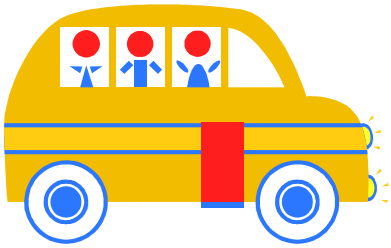
**ARTS**
**READINESS**
**TRAINING**
**SCHOOL**

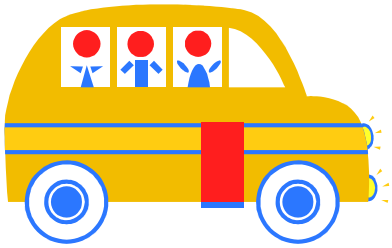
# Academy Arts

# Parent Handbook 2008-2009

***A*cademy of *M*ovement & *M*usic**
**605 Lake Street • Oak Park, Illinois 60302 • 708•848•2329 • fax 708•848•2391**

www.academyofmovementandmusic.com





# TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

1. **Traffic is ONE WAY on Bishop Quarter Lane!** Enter Bishop Quarter Lane (second lane west of East Avenue on North Boulevard); exit Bishop Quarter Lane by continuing along U drive and turning onto North Boulevard.

2. **THERE IS NO PARKING next to our building or in front of the garages.** These spaces are reserved for faculty and staff. Even if you are coming in for "just a minute" - **park only on Lake Street, East Avenue, or in the metered slots on North Boulevard.**

3. **You may wait <u>for five minutes or less</u> in your car along the sidewalk on Bishop Quarter Lane.** You may not park or leave your car in this area. Do not wait on our neighbors' driveways or in front of them. You will be towed!

4. We do have Academy staff available at certain times to help greet young children and escort them to and from the building.

5. **When walking your child into the building, please use the sidewalk**, not our neighbors' driveways, grassy areas or Bishop Quarter Lane.

6. **Never park in the u-shaped drive in front of our building off of Lake Street. <u>You will be towed</u>!!**

7. **Failure to comply with these regulations may result in your child's dismissal from the Academy.**

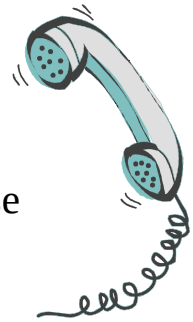
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

# Academy A.R.T.S. Calendar 2008-2009

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **September** | **3** | Parent Orientation 7:30 PM |
| | **4** | A.R.T.S. Open House |
| | **8** | Classes Begin |
| | **12** | A.R.T.S. Door Greeting Begins |
| | **21** | Parent/Child Workshop/Get-together |
| | | Morning Classes 1:00-2:30 PM |
| | | Afternoon Classes 3:00-4:30 PM |
| **October** | **29** | Fall Masquerade |
| | **30** | Fall Masquerade |
| **November** | **3** | Open Observations Begin |
| | **6** | Upstairs A.R.T.S. Performance 9:30 AM, 1:30 PM |
| | **21, 24, 25** | A.R.T.S. Conferences 8:00-3:30 PM - **No A.R.T.S. Classes** |
| | **26-28** | **Thanksgiving Recess** |
| **December** | **22** | **Winter Recess Begins** |
| **January** | **5** | **Classes Resume** |
| | **13** | 2009-2010 Registration Begins for Current A.R.T.S. Families |
| | **27** | 2009-2010 Registration Opens to All Academy Families |
| **February** | **7** | A.R.T.S. Sock Hop 6:00-7:30 PM |
| | **8** | 2009-2010 Open Registration Begins |
| | **10, 11, 12** | Valentine Exchange |
| | **12** | Upstairs A.R.T.S. Performance 9:30 AM, 1:30 PM |
| | **17** | Summer A.R.T.S. Pre-Registration - Current A.R.T.S. Families |
| **March** | **2** | **No A.R.T.S. Classes/Teachers Institute Day** |
| | **18, 19** | Picture Days (Class Pictures) |
| | **30** | **Spring Break Begins** |
| **April** | **6** | **Classes Resume** |
| | **16** | Upstairs A.R.T.S. Performance 9:30 AM, 1:30 PM |
| **May** | **20, 21** | Recognition Days 9:30 AM, 1:30 PM ~ **Last Days of School** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **June** | **15** | Summer Session Begins – 7 Weeks |

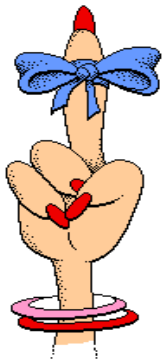
## ABSENCES/ILLNESSES



**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
- if you are going to be early or late picking up your child
- if you have problems or questions

## REMINDERS



**1. 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.

**2. DO NOT** use your child's backpack to transport any medication from home to your child's after school day care destination. If necessary, we will be happy to keep such items in the office for you.

**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 containing any peanuts or peanut products into the school. Please see page 1 for details.

**5. 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.

**6. DO** check your child's backpack on a daily basis for important A.R.T.S. communications, artwork, etc.

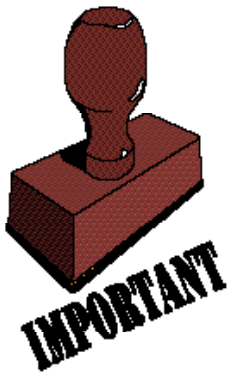
## PEANUT POLICY

**THE ACADEMY IS A PEANUT -FREE ZONE**
**PLEASE READ AND OBSERVE CAREFULLY**

***This may seem like an unusual first page to our A.R.T.S. Parent Handbook, but because we feel this is such an important issue we have chosen to begin our Handbook by addressing it.*** We have students at the Academy with life-threatening allergies to **PEANUTS** and all **PEANUT PRODUCTS**. These students must avoid these foods and foods containing these substances. Please do not bring in any treats on any occasion that contain any of the following ingredients:

PEANUT OIL
GROUND NUTS
MIXED NUTS
NUTS
NU-NUTS FLAVORED NUTS
PEANUTS
PEANUT BUTTER
PEANUT FLOUR
M & Ms (PLAIN OR PEANUT)
CHOCOLATE CANDIES AND CANDY BARS
HYDROLYZED PLANT PROTEIN
HYDROLYZED VEGETABLE PROTEIN
MARZIPAN
NOUGAT
AFRICAN, CHINESE AND THAI DISHES
EGG ROLLS

***Please be sure to read labels!***




We appreciate your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please call Stephanie at the Academy at 708-848-2329.

# YOUR CHILD'S DAY

## DOWNSTAIRS A.R.T.S.

Children in the Downstairs A.R.T.S program are divided by age into four different groups -- red, blue, green and yellow, with the yellows the youngest. Generally, the age range within a group is no more than six months.

There are three classrooms downstairs. Studio I is used for Creative Movement. The Yellow group begins in this room every day. Studio II is the Physical Fitness room. The Green group starts here each day. Studio III is the Art, Music, Montessori classroom. This is where both the Blue and the Red groups begin their day.

Creative Movement and Physical Fitness are each half hour classes; the children spend a full hour in the Art, Music, Montessori classroom.

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 Physical Fitness class also works on basic motor skills with more emphasis on upper body work. One or two days a week may have a special activity using ropes, balls or a parachute. The other days usually have a circuit of activities.

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 and green circle with a variety of building materials to share. Children generally participate in art projects on Monday and Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday generally incorporate special projects and practical life exercises. The hour of activities concludes with music on the green circle.

During the course of the year we work on thematic units that usually last about three weeks. Items in our green circle, imaginative play area, books, puzzles, some shelf work, art and music vary with each theme.

Snack, usually consisting of graham crackers or pretzels and apple juice or water, is served halfway through the morning/afternoon. Before snack the children wash their hands then change classes.

The teacher/child ratio varies from room to room. There is one teacher and an aide in Creative Movement and one teacher and an aide in the Physical Fitness class. Three teachers are always present in the Art, Music, Montessori classroom. There are also one to two “floating aides” who assist children with hand washing and bathroom needs. These aides also assist in the classrooms as needed and are actively involved in the greeting and dismissal procedures.

Children 3 1/2 (by September 1) and older are eligible to participate in our Friday Montessori program that is held in our large open classroom upstairs.

## UPSTAIRS A.R.T.S.

Children in Upstairs A.R.T.S. begin their day by climbing the long flight of stairs upstairs to the big classrooms. The teachers greet your child. They are directed to a special area where they remove their coats and change their shoes. Once in their school shoes, the children do a daily calendar activity and then are free to choose work from the activity cabinet or to run and move about the yellow circle. To end this free time, a teacher rings a bell signaling the children to put their work away. The Orange Group (younger children) will then go to the West gym as the Purple group begins their day in the East gym.

Each day Upstairs has different activities, with each class lasting about 45 minutes. Depending on the activity and the day, the teacher/student ratio varies Upstairs, but is usually about 1:6. Like in Downstairs A.R.T.S, snack, usually consisting of graham crackers or pretzels and apple juice or water, is served halfway through the morning/afternoon. Before snack, the children wash their hands. After snack, the groups change classes.

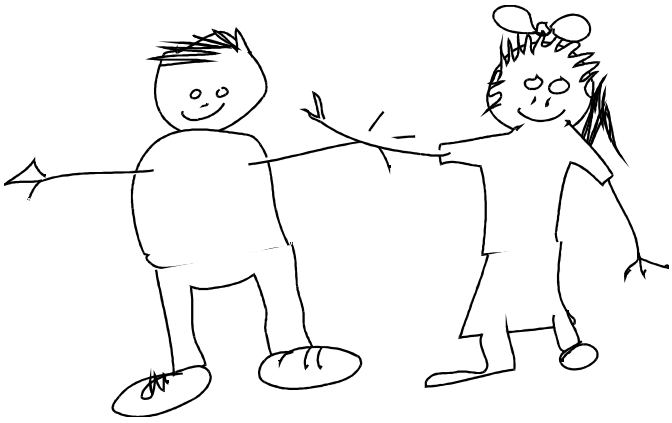
Mondays and Wednesdays are experience oriented. Mondays consist of an art and a creative movement class, each lasting about 45 minutes. Wednesdays are for literature and physical fitness. Literature allows the children to informally act out some favorite stories.

Tuesdays and Thursdays are performance oriented. During the school year, four “units” or "themes" are presented. All classes explore activities and ideas built around these themes with a performance that ends each unit. On Tuesdays, the children have Music and Production Shop -- an art class that creates sets, props and sometimes costumes for each performance. Thursday’s children work in Dance and Cultural Awareness. Here they will learn songs, dances and customs from around the world.

Friday is a special day Upstairs at the Academy. Some older children (3 1/2 and up) from Downstairs A.R.T.S. join Upstairs students to work in the large open space. The space is set up with special activity areas that include Montessori practical life and sensorial work, science, language, math, puzzle solving and construction materials. There are also weekly special projects that might include cooking or flower arranging.

At the end of each day, the children change shoes, put on outerwear and are led down the back stairs to the main hallway where they are dismissed.

# CLOTHING FOR SCHOOL



## • CASUAL, LOOSE-FITTING CLOTHING •

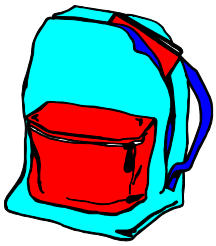
• Simple shorts, leggings, or sweat pants with a T-shirt or sweatshirt work best. Dresses get in the way during our more active classes. If dresses are a must for your preschooler, they need to be worn over leggings, bike shorts, or tights. No jewelry please as this also gets in the way. Our art experiences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

• **Upstairs A.R.T.S.** – dresses **may not** be worn on **Wednesday**, which is Physical Fitness Day.

## • 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. Upstairs children will leave their ballet slippers at school**.** If your child is taking a separate ballet class or Boys Production Workshop during the week we will see that their ballet slippers are waiting for them at their class.

## • SCHOOL BAGS •



• It is strongly recommended that each child in **Downstairs A.R.T.S.** bring a small backpack in which to carry ballet slippers, (optional: change of clothing), art work, and correspondence to and from school. ***Please do not send toys, food, or meds in your child's backpack.*** Please label it with your child's name.

• Backpacks are not needed in **Upstairs A.R.T.S.**

## • HAIR •

• Girls' 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. The Academy has several sets of T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweat pants, leggings, underwear and socks. The aides will change your child's clothing and send home the soiled clothing in a plastic bag. Just wash and return the Academy clothes the next time your child comes to school. If your child is very uncomfortable wearing unfamiliar clothing, keep an alternative set of clothes in your child's backpack.

## • 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, outer garments and backpacks 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.

## • PERFORMANCE CLOTHING •

• Those children enrolled in the performance component (Tuesdays and Thursdays) of the Upstairs A.R.T.S. are **required to have** the following uniform clothing for our seasonal shows:

• girls - white long sleeved scoop neck leotard, pink tights, black sweat pants and pink leather ballet slippers.

• boys - long sleeved white turtleneck shirt or turtleneck leotard, black sweat pants and black leather ballet slippers.

# DROP OFF/PICK UP PROCEDURES

## *Safety Restraints*

We are required to follow Illinois law regarding car seats and safety restraints. Greeters cannot put a child in a car lacking these mandatory safety devices. Please walk in to get your child until you have safety restraints appropriate for your child's age and weight.

Drop off and Pick up procedures begin the second week of regular classes. Prior to that, please allow time to park on the street and walk into the building.

**Please do not drop children off prior to 10 minutes before classes begin. AM begins at 8:45. PM begins at 12:45.**

## • DROP OFF PROCEDURE •

• There is a greeter to escort children into the building from 10 minutes before the start of class to 10 minutes after.

• Drive up to the utility pole far enough so that two cars can let off children at the same time.

• Stay in your car and let the greeter get the children out of your car.

• **Please have your children on the passenger side of the car.**

## • DISMISSAL PROCEDURE •

**You may pick up your child by parking on East Ave., Lake Street or the metered slots on North Blvd. and walking into the building or by using our pick up service.**

**If you are coming into the building to pick up your child**:

• **Downstairs A.R.T.S. parents** should line up to the right of the double doors and around the desk area.

• **Upstairs A.R.T.S. parents** should line up to the left of the double doors (along the wall by the office).

• **Please leave a center pathway clear for the children to get through.**

• All the children will be seated in the hall behind the closed double doors. A staff member will ask you your child's name and we will walk your child to you.

• Please clear the entryway as soon as possible after greeting your child to make room for others. The crowding and the noise in this small area can be difficult for some children, as well as the staff trying to call the children.



• We realize that the children are very excited to see you and you are equally excited to hear about their day, but we ask your patience. This procedure allows us to dismiss the children efficiently while keeping everyone safe.

**If you choose to use the pick up service:**

• We have an established Pick Up routine, which you can elect to use. Each child will receive a Pick Up Number assigned by the office. The Pick Up service helps avoid the congestion involved in having sixty parents trying to find separate parking spaces and coming into the building to pick up children.

• ***Please do not arrive 20 minutes early and just sit in line.*** Our neighbors complain and call the police. 5 minutes is maximum.

• A greeter watches at the outer door for the Pick Up Numbers, and then escorts the children to the car.

• **Show your number** when you pull into Academy Drive by holding up your number **outside** the car window.

• **When your child is brought outside you may then pull up to the utility pole.** If you are first in line do not assume that your child will be the first to be brought out. If the last person's child comes out first, that person may drive around the other cars to get their child.

• **Wait in your car.** Do not get out of your car to get your child because this will delay the line.

• **Have your child's car seat on the passenger side of the car.**

**You can help us insure a safe and effective dismissal in these ways:**

• If you need to pick up you child early, call the office to make arrangements.

• Do not park in employee spaces around the building or Bishop Quarter Lane at any time or for any reason.

• Please be sure to walk on the sidewalk along the fence, not on Bishop Quarter Lane or on the condo driveways.

The Academy can release children only to authorized persons – a child's parent(s) or legal guardian. Only the child's parent(s) or legal guardian can authorize another person to pick up a child. Authorizations should be in writing and must be signed by the parent(s) or legal guardian. The Academy has long-term and short-term forms available in the office. The Academy will accept a signed note or letter from a parent or guardian instead of one of the Academy forms. Phoned authorizations will be accepted at the discretion of the Academy office.



## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

You're welcome to celebrate your child's birthday at school. You might even want to consider celebrating a six month birthday if your child has a summer birthday. Some families choose to give a book or small gift to the classroom for all the children to enjoy. Please ask the director for ideas of items the teachers can use.

**• DOWNSTAIRS A.R.T.S. •**

You are invited to bring a treat to share. During the greeting routine, the birthday child is given a special sticker to wear for the day. At snack time the children sing "Happy Birthday" and enjoy your special treat. 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. Pretzels, goldfish crackers, fruit, simple sugar cookies, donut holes, or mini muffins are always enjoyed.* The Yellow and Green groups have snack together. The Red and Blue groups eat separately. 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 or 1:50 PM. You are welcome to join us.

Downstairs A.R.T.S. children who attend Friday, Montessori Day have a few options for celebrating their birthday:

1) You can celebrate their birthday by bringing a special treat to share on the day that they attend Downstairs A.R.T.S. that is closest to their birthday;
2) You can celebrate their birthday on the Friday closest to their birthday with the Friday/Montessori children (see procedure below);

OR

3) You can choose to celebrate both times ~ with Downstairs A.R.T.S. during the week and on Friday with the Montessori Group.

**• UPSTAIRS A.R.T.S. •**

Children who attend Upstairs A.R.T.S. but do not come on Friday, celebrate their birthdays on the school day closest to their birthday. You are invited to bring a treat to share. Snacks are served Monday through Thursday at 9:50 am and 1:50 PM. You are welcome to join us.

Upstairs A.R.T.S. students who do attend on Fridays are asked to celebrate their birthday on the Friday closest to their birthday. Please advise the teacher in advance that your child will be celebrating his/her birthday. Your child is asked to bring photos marking each year of his/her life. Write the child's age on the back of each picture so we can make a time line. We discuss the changes that your child has experienced as he/she has grown. Snack times on Friday are 10:30 am and 2:30 PM. You are welcome to join us.



Children prefer simple snacks; treats with frosting are too messy. They generally like to have seconds and even third helpings of birthday treats. Popcorn, rice cereal treats, butter cookies, donut holes and fruit are always enjoyed**.*** The children all snack together. Check with the director to find out how much to bring.

***Please consult Handbook page 1 for important information concerning food allergies and prohibited snacks.**

## SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS

**• FALL MASQUERADE •**

At the end of October, the A.R.T.S. students celebrate with a class time masquerade. Children are welcome to wear costumes although young children often do not want to. If your child wants to wear a costume, please follow these guidelines:

• **Do not send your child to school in a mask or heavy face paint.** Some of their classmates find masks or heavy face paint very frightening.

• **Do not send your child to school with any weapons.** Toy guns, swords, etc. are best left at home as we strongly discourage this sort of play in our classrooms.

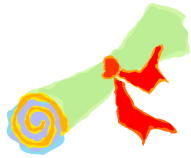
• **Be careful that costumes do not hamper movement**, as children will be participating in movement classes. Sweat suits with a few simple accessories, i.e. removable ears, tails, etc. are good choices. ***Label costume pieces.***

It's fine if your child decides not to wear a costume. We will have some things here for children to put on. Costumes need not be elaborate - a silly hat or a funny shirt can be delightful. Our focus is on children having a good time.

**• VALENTINE'S DAY EXCHANGE •**

We celebrate Valentine's Day in our classrooms. The children bring valentines for each of their classmates. Please help your child sign each valentine, but **DO NOT ADDRESS IT.** The children will enjoy a special holiday snack provided by the PTO.

**• 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.



## 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. Our goal, as educators, is to provide our students with a safe environment where they can, with our guidance, learn self-discipline and self-control. It is our task to present them with choices and actions appropriate for the situations they encounter in our classrooms. When a child chooses an inappropriate behavior – such as interrupting another child's work with educational materials, or trying to sit on another child's mat – a teacher will approach the child and, one-on-one, explain why this choice is inappropriate. With children who are becoming more verbal, teachers help children to use words to express their feelings to each other in cases of conflict or dispute – and to learn to say: "I'm sorry".

Sharing common materials (toys), respecting another's personal space and learning to wait for a turn are all a part of the preschool classroom experience. We help children learn problem-solving skills and to develop "scripts" to deal with classroom social interactions and activities. Occasionally it is necessary to ask a child to sit to the side and to observe and to see for him/herself what the other children are doing; this is a part of the learning process. The teacher may also point out to the observing child what it is that the other children are doing that is appropriate – or by praising the behavior of another child the teacher can motivate others to choose a similar behavior.

As much as possible, we try to help the child with positive directions. In those cases where a child demonstrates dangerous/harmful behavior (i.e. biting or hitting), it is necessary to remove him/her from the situation to another area of the room or out in the hall. This "Time Out" provides the child an opportunity to calm down, regain control, as well as providing the teacher an opportunity to talk with the child. Usually talking about the reasons why the child is feeling so upset and identifying and acknowledging the child's feelings is enough to calm him/her enough to return to the classroom. Rather than view our discipline policy as a negative punishment, we see our task as educators as one where we use constructive interruptions to refocus, redirect and – educate.



# COMMUNICATIONS

## • COMMUNICATIONS •

Please feel free to contact us anytime you have questions, comments or concerns. You can do this by directly asking the director/staff or leaving a message in the office indicating who you'd like to talk with and/or what you'd like to talk about. Both the staff and director are involved with the children during class time, but we will return your call at a time that you indicate is convenient for you.

## • DEANS •

In **Downstairs A.R.T.S.** your child's dean is the teacher of your child's first class. Each of the color groups, yellow, green, blue and red has a dean. Usually your dean will be the teacher to contact you if your child is having any challenges at school.

In **Upstairs A.R.T.S.** the director of the program is the dean for all the students.

## • 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. Baby-sitting 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.



## A.R.T.S. PTO

The A.R.T.S. Programs depend on the contributions of time and talent by parents. We really need you! Your energy adds to the overall success of the program and to your child's enjoyment.

Upon enrolling your child in the A.R.T.S. program, you automatically become a member of the Academy A.R.T.S. PTO. This group is led by a board of officers and room parents who help to facilitate many events throughout the year. They sponsor both the Fall Get-Together in September and the Valentine Sock Hop. They organize special festive snacks for the Fall Masquerade, the Celebration of Lights in December, and Valentine's Day, as well as the refreshments during Parent-Teacher Conferences. In short, they provide many of the "extras" for the A.R.T.S. program.

There is a list of jobs for which the PTO always needs volunteers. We encourage you to become involved in the organization and to sign up for at least one activity. Many of the jobs require mostly phone calling to organize special holiday snacks, etc. and are do-able by working parents or families with infants whose schedules make it difficult to help out during the actual school day. It is a good way to meet other families and to feel a part of your child's preschool experience. It also helps us keep tuition costs down while providing an exciting and enriching environment for your child.

Fill out the volunteer form or talk to the director about what you can do to help out.

## EMERGENCY CLOSING PROCEDURES

The Academy has only closed twice in twenty-five years ~ each time it was 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), your child's dean will telephone you to advise you of the closing. **Do not assume** that if Oak Park Public Schools are closed that the Academy will be closed



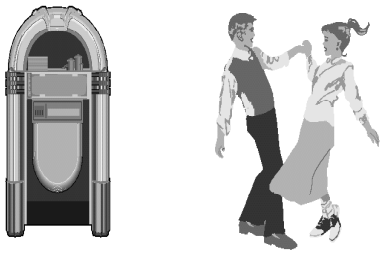
## FAMILY A.R.T.S. ACTIVITIES

### • FALL GET-TOGETHER •

The PTO sponsors a Sunday afternoon get-together in September. It is a great way to renew old friendships and to meet new A.R.T.S. families. This fun-filled afternoon includes a mini-movement workshop with Larry and juice and cookies for all.

### • VALENTINE'S SOCK HOP •

We will have a special family evening of family fun scheduled in February. Parent volunteers help to organize a sock hop for all the A.R.T.S. children and their families. Everyone brings a snack to share. We dance, make valentines and visit with friends. It is a fun and festive evening for the whole family.



## UPSTAIRS A.R.T.S. PERFORMANCES

Upstairs A.R.T.S. children who attend on Tuesday and Thursday over the course of a year will investigate and study four topics in depth. These are explored through a child's perspective with art, dance, literature, music and cultural awareness. Each unit closes with a performance. After the program we celebrate with a special snack. At some point during the year each family is asked to bring something to share. You will be contacted when it is your turn to provide treats.

The children work hard and look forward to presenting their show to an appreciative audience made up of family and friends. Please try to make sure at least one adult in your family is at each performance during the year. It means a great deal to the children.

**The specific details regarding each of these events will be sent home in a timely fashion during the school year.**



# A.R.T.S. Faculty

**Academy Administration**
Stephanie Clemens, Director
Kari Farkvam, Administrative Assistant
Mary Ellen Faust, Business Manager

**A.R.T.S. Administration**
Niki Merrick, Director, Downstairs A.R.T.S. Program
Donna Pries, Director, Upstairs A.R.T.S. Program

**Downstairs Faculty**
Patricia Ackerman, Creative Movement
Judy Bianchi, Physical Fitness, Montessori
Anita Fillmore, Physical Fitness
Philomena Harbaugh, Montessori
Larry Ippel, Creative Movement
Niki Merrick, Music
Ruth Tazelaar, Art

**Upstairs Faculty**
Larry Ippel, Creative Movement, Physical Fitness, Montessori
Mara Leonard, Music
Linda Preston, Montessori
Donna Pries, Art, Cultural Awareness, Literature, Production Shop, and Science
Rebecca Pries, Dance
Marion Steffen, Special Projects

**Classroom Aides**
Julie Burdick
Rosa DePerlinghi
Caroline Deziel
Claire Lombardo
Mary Lou Powell
Rebecca Pries
Sarah Reposh
Beth Seuffert
Gina Sigismondi
Marion Steffen



# ACADEMY A.R.T.S. STAFF BIOS

**Stephanie Clemens**, Director of the Academy of Movement & Music, "founded" the Academy in 1971 in her Oak Park living room when she rolled up the rug and began giving dance lessons to neighborhood children. Since that time the Academy has grown into a real village Institution, home to approximately 1000 students: 200 families in the A.R.T.S. preschool program, the rest in dance and music classes. Stephanie studied dance at Juilliard and took a B.A. in Physical Anthropology at U.C.L.A. where she did research on the evolution of the human locomotor system. Stephanie spends her time at the Academy teaching in the dance division and has developed the Introduction to Ballet program for preschool age children. She is a Co-Director of ***MOMENTA***, the Academy's resident performing company. She has three grown sons, Jason 39, Justin 37 and James-Paul 27, all of whom grew up in Academy classes ~ and three granddaughters – two of whom have been students at the Academy – and a grandson.

**Niki Merrick**, Downstairs A.R.T.S. Director (Music)**,** received her B.S. and M.S. in Speech Pathology from the University of Illinois and has done post graduate work in Early Childhood. She has worked with preschool aged children both as a volunteer (Sunday School teacher/15 years) and as a Speech and Language Pathologist (early intervention/special education programs). She joined the Academy staff in 1988 as a co-teacher in the Physical Fitness room for the Kinder A.R.T.S. program. Since then she has worked as a Physical Fitness aide/teacher

and then as Music teacher in the Downstairs A.R.T.S. program. Her love of music began in grade school with years of membership in school and church choruses including the Acapella Choir at OPRF and the University Chorus at U of I. Niki has had instruction in piano, guitar, and voice. Her life outside the Academy includes her husband Larry and their four children, one daughter-in-law and first grandchild who have helped provide a wealth of parenting experiences. She is also a member of both the American Speech and Hearing Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

**Donna Pries**, Upstairs A.R.T.S. Director (Art, Cultural Awareness, Literature, Production Shop, Science), received a B.A. from North Central College in Elementary Education and Religion. Upon graduation, she spent the summer as a playground director in Santa Cruz, New Mexico, then taught 4th grade for 5 years in Naperville. She took oil painting and pottery classes. When Donna quit teaching to raise her children, Adam (35) and Rebecca (33), she made stoneware plaques and mirrors to sell at art fairs. The Pries family came to The Academy when they lived in Cicero. Adam and Rebecca were taking ballet, but Donna wanted a school where other boys were also taking ballet. Rebecca teaches ballet and A.R.T.S. at the Academy and has worked in the office. Adam and Rebecca were both involved with ***MOMENTA***. Adam was a professional ballet dancer for six years. Donna also took dance classes - ballet, tap and jazz - here at The Academy. Donna also cleans and organizes costumes for recitals at the Academy. She has been involved with the Academy for 30 years. As well as teaching at The Academy, Donna is a director of a Sacred Dance Troupe, and teaches workshops in area churches and retreats. In 1996, Donna was nominated for the Kohl-McCormick fellowship for Early Education and in 1998 she received the Orrin Kayan Memorial Excellence in Teaching Award. Donna has attended seminars on both the Montessori and Reggio Emilia methods of early childhood education.



**Patricia Ackerman**, Creative Movement (Downstairs), studied early childhood at Triton College and early childhood and theatre at Mundelein/Loyola University. Patricia came to the Academy in the summer of 1985 to study dance and began aiding in the Kinder A.R.T.S. program. She has worked as a floating aide, physical fitness aide, Montessori aide, music aide, and one summer as the Downstairs art teacher. She has demonstrated for many ballet classes and spent two years as an aide for a student with cerebral palsy. Patricia joined ***MOMENTA*** in 1986 and has been in many reconstructions of Doris Humphrey and Ruth St. Denis dances. She is now involved in passing some of those dances on to the younger members of ***MOMENTA*** and watching her daughters perform, and sometimes even performing with them. Her daughters, Rachel (14), and Madeline (10) have grown up here at the Academy. Patricia loves being part of the Academy family.

**Judy Bianchi**, Physical Fitness and Montessori (Downstairs), has been on staff at the Academy since 1999. She began as an aide for the Physical Fitness class and has emerged through the Academy programs. She has taught Physical Fitness, Downstairs Montessori and Upstairs Friday Montessori. She has also experienced the Creative Movement class. Judy is married and has three daughters. Her daughter Talia was a dancer at the Academy and Judy is now taking dance classes at the Academy as well. As a student Judy was a gymnast. She competed in many

competitions and has performed many routines. Floor Exercise was her specialty. Judy has also learned the art of Rhythmic Gymnastics. Judy has taught teens Floor Exercise at summer camps at Maine East H.S. in Park Ridge. She also has volunteered at Whittier Elementary School as a classroom aide helping children better develop their reading skills and comprehension skills. Judy truly enjoys working with young children and is very happy and gratified to have the opportunity to work in all of the creative programs at the Academy.

**Rosa DePerlinghi-Gobien**, Downstairs Aide, has an educational background in Ancient History. Before moving to the US Rosa traveled from Europe to Asia, South America to Australia and on to Africa in search of different cultures and societies and whenever possible she also accompanied her husband in his travels as a photojournalist and portraitist. In August of 2000 she moved with her family to Oak Park. Rosa's three children, Guillaume (18), Celine (16) and Sarah (14) attended the Academy for a number of years. "Thanks to my children I met the team at the Academy – they made me feel at home at once and it's been a lovely experience for me to be able to work here." Rosa worked in the A.R.T.S. program as a floating aide, a physical fitness aide and a creative movement aide. For the past three years Rosa has also worked in the Academy office.

**Anita Fillmore**, Physical Fitness (Downstairs), is a native Oak Parker who has been on staff at the Academy since 1997. Anita grew up at the Academy, dancing and playing the piano. She holds a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Dance from Barat College, and an M.F.A. in Dance Performance & Choreography from the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. Since returning to Oak Park, she has continued her longstanding relationship with the Academy in a variety of roles. For the last 11 years Anita has taught dance to all ages at the Academy, and performed and choreographed for ***MOMENTA***. Most recently, her roles have expanded to include teaching in the Preschool. Anita began teaching in the Downstairs A.R.T.S. Program in January of 2007 as the Physical Fitness aide in the mornings, and teacher in the afternoons.



Outside of the Academy, she enjoys dancing with Instruments of Movement and Breakbone Dance Company.

**Rachel Gorgol,** Downstairs Aide, has a B.S. in Psychology with a minor concentration in Art Therapy from Loyola University. Rachel had an undergraduate internship doing one-on-one Art Therapy and assisting in the 5th grade BD classroom at Loyola's Therapeutic Day School. After graduation she worked as a private agency caseworker for children placed in relative foster care by DCFS. She left that job after 2 years when her first child was born, deciding to stay at home with him. Rachel provided daycare in her home for 2 years, while her son was a baby. For the past 8 years Rachel has been doing data entry for a state-funded project working with teen mothers. When her son joined ***MOMENTA*** Rachel became involved in creating sets and backdrops for the shows. She started working as a Downstairs A.R.T.S. aide last fall and has enjoyed it very much. Rachel finds it a great way to get back into working outside the home before her youngest child starts full-time school. Rachel's two oldest children Max (13) and Heléna (8) attended the A.R.T.S. preschool and are now dance students at the Academy. Estella (4) is a current preschool student in the A.R.T.S. program.

**Philomena Harbaugh**, Montessori (Downstairs) and Upstairs Aide, has a BA in Spanish and Political Science from Grove City College in Grove City, Pennsylvania. Philomena and her husband moved to Oak Park from Pennsylvania in 1995. She worked for a year at the Language and Music School in Oak Park as an Assistant Spanish Teacher, as an English as a Second Language Instructor (child and adult) and as the Office Manager. Philomena worked for five years at the Oak Park Public Library as the Database Manager. When her daughter Meenah was born, Philomena chose to be a full time mom. Once her daughter Meenah began preschool in the Downstairs A.R.T.S. program, Philomena started volunteering at the Academy. Three years ago, Philomena joined the Academy staff as an official faculty member, working as an Upstairs Aide. After attending MECA Seton's (Montessori Education Centers Associated) Paraprofessional Program in Clarendon Hills, IL, in the summer of 2008, Philomena began to work in the Downstairs A.R.T.S. Montessori program. Philomena's daughter Meenah, now 7, still attends ballet and summer A.R.T.S. at the Academy. Philomena also acts as a PTO volunteer, a classroom volunteer and a Girl Scout Daisy Troop Leader at Holmes Elementary School where her daughter attends. Philomena is thrilled to begin her third year here at the Academy!

**Larry Ippel**, Creative Movement (Downstairs) and Creative Movement, Physical Fitness, Montessori (Upstairs), is a native of Chicago. Larry has been on the faculty of the Academy of Movement and Music since 1975. He has a B.S. in Comprehensive Art Education from Illinois State University. He completed three years of graduate study at the California Institute of the Arts before performing with the Chicago Dance Theatre from 1973 to 1979 and with the Arve Connection Dance Company from 1976 to 1983. Larry is a co-founder, co-director, and choreographer for ***MOMENTA,*** the dance company in residency at the Academy for 25 years. He performed with the American Dance Repertory Theatre in New York and at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. Larry received the first Orrin Kayan Memorial award for excellence in dance teaching, and he is also listed in Who's Who in American Education. Larry was a finalist for the Kohl-McCormick Early Childhood Education award. For many years he



presented his creative movement approach to problem solving at the annual conference of the Chicago Metropolitan Association and /or Du Page County Association for the Education of Young Children. In addition, Larry has conducted teachers' workshops for CEDA's Headstart Program and conducted creative movement workshops in elementary schools throughout the Chicago-land area. In January of 2000, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the Chicago Dance Coalition. Also in 2000, he restaged, with Lynn DeCinni, Richard Arve's men's trio "Naja" for ***MOMENTA's*** fall season and for Dance Chicago 2000. Larry performed his original role in this 1976 work. In 2001 Larry, again with Ms. DeCinni, set this work on Gus Giordano's Jazz Dance Chicago Company for their 2001-2002 season. Larry was accepted onto the Doris Humphrey Society board in 2001. In 2003 ***MOMENTA,*** with Larry as choreographer, was selected to take part in the American Composer's Forum's Dance Residency program. Larry completed the work "Sharing the Moment" in collaboration with composer Ilya Levinson in March. Ilya's score was commissioned by the Chicago Chapter of American Composer's Forum and funded by the Chicago Community Trust. In addition, this work was also funded by grants from the Village of Oak Park. "Sharing the Moment" was featured on WFMT's Art Beat

Chicago and at Oak Park's 2003 Universal Access Forum. Larry and Ilya's third collaboration, a performance piece structured on Ruth Bragg's children's book Colors of the Day, was premiered in ***MOMENTA's*** 25th consecutive fall season children's matinee series in November of 2007.

**Mara Leonard**, Music (Upstairs), has her Bachelor of Music, Cello Performance, from North Park College and her Masters of Music, Cello Performance, from Roosevelt University. She has been teaching music (cello, piano, and violin) in Oak Park since 1976. Mara is a member of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra and has performed with Northwest Indiana Civic Orchestra and continues to free-lance in the Chicago area. She has also been an administrator at Sherwood Conservatory of Music (Program Coordinator for the String Department) and has been on the faculty at Sherwood Conservatory and Elmhurst College. Since becoming a mom, and even before, Mara has become more and more interested in child development and working with children and adults through the medium of music. She has a private music studio in Oak Park and continues to look for new ways to teach music. Mara is delighted to be on board at the Academy and working with the A.R.T.S. program. Her daughter, Karina, is studying dance at the Academy.

**Mary Lou Powell**, Upstairs Aide, joined the Academy nine years ago as an aide in the Downstairs A.R.T.S. program. She is the mother of five children. While raising her children Mary Lou worked full and part time in the medical field. She has spent many years as a tutor, room mother, Brownie and Cub Scout leader, and classroom volunteer. Mary Lou attended Barat College.

**Linda Preston**, Montessori Directress (Upstairs), directed the Montessori environment in the Kinder A.R.T.S. program (predecessor to Upstairs A.R.T.S.) and taught in the Art/Music/Montessori classroom in the A.R.T.S. program for 7 years, from the mid-80's to the early 90's. Linda's son Elisha (28) spent a year in the Kinder A.R.T.S. program and still thinks of the Academy as home. Linda obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Education from Beloit College in 1967 and a second Bachelor's in Judaic Studies in 1978. In 1985 she



completed her Montessori training and received a Montessori Pre-Primary Certificate. After teaching at the Academy, Linda worked at the University of Illinois Circle Campus teaching adults with developmental disabilities. Linda received a Master of Arts from DePaul University in 2002. In addition to her duties in the Montessori section of Upstairs A.R.T.S., she works part time as a health educator for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities and part time as an advocate for her son. In her spare time Linda is a volunteer religious educator.

**Rebecca Pries**, Upstairs A.R.T.S. Dance and Aide, has a B.A. in Latin American Studies from Washington University and a M.S. in Early Childhood Education from the Erikson Institute. Rebecca began attending ballet classes at the Academy when she was five years old. She continued to study ballet through college, but chose a professional career working with children. After graduating from Wash U, she lived and worked in Chile, where she met her husband. Upon returning to the United States, she worked as Director of the School Age Program at Casa Central in Chicago for five years. After completing an M.S. in Early Childhood Education with

Type 04 teaching certificate from the Erikson Institute, Rebecca taught in the Chicago Public Schools' Head Start program. Since 1999, Rebecca has continued to teach ballet at the Academy part-time and work in the A.R.T.S. program during summers. This will be her second year in the A.R.T.S. program working with her mother, Donna Pries.

**Gina Sigismondi**, Downstairs Aide, has her B.A. in Dance Theatre from Northern Illinois University. She has taught ballet and jazz at the Academy since 1989 to students ranging in age from preschool to high school. She has been a performer and choreographer for ***MOMENTA*** since 1986. Gina has worked in the A.R.T.S. program in the past, teaching Creative Movement in Downstairs A.R.T.S. for three years and Creative Movement and Physical Fitness in the Upstairs program for one year. She returned to the A.R.T.S. program this summer as an aide in the Physical Fitness room. Both of Gina's children are at the Academy, Dominick (7) has graduated from the A.R.T.S. program and takes dance and Talia (4) is in the A.R.T.S. program and ballet.

**Marion Steffen**, Aide and Friday Special Projects Teacher (Upstairs), has worked in the A.R.T.S. program for seventeen years as an aide both Downstairs and Upstairs and as a Montessori Teacher in the Practical Life Area. Her association with the Academy is even longer; three of her four children have been students here in both the dance and A.R.T.S. classes. Marion attended Harper College. She was trained as a Dental Hygienist and as an instructor for the Red Cross in Community CPR and First Aid. She has also worked part-time at the Early Childhood Department and Resource Center, Concordia University in River Forest and for the West Suburban Satellite Day Care Action Council. In addition, Marion is a graduate of the American Airlines Training School in Fort Worth/Dallas. Over the years, Marion has volunteered in her own children's classrooms and has been both a Brownie and a Cub Scout leader.

**Ruth Tazelaar**, Art (Downstairs), has been married for thirty-seven years and is the mother of four children and soon to be grandmother of ten. When she became a mother, she chose to remain at home. Before coming to the Academy, for the last 30 years, she has helped raise many children as a home day care giver. She has also taught at Church schools, taught a dance class,



cooking classes and has had a catering business. Through her life experiences and learning, Ruth feels she can teach much to the children at the Academy. She has been at the Academy for fourteen years, beginning as an aide and moving to the Creative Movement Room in Downstairs A.R.T.S. before becoming the art teacher. Ruth attended Triton College and Trinity Christian College.