhere to these expectations will result in disciplinary action. Frequent disrespect towards peers, staff or property may result in child's dismissal from the Schuylkill Center's Afterschool Program.

PROGRAM HOURS

Monkey Tail Gang begins at the end of the school day and ends at 6:00 pm on days your child's school is in session. Pick-up takes place at the Schuylkill Center's Main Building. Between the hours of 4:00 and 5:00 pm the group is hiking and often away from the main building. Parents and guardians needing to pick their child up between 4:00 and 5:00 pm need to communicate the time they will be picking up to staff prior to that day. Early pick up **MUST** be communicated with a staff member by the parent or guardian. Communication should not be done through the child.

EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS

Half day programs are offered on school early dismissal days. Early dismissal days apply to the day of the week that a participant is registered for the afterschool program. For instance, if a scheduled early release day falls on a Friday and a participant normally attends the afterschool program on Friday, he or she is able to attend the half day program at no extra charge. However, if a child does not normally attend on Fridays, they are welcome to join the half day program for a fee of \$30, for the hours of dismissal time to 6:00 pm, if space is available. In order for our half day programs to be worthwhile, for both staff and your child, we need to have a minimum of three participants for any given early dismissal day. If there will be fewer than three participants on a day that your child's school dismisses early, the half day program will not be held and other arrangements will have to be made. Days when children are off from school (holidays, full-day teacher professional development, etc.) are **NOT** included in the fee schedule.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, Monkey Tail Gang Afterschool Program may be closed. Closures will be posted on the Schuylkill Center's website and social media pages. We will also send out a notification via our one-blast text system. Parents are responsible for checking those sites to determine the status of the program. Because of the nature of the Schuylkill Center's location, please keep in mind that the Center may have to close while schools are still accessible and open.

2. REGISTRATION & FEES

ENROLLMENT

Parents and guardians enrolling their child in Monkey Tail Gang (MTG) must submit registration online using our website. Participation is kept at a 1:10 educator-student ratio. In the event that the program is filled to capacity a waitlist will be formed on a first come, first serve basis.

FEES

The Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education is a non-profit organization funded by program fees, membership, donations and grants. The Schuylkill Center reserves the right to increase Monkey Tail Gang afterschool program fees as necessary. For questions about MTG program fees please contact the Registrar at (215) 482-7300 ext. 110.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Program fees may be paid in full at the time of registration, or on a monthly basis in ten equal installment payments. If paying on a monthly basis, the first 10% payment is due at the time of registration online. Equal payments will be charged on the 15th day of each month, September through May. Annual tuition is based on 38-week enrollment and is not affected by absences due to illness, family vacations, snow days, power outages or other days off.

Sibling Discount: Siblings will receive a 10% discount on their annual tuition.

Refunds: Deposit payments are nonrefundable after August 30.

CANCELLATIONS

If a student's registration in the afterschool program or van transportation needs to be cancelled, or if their schedule should change during the school year, the Schuylkill Center must receive written notice thirty days before that change takes effect, in order to prorate fees accordingly. Fees for the previously registered schedule will continue to apply for thirty days from receipt of that written notice. The Director of Education at the Schuylkill Center must approve all changes or refunds.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

If changes in a child's weekly schedule are requested, we will try to accommodate the family, however, we may not be able to accommodate changes if other days are already full. We can only guarantee space in the days for which you have officially registered. There will be no changes or make-up days in the schedule due to days missed because of illness, vacation, snow days or other school closings under extenuating circumstances.

PAST DUE BALANCES

Any parent with a past due balance with the Schuylkill Center before the start of the next session will not be allowed to register or have children attend until the amount is paid in full. For questions about your bill or past due balances please contact the Registrar at (215) 482-7300 ext. 110.

RETURN DRAFTS OR CHECKS FOR NON-SUFFICIENT FUNDS

Any drafts or checks returned for Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) will be subjected to an additional \$25.00 service charge.

LATE FEES

Monkey Tail Gang educators are scheduled until 6:00 pm each day. Late pick-ups require staff and employees to stay past their scheduled hours. Please respect their time and arrange to have your child picked up no later than 6:00pm. The following late fees apply to families picking up after 6:00pm.

6:00 pm to 6:15 pm
\$1 per minute

6:16 pm to 6:30 pm
\$3 per minute

6:31 pm to 7:00 pm
\$5 per minute

If a child is not picked up by 7:00 pm and no contact has been made with parents/guardians or emergency contact persons, Schuylkill Center staff will contact the proper authorities.

RECEIPTS FOR TAXES

It is the responsibility of the participating family to maintain documentation for end-of-year tax records. The Schuylkill Center does not provide yearly itemized accounts of payments received. The Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education **Federal Tax ID # 23-1654975**

3. DROP-OFF/PICK-UP

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to the Schuylkill Center may be provided by each child's school. Please contact your child's school to arrange transportation to Monkey Tail Gang. The Schuylkill Center does provide limited transportation for Kindergarten participants, as well as, schools that do not provide bus transportation to the Schuylkill Center. Please call us at (215) 482-7300 ext. 110 to inquire about transportation options for your child. Children receiving transportation in Schuylkill Center vehicles will be transported in mini-vans. **If a child is under the age of 8, an appropriate car seat must be provided by the parent or guardian until it is no longer needed.**

Schuylkill Center Staff are not permitted to provide transportation or rides home in their personal vehicles.

CAR SAFETY

Please turn car engines off upon arrival at MTG. Having fewer idling cars improves the air quality around the Schuylkill Center, puts less wear on car engines, increases the fuel economy, and reduces the amount of greenhouse gases. Please support this important environmentally friendly behavior.

SIGNING-IN CHILDREN

Registration information from each session will be used to create weekly attendance sheets. Any changes to a child's daily schedule must be communicated to the Schuylkill Center's Registrar by calling (215) 482-7300 ext. 110 or by emailing scee@schuylkillcenter.org.

SIGNING CHILDREN OUT (RELEASING CHILDREN FROM MONKEY TAIL GANG)

When parents, guardians or other authorized person picks a child up from Monkey Tail Gang a signature is required before the child can be released from the program. Parents and guardians must notify Schuylkill Center staff of any changes to the list of approved adults picking up their child. Children will not be released to unauthorized persons. Children should be picked up and signed out from MTG each day by 6:00 pm at the Schuylkill Center's Main Building.

If you need to pick up your child BEFORE 5pm, this must be communicated directly with staff. Children cannot relay the message on your behalf.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

GENERAL SAFETY MEASURES

The Schuylkill Center follows these guidelines to ensure the safety and security of all children here at the center:

- All cleaning supplies and toxic substances are stored in locked cabinets.
- All exterior doors must be kept locked at all times except for the main entrance and the door to the sensory garden.
- The building is armed with a security system.
- Keeping Track of Kids: Head counts are conducted regularly and staff are positioned throughout groups of children to ensure all children stay together. Staff follow 1:10 staff-child ratios and check-in and out with parents as they drop-off or pick up their child.
- Staff maintain paper records of health and emergency paperwork in a binder for staff to take on outdoor excursions.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Emergency response procedures are in place for: 1. Lost child (onsite or offsite), 2. Lock Down (on property and in facility) 3. Fire 4. Shelter in Place 5. Medical Situation (onsite and offsite), 6. Travel Emergency 7. Hazardous Weather 8. Evacuation 9. Firearm Discharged on Property 10. Person of Potential Danger

Staff receive an annual training in these procedures.

EMERGENCY PLAN PROCEDURES

If an emergency occurs at The Schuylkill Center

1. We determine if it is a life-threatening emergency and then follow the organizations emergency notification plan.
2. If it is life threatening, staff will contact emergency medical services (911).
3. If an injury while at Monkey Tail Gang results in a child to not be able to participate in an activity, we will contact a parent. If staff is unable to reach a parent, they will try the emergency number on file. If staff is also unable to reach the emergency contact, staff will contact the child's physician.

PARENTS MUST KEEP CURRENT EMERGENCY CONTACT NAMES AND NUMBERS IN THE RECORDS.
NOTIFY THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER IMMEDIATELY IF THERE IS ANY CHANGE.

BACKGROUND CLEARANCES

All full-time and part-time staff is required to submit state and federal background clearances as a condition of employment.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Pennsylvania law requires professionals who work on behalf of children (such as teachers and child care center staff) to report child abuse and/or neglect whenever they have reasonable suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect. If a staff person suspects that a child is being emotionally, sexually, or physically abused or neglected, s/he is required by law to directly report their suspicions to ChildLine and then

notify their supervisor that they have made a report. Once a report of suspected abuse and/or neglect has been made, child services determines whether or not to conduct an investigation. Any person can make a report of suspected abuse or neglect by calling ChildLine: 800-932-0313

All Schuylkill Center education staff are required to complete Mandated Reporter Child Abuse training.

SAFE OUTDOOR PLAY

We will be outside in various types of weather while always being aware of the children's health and safety. We follow weather alerts to determine safe temperatures for outdoor play and exploration. To ensure that children are protected in our outdoor space and in various types of weather, we follow these guidelines:

- Parents are asked to send clothing to allow layering for cold weather outside play (appropriate snow boots and snow suits will be essential for outdoor play during winter play in colder conditions)
- Educators will ensure that all children have dry clothing when going outside in cold weather.
- Educators and Schuylkill Center staff will maintain trails and keep them free from hazards.
- Educators will carry cell phones on trails.

BRUISES, SCRATCHES AND STINGS

Children in Monkey Tail Gang frequently come home with minor scratches, bumps and bruises as a result of active play outdoors. We treat these minor injuries with soap, water, and bandages for scratches, icepacks for bumps and stings, and loving care. The most common plant and insect hazards are poison ivy (causes an itchy skin rash if allergic), stinging nettle (gives a stinging, tingly sensation when touched, sometimes minor swelling at site) and yellow jacket stings (mostly in the summer). We teach kids how to recognize poison ivy and stinging nettle and do our best to keep the kids from playing near it. We typically do not call parents if their child is stung (unless s/he is allergic or it is the child's first sting), or gets bumps, bruises, or scratches, as they are simply a part of outdoor play, but we do notify parents of the incident at pick-up.

INCIDENT REPORTS

If an accident, injury, or emergency should occur, we aim to learn from that experience, and modify our policies and procedures if necessary. An Incident Report form will be completed and given to parents/families for any accident or incident occurring on our property and/or during one of our programs onsite or offsite. The original report will be given to the family or guardian and a copy will be kept on file with the Director of Education. If an incident occurs which results in an injury to the child's head, the parent will always be notified as soon as possible after the incident, in addition to filling out an incident report.

POACHING ACTIVITY ON THE PROPERTY

As a large, forested property in Philadelphia, we attract some illegal deer hunting activity (poaching) every year. When a poacher is seen on the property, we notify educators and adjust their use of the property according to where the poacher may have been seen/heard. We notify our Game Officer, who investigates poaching activity on the property, and we notify the police as well. If shots are heard, we call 911 and bring all of the children indoors until we have evidence that the property is clear.

Each time there is a poaching related incident on the property during Monkey Tail Gang hours, we will distribute a notification memo to parents during pick-up on the day of the event, and make the memo available for families not present the day of the event. The notification memo will include the nature of the incident, actions taken, and any known outcomes of these actions.

FIRST AID SUPPLIES

The classroom is equipped with a first aid kit. A Monkey Tail staff member will bring this kit as well as participant health history forms and relevant medications (e.g. epi-pen for bee allergy) when the group is out on hikes, excursions or trips.

MEDICATION/ILLNESS

To help avoid the spread of illness, children with a fever, diarrhea or nausea should not attend Monkey Tail Gang. Any child who is out of school or released early from school, due to illness may not attend Monkey Tail Gang that day. Upon notification of a sick child during Monkey Tail Gang, a parent or guardian must pick up their child immediately. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child.

Parents will be contacted to pick up their child if he/she has any of the following:

- Illness that prevents their child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Fever (above 100°F under the arm, above 101°F in the mouth, above 102°F in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – two or more cases of loose stool.
- Vomiting.
- Drooling caused by mouth sores.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.

Children who are ill may return to the program when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin unless: The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and; the involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES NOTIFICATION

When an enrolled child or an employee of the Center has a (suspected) reportable disease (e.g. chicken pox), a letter will be sent home to all families notifying them of the situation.

ADMINISTERING MEDICATIONS

The “release for administration of medication” section of the registration form must be filled out by each parent or guardian who wishes Schuylkill Center staff to administer medication at any time, for any reason. All medications must be received in the original prescription container with original date and instructions. Medications will be kept in staff medical kits if appropriate (epi-pens, inhalers, etc.) or in a locked medicine cabinet. When medication, prescription or over-the counter, is to be administered to a child during the program, we ask that the following steps be taken:

1. Written orders from a physician giving the name of the drug, dosage, when the medication is to be taken, diagnosis and/or the reason the medication is being given. A doctor’s order is required for all medication, prescription or over the counter.
2. Written permission from parent or guardian requesting that the program comply with their physician’s order.
3. Medication is given to staff in an appropriately labeled pharmacy container and/or over the counter medication in its original container as purchased. In either case, the parent, guardian or family member should bring the medication to one of the Monkey Tail Gang staff. The Monkey Tail Gang Staff will look for the right name, right medicine, right dosage, right time and right route of administration.

LYME DISEASE PREVENTION

Parents and staff receive information prior to the program about Lyme disease and the risk associated with our programs. Parents are provided with an information sheet and pictures of what to look for. Staff conducts tick checks with the children after walks, hikes, and at the end of the day. Parents are an essential part of reducing the risk of Lyme’s disease. Make tick checks a daily routine, i.e. after returning home from school or before bedtime. Use a headlamp or flashlight to find and spot ticks.

LICE POLICY

When a case of head lice is identified in a Monkey Tail Gang participant, the following steps will be followed to minimize further spread and assist in elimination of the problem:

1. The child will be sent home to be treated by the parents, who should consult with their physician.
2. All children in the class, siblings, and anyone else who may have been in close contact with the child should be examined for lice.
3. Written notice will be sent home to the parents and families of the Monkey Tail Gang informing them that a case of head lice has been identified in the class. Parents will be asked to assist by performing regular inspections of the child’s head to reduce spread of the lice.
4. The classroom will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Additionally, any sources of potential infestation such as mats or pillows will be disinfected or removed from the classroom.
5. According to the National Pediculosis Association, no pediculicide (lice treatment) is 100% effective at killing nits (eggs). Therefore, to prevent further infestation, treatment at home must include removal of all lice and their associated nits before returning to the program.
6. Prior to returning to class, the child should be examined by Monkey Tail staff to determine the child is free from lice and nits. If the child still has lice, he or she will be sent home from school to have them removed by the parents.

7. For additional information visit:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/factsht_head_lice.htm

FOOD ALLERGIES

Many children have food allergies. The prevalence of peanut and tree nut allergies in children, the most serious of food allergies, has doubled in the past five years. A life threatening reaction called Anaphylaxis can occur even with the slightest exposure to an allergen. If a child has a food allergy, parents must let staff know and make note of it in the health history form. The Schuylkill Center is NOT a peanut free zone. All snacks provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are peanut free. However, some food may have been manufactured in a warehouse that DOES have peanuts. There will be a peanut free table for children with allergies and wanting to bring their own snack. Parents are also welcome to pack a snack for their child.

5. THE STAFF/FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

COMMUNICATION

Staff work hard to create a collaborative environment where educators work in partnership with families and maintain regular, two-way communication. Written, email and phone communication are important in establishing good communication. Staff deliver a monthly newsletter highlighting Monkey Tail Gang's adventures and strive to get to know each family and make sure that they feel connected to our staff and the Schuylkill Center.

We use Kikutext for one-blast texts to all enrolled families of important, time sensitive information, such as emergency situations and weather-related closings. Therefore, it is important that your family sign up for Kikutext messaging. Staff will provide you with information on how to enroll.

Please feel free to share any ongoing information about your child, as well as ideas to support your child's learning. Staff strive to work collaboratively with parents to find solutions that can be incorporated into the program. Pick-up is not always the best time to talk with staff as it is a busy place, please schedule a meeting with the staff at any time to engage them in a discussion about your child.

FAMILY GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

In daily communication with families, staff strive to resolve issues that may come up. However, if at any time a parent feels that an issue has not been addressed or resolved and it may need to be pursued further, staff are here to support that process.

It is essential that parents and families are heard when they raise a concern. The early identification and communication of a concern and prompt initiation of a resolution can help avoid further problems. All parent concerns should be addressed initially at the level closest to the event in an effort to come to a resolution. If a parent still has a question, concern or issue, the following steps will help facilitate the problem solving process:

- First, speak with the Public Programs Coordinator.
- If unsatisfied, speak with the Manager of Public Programs, 215-482-7300 x140
- If still unsatisfied, you should contact the Director of Education (Aaliyah Green Ross, 215-482-7300 ext. 129)

SCHUYLKILL CENTER MEMBERSHIP

The Schuylkill Center encourages families to become a member of the Schuylkill Center. Being a member is the best way to stay informed on events and happenings at the Center and members also receive unique benefits, including:

- Free and/or discounted admission to many programs and events
- Quarterly newsletter (The Quill) with calendar of programs and events
- 10% discount at our gift shop, 10% discount at our native plant sales and 20% discount on seasonal bird seed sales
- Exclusive invitations to member-only events, like the Native Plant Sale preview, where members receive a free plant

- Ability to rent community garden plots
- Free or discounted admission at nature centers across America
- \$20 per week discount on summer camps and the opportunity to register early
- Ability to host a birthday party in the nature center with an educator

PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER

The Schuylkill Center is a place with many programs, events and opportunities available for parents and families to grow with our after-school program. When parents extend their talents, time, and participate outside of daily after-school life, they become connected with the Schuylkill Center and the collaborative community. This is a wonderful way to build meaningful relationships between parents, families, children, educators, and other people in our community.

6. ABOUT US

STAFF

Barbara Baumgartner, Naturalist-Educator

Since 2007, Barbara Baumgartner has been a camp counselor for our four and five year old camps and has worked as an after school mentor/educator with Monkey Tail Gang. In addition to her love of kids and being outdoors, Barbara brings her 30 years' experience as a Children's Librarian and Library Administrator with the Free Library of Philadelphia, and her long career as a storyteller and writer. She began her career as a counselor many years ago at Camp Arrowhead near Rehoboth, DE. Barbara has a B.A. from Oberlin College, an MLS from Drexel University, and a PhD (in Storytelling and Education) from Union Institute and University. She is also the author of four children's books, all of them retellings of folktales from various cultures. The most well-known of her books is *Crocodile! Crocodile! Stories Told Around the World*, Dorling Kindersley, 1994.

Eduardo Duenas, Lead Environmental Educator

Eduardo Duenas' interests are in education and environmental studies. Eduardo has a Master's Degree in Environmental Management & Sustainable Development (April 2014 Universidad La Salle, San Jose, Costa Rica) and a Bachelor of Science in Ecotourism. Eduardo is bilingual, speaking both Spanish & English. Before he obtained the position of lead environmental educator, Eduardo worked as a Schuylkill Center Seasonal Educator for after-school and community outreach programs. He also worked with guided group programs at the Schuylkill Center and was involved in the development of new CUSP community partnership in July 2016. Eduardo also served as a volunteer for environmental education programs, Land Restoration and Toad Detour shift manager. Eduardo's other interests include music, travel, soccer, arts and environmental conservation.

Eduardo@schuylkillcenter.org

Susan Marcossan, Naturalist-Educator

Ms. Marcossan has been working as a mentor/educator with our after school program and summer camps since 2004. Prior to joining Schuylkill Center staff, Ms. Marcossan was a part-time environmental educator with Awbury Arboretum from 2000 to 2008. She is also an advisor at Villanova University for the Cultural Film and Lecture Series Program. Ms. Marcossan graduated from Miami Norland High School in Miami Florida.

Aaliyah Green Ross, Director of Education

aaliyah@schuylkillcenter.org; xt. 129

Aaliyah Green Ross guides the growth and development of the Schuylkill Center's education department. She has over 13 years of experience in environmental education, with particular interests in herpetology, general ecology, geology, wetlands, and urban watersheds. Before joining the Schuylkill Center in March 2017, Aaliyah spent nearly ten years as an environmental educator at the Phinizy

Center for Water Sciences in Augusta, Georgia. Aaliyah received a B.S. in Animal Sciences from Rutgers University in 2004, and a M.S. in Ecology from the University of Georgia's Odum School of Ecology in 2007.

ABOUT THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER

Founded in 1965, the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE) was this country's first major metropolitan nature center. Today, the Schuylkill Center remains this nation's premier "living laboratory" for environmental education in an urban setting. The Center is located on a bio-diverse nature preserve of 340-acres in the Roxborough section of Philadelphia – the largest privately owned green space in the City – and its four interrelated program areas are Environmental Education, Environmental Art, Land Restoration, and Wildlife Rehabilitation. Our campus includes a six-mile trail system with aquatic study platforms, a public Visitors Center, and the Schuylkill Wildlife Clinic, which treats and houses about 3,500 sick, injured and orphaned wild animals annually.

The Schuylkill Center is Greater Philadelphia's primary source of K-12 environmental education programs and teacher trainings. Our new Nature Preschool and a wide menu of after-school, summer camp, and recreational programs provide urban children with important exploration and playtime in nature. An added variety of hikes, wild animal demonstrations, festivals, and other public programs serve birders, outdoor enthusiasts, families, and adults of all ages. Exclusive to this region, our Environmental Art program is the only one of its kind on the grounds of a nature center, creating site-specific artworks, artist-led walks and talks, and unique cultural experiences for diverse audiences. All told, the Schuylkill Center hosts 34,000 visitors per year, and our school and public programs serve 20,000 people annually.

7. APPENDIX A

Schuylkill Center Policy on Play *

The Schuylkill Center advocates playing outdoors as integral to children's enjoyment of their lives, their health and their development. Children and young people of all abilities, cultures, ethnicities or social and economic backgrounds, need and want to play outdoors in whatever way they can.

Through play, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them. (Play England)

The Schuylkill Center operates in accordance with the Playwork Principles:

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. The role of our staff is to support all children and young people in the creation of space in which they can play.
5. Our staff response to children and young people playing is based on current knowledge of play process and reflective practice.
6. Our staff recognize their own impact on the play space and the impact of children and young people's play on the staff.
7. Our staff choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All staff intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

The Schuylkill Center property offers varied and interesting environments that stimulate social, physical, creative, emotional and intellectual play. The natural setting includes the provision of diverse and dynamic natural habitats and play spaces with a range of objects and materials (loose parts) that children can select to develop their own play.

Schuylkill Center staff plan activities and provide resources that are based on children's interests and supports individual children's needs to ensure all children enjoy themselves.

Schuylkill Center staff recognize the importance of free play with minimal intervention while keeping children safe from harm.

By following the “Best Play” objectives, the Schuylkill Center aims to:

1. Extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
2. Recognize the child’s need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need.
3. Manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
4. Maximize the range of play opportunities.
5. Cultivate independence and self-esteem.
6. Foster children’s respect for others and offer opportunities for social interaction.
7. Support the child’s wellbeing, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

Schuylkill Center staff carefully observes play and consults with children and parents about the provision of outdoor play in a variety of ways on a regular basis.

The Schuylkill Center supports staff to undertake playwork training and to keep up to date with developments in playwork.

The Schuylkill Center regularly evaluates practices and resources.

Supporting Documents

Best Play: what play provision should do for children (NPFA, Children’s play council and PLAYLINK 2000)

Playwork Principles (Penny Wilson)

Making it Happen: Implementing the Charter for Children’s Play (NCB Play England 2009)

A Taxonomy of Play Types (Bob Hughes, Play Link 2nd edition 2002)

The First Claim: A Framework for Playwork Quality Assessment (Bob Hughes, 2001)

*policy modeled after several play policies from the UK