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**CAATINGA! Parent Handbook**

**2021-2022 School Year**

**We are so happy that your child will be joining CAATINGA! this school year. We will form a positive community of friends as we learn about, appreciate, explore and connect to nature through art. Our goal is to have a child led art & nature program that allows children to learn in nature through song and dance, art and science. When you pick up your child we hope that they are dirty, sweaty, smell like the fresh air and have a piece of art in their hand to show you.**

**We created this handbook to answer some questions that you may have about our policies and procedures. Please feel free to contact us at:** [**CreativePlayFun@gmail.com**](mailto:CreativePlayFun@gmail.com)

**Welcome CAATINGA! families!**

**Janis and Melissa Dunckel**

Janis Dunckel has been trained in Art at The Maryland Institute College of Art and at The Ringling College of Art and Design. She has worked at The New York Times as a News Artists and many other papers. Janis has also worked as a Courtroom Artist for Fox 5 and as a Graphics Director. Janis loves teaching children about Art and has taught at the Art Station, Callonwalde and art camps for 16 years.

Melissa Dunckel has studied at the Savannah College of Art in Atlanta. She has a love for sewing and creating 3-Dimensional projects. Melissa has worked with children for several years. She enjoys teaching children about art through nature.

Both founders, Janis Dunckel and Melissa Dunckel, have attended numerous training classes on nurturing and guiding children through nature. They are both Members of the Eastern Region Association of Forest and Nature Schools and have received their Nature-Based Teacher Certification's.

**Clover and Barley:**

At CAATINGA!, we may have Ms. Janis’s little and extra sweet dogs, Clover and Barley, visit us from time to time. They absolutely love children, and the children love them! Clover and Barley are non-shedding and hypoallergenic.

**Mission Statement:** CAATINGA! cares and empowers children with creative freedom through guided art in nature.

**Objective:** To provide children with creative freedom while gently guiding them to their fullest potential to create their own masterpieces. Teach children to express themselves artistically through nature so that they will love, respect and protect it.

Provide opportunities to work collaboratively to support one another, create, problem-solve and play.

Provide children with a lasting, wonderful, memorable experience.

Motivate and increase positive self-esteem.

Encourage questions about art and nature while learning the answers together.

**Directors/Contact Information:**

Janis Dunckel

Melissa Dunckel

Office- 678-632-2880

CreativePlayFun@Gmail.com

**Location:**

830 W. College Avenue

Decatur, GA 30030

(no affiliation with Thankful Missionary Baptist Church)

Our entrance is located at the corner of W College Avenue and Feld Aveune. We have blue doors and a wooden picket fence.

**CAATINGA! Hours:**

Monday - Friday from 2:20PM to 6:00PM in accordance with the City Schools of Decatur schedule.

**Ages/Info:**

CAATINGA! is available to children in K-5th grade. Children from all schools are welcome to attend, however, CAATINGA! only provides walking transportation from Oakhurst Elementary School.

**Admission Policy:**

Admission to CAATINGA! is made without regard to race, color, creed, sex, or national origin.

**Curriculum**

We look forward to exploring the world of nature through the creative process with your child.. This program is designed for children who enjoy diving into many different types of art projects from, weaving, building, drawing, and many other fascinating, messy, gooey fun projects. CAATINGA! is a child led program where children have the opportunity to follow their interests through outdoor art. We will create art that reflects our love of nature with watercolors, acrylics and many other art mediums.

**Application Process**

**Registration:**

There is a $50 non-refundable registration fee due at the time of enrollment. Registration fees are renewed each year during open registration in order to hold space for the following school year. Once you have applied, you will be notified by email once a space is available for your child. If you accept the opening, the first month’s tuition will be due by May 1st, 2021. These fees are non-refundable.

By inputting your credit card information into the registration system, you are just saving your card number to make it easier to pay once you receive the invoice. By inputting your credit card information into the Registration, you have not paid. You will receive a link to sign up for the Parent Portal and payment for your invoice can be made there. Your balance will be shown in the top right corner.

**Admission Requirements:**

Acceptance into CAATINGA! is based on availability of open spots. The attached forms must be filled out and submitted (if applicable).

1. Enrollment Form
2. Consent Form
3. Risk Form
4. Medical Emergency Form
5. Walking Field Trip Form
6. Transportation Form
7. Authorization For Medication
8. Parent Handbook Acceptance Form

A waitlist will be created if enrollment exceeds available open spots. You will be notified once a space has opened for your child based on availability. Once notified, the registration fee and first month’s tuition is due within 48 hours to confirm your spot. (If your child is starting in the middle of the month, you will be sent an invoice for registration, and pro-rated tuition for the month.)

Your registration has not been fully submitted until the registration fee, and first month’s tuition have been paid. These invoices must be paid within 48 hours of receiving them or by the first day your child starts at CAATINGA!, whichever comes first.

**Re-enrollment:**

Children must be re-enrolled each year with an additional $50 registration fee to be paid.

**Sandbox Parent Portal:**

Once you have registered your child, you will receive an email with a link to sign up for CAATINGA!’s Parent Portal. Through the Parent Portal, you can make payments, set your unique 4 digit pin, and sign up to receive notifications. CAATINGA! uses the Parent Portal to send schedule updates, and to connect with Parents. Please make sure that you go to Settings in the top right corner and click on receive emails for Newsfeed Updates.

**Tuition and Fees**

**Monthly Tuition:**

5 days a week- $399

4 days a week- $365

3 days a week- $285

2 days a week- $205

1 day a week- $130

(Monthly tuition already takes into account School Breaks and Holidays. Monthly tuition is the same each month. Camps that may take place during School Breaks will have a separate sign-up and tuition due).

**Due Date for Tuition/Late Policy:**

Invoices will be generated on the 25th of each month and payment is due the 1st of each month. A late fee will be charged on any payment made after the 5th of the month. Late fees are $15.00. (We will make every attempt to work with families if a financial situation should arise. Please contact a director immediately).

Parents/Guardians may sign up through the Parent Portal to be automatically billed when invoices are due. The invoice will be deducted from your card on file on the 30th of the previous month.

Parents/Guardians may also use the Parent Portal to add a credit/debit card or to make manual electronic payments.

**Insufficient Funds:**

A fee will be incurred for bounced checks.

**Late Pick up Fees:**

CAATINGA! ends at 6:00pm. Parents/Guardians picking up children after 6:00pm will be considered late. Late fees are $5.00, plus $1.00 for every minute after closing time. Any expenses accrued will be added on and collected with the following month’s tuition.

**Withdrawal:**

To withdraw your child from CAATINGA!, a 30-day written notice is required at the beginning of the month before the planned withdrawal. Otherwise fees may apply. No refunds or credits will apply to any unused or missed days.

**Tax Identification Number:**

CAATINGA!’s EIN number is: 82-3691093

**School Operations:**

**Sample Daily Schedule:**

2:20-3:15pm: Children arrival/bathroom.

3:15-4:30: Snack/creative outdoor time.

4:30-5:30: Option for Art Project (indoors or outdoors depending on weather), or

continued creative play.

5:30-6:00: Clean/gratitude/free play (choice of indoor/outdoor activity or independent art) until parent pick up.

\*Art Projects may drawing insects, wildlife, plants, trees,… and collecting nature for use in art creations. “Growing Up Wild” and Nature Smart books will be implemented throughout the art curriculum.

**Masks:**

Masks will be required to be worn by both children and staff at all times while inside at CAATINGA!. If a child needs a mask break and we are inside due to inclement weather, children will be able to go to an isolated space in the hallway to take their mask off for a few minutes and have some relaxing time to read a book. The area will be cleaned when the child is done using it and books will be renewed each time. Masks will be required to be worn by children outside if children are not able to be 6 feet apart from one another. Staff will wear their mask at all times, except during meal time while staying 6 feet apart. CAATINGA! follows the CDC mask safety guidelines. Please send your child with an extra mask in a bag labeled with their name.

**Transportation:**

Children from all schools are welcome to attend CAATINGA!. We will only be providing walking transportation from Oakhurst Elementary. Children attending from other schools must have their own transportation. It is extremely important for you to notify us, through phone or email, of your child’s absence by 12:00pm on the day of absence.

COVID-19:

Children will have their temperature taken before entering CAATINGA!. If for any reason, a child develops a fever or any other COVID-19 symptoms while at CAATINGA!, parents will be called to pick up their child immediately. If any child, teacher or family member of either child or teacher living in the same household develops COVID-19 or symptoms related, CAATINGA! after school sessions may close for a certain amount of time and refunds will not be provided.

Parents/Guardians hearby release CAATINGA! LLC, it’s successors, assigns, employees, contractors, members, volunteers and facility location from any and all liability arising from their child attending CAATINGA! during COVID-19, except in the case of intentional misconduct or gross negligence. CAATINGA! will not be held responsible in any way your child or a family member in your household becomes sick with COVID-19, as a result of attending CAATINGA!’s after school program. No refunds will be given for any days missed due to COVID-19.  
  
Due to ongoing changes and updates with COVID-19, CAATINGA! may at anytime make changes to their policies and procedures.

**Walking Field Trips:**

CAATINGA!’s facility is located in a unique spot that allows us to take advantage of nearby parks. CAATINGA! is located 0.5 miles from the town of Oakhurst, 0.2 miles from Oakhurst Park and two houses away from Mead Road Park. Signature of the walking field trip form grants your child permission to take all art and nature walking field trips with us to these parks. Parents will be notified in advance when we will be at a park in case they need to pick-up their child earlier than 4:30pm.

In some cases pick-up will be at the park and parents will be notified. Walking to parks will provide children the opportunity to create art in different surroundings.

**Snack/Food Allergies:**

Please send an afternoon snack for your child to eat while at CAATINGA!.

CAATINGA! will occasionally provide a special snack for children. We cannot guarantee it will be free of the top known allergens. If your child requires a special diet, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide a snack for your child. (Please contact a Director if your child has an allergy that prevents them from being in the same room with nuts, etc.)

**Schedule Change Requests:**

Parents must commit to a weekly schedule stating the day(s) that their children are signed up for. Once signed up for these days the schedule is fixed; there are 3 allowed schedule adjustments per school year. Adjustments must be made via email 4 weeks before the change and may not be guaranteed, based on availability of preferred days. (A $25 Administrative fee will be charged on each schedule change).

**Absence:**

It is the parent’s responsibility to notify CAATINGA! via email if your child will be absent for any reason by 12:00PM on the day of absence. Multiple instances of “no-calls” may result in applicable fines determined by directors of CAATINGA!. If there is an absence during any assigned days, tuition fees will not be waived.

**Arrival and Departure:**

When the children get off the bus we will immediately check the list to see which children to expect. No child will ever be released to an adult who is not on the approved list filled out by the parent.

**CAATINGA! Closings:**

We will follow the City Schools of Decatur Calendar.

If CSD schools close for inclement weather, we will also be closed. If CSD schools close early due to inclement weather, CAATINGA! will also close and will not operate that day. (Tuition fees will not be waived for any school closings due to inclement weather). In the event of early closings families will be notified.

Children will always play outside unless it is uncomfortable because of the heat or cold. If it’s thundering and/or lightening children will not play outside.

**Clothing and Personal Items:**

**Extra Clothing:**

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use the more you have.” – Maya Angelou

“There is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing.”- Ranulph Fiennes.

We are an art and nature-based program. Please ensure that your child comes dressed appropriately for the weather and for art activities both of which can be messy.

We ask that you please send an extra pair of clothes with your child if you want them to change into different clothes for the program. It is the responsibility of the child to know if they need to change their clothes when they arrive at CAATINGA!.

Please keep in mind that children may get messy in CAATINGA! so send a large shirt or smock.

We may be creating art in light showers so it’s recommended that children bring raincoats, ponchos and umbrellas to leave at CAATINGA!. We also ask that your child have a pair of rain boots or shoes appropriate for water during times that we play in the rain/puddles that we can keep at the facility. A change of clothes should also be kept at the facility. Please label all items sent with your child.

**Additional Items to Bring:**

Please remember to send your child with a labeled water bottle, an extra mask, and a labeled towel to sit on at snack time. (The towel can be left at CAATINGA!.)

**Electronics:**

Please talk with your child about not bringing any electronics and to put cell phones away while at CAATINGA!. This is their time to create art in nature and with friends.

If we see a child playing with an electronic device brought from home, we will talk with the child about the importance of spending this time creating in nature and ask them to return it to their book bag. If the electronic comes out again, the device will be collected and given back once a parent has arrived for pick up. This allows for each child to be fully immersed in arts and nature without electronic distractions caused by themselves or others.

**Boundaries:**

Children are expected to stay within the boundaries established by the staff.

**Policies**

**Pick-up:**

Each parent will create a unique 4-digit identification number through the parent portal. This number will be used to check your child out of CAATINGA!. Please inform CAATINGA! if anyone other than a parent will be picking up your child. They will need to bring their ID and know your 4-digit code.

**Inclement Weather:**

In the event of unusual weather conditions, listen to the radio or television for emergency school closings. CAATINGA! will close anytime The City of Decatur Schools are closed. If CSD schools close early due to inclement weather, CAATINGA! will also close and will not operate that day. (In the event of weather emergencies during program hours, CAATINGA! may need to close early and parents will be notified.) Tuition fees will not be waived for any school closings due to inclement weather.

**Evacuation:**

A plan has been developed with evacuation routes. If for any reason it is necessary to evacuate the building, all parents will be contacted by phone of the change in location.

**Loss of Building Utilities:**

If there are any building malfunctions including lights, or water for an extended period of time, parents will be called to pick up the children. Should any supply (electrical, gas, or water) be interrupted for more than one day, CAATINGA! will be closed until services are restored. Tuition fees will not be waived for any school closings due to loss of building utilities.

**Safety of Your Child**

**Staff Training:**

Staff of CAATINGA! have backgrounds in art as well as certifications in nature education and in First Aid and CPR.

**Minor Injuries:**

Outdoor play sometimes results in skinned knees, bumps, or scrapes; staff of CAATINGA! will treat injuries such as these with soap/water, ice and TLC. The area will be bandaged, if necessary. Parents will be notified of any minor injuries upon pick-up with a filled out Ouch Report.

**Sunscreen and Bug Spray:**

Please send a bottle of sunscreen and/ or insect repellent with your child’s name on it. (These can be kept at CAATINGA!.) Our staff will only administer sunscreen and /or insect repellent that has your child’s name on it. An authorization form must be signed and placed in your child’s file.

**Medication/Allergies:**

Any medications that need to be administered to your child while attending CAATINGA! must be acknowledge on your child’s medication form with signed consent for us to administer to your child. All medications must be labeled and stored in the original prescription container. (If your child needs to take medication at CAATINGA! please speak with a Director).

All known allergies for your child are required to be listed on the Medical Form. Any medication that is required, such as epinephrine injector, will be kept with a lead staff member at all times. The parent is responsible for keeping their child’s medical form up to date and supplying CAATINGA! with unexpired medications. (If your child has a known allergy please speak with a Director).

**Dispensing Medication:**

We must have a signed authorized form from the parent in order to administer medication, even non-prescription. Specific instructions regarding dosage, frequency, and symptoms or condition for which medication administered should be listed on the medication form signed by the parent. The medication should be labeled with the child’s name. The CAATINGA! staff member who administers the medication will document the time, dosage and any noticeable side effects.

**Illness:**

Parents/Guardians will be contacted to pick up their child from CAATINGA! if their child has or shows symptoms of:

* Fever of 101 degrees or higher
* Vomiting
* Diarrhea
* Pink eye
* Lice
* Undiagnosed rash

In order to return to CAATINGA! the child must:

* Have taken appropriate medication (if applicable) and be free of illness related symptoms for 24 hours.

Have a note (if applicable) from their health care provider stating that they are not contagious and may return to school.

These policies are put into place in order to keep communicable diseases from spreading.

Should a child become ill while in our care we will first contact the parent to pick up the child promptly. If the parent cannot be reached the emergency contact will be called.

**Medical Emergency:**

In the event of a medical emergency, we will contact 911 and then immediately contact the parent. Children may be transported by ambulance depending on the severity of the emergency. It is important that the parent has filled out the Vehicle Emergency form.

**Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect:**

Staff of CAATINGA! are legally bound by Georgia Public Law 102-294 to report any signs of child abuse and/or neglect. All cases of abuse or suspected abuse should be reported directly to a director, who will report to the Department of Family and Children Services in accordance with the Official Code of Georgia. This law defines four areas of child abuse and neglect as 1) physical or mental injury 2) sexual abuse 3) negligent treatment 4) maltreatment.

**Physical Risks:**

We will always do everything that we can to make sure your child is safe but playing in nature can always incur elements of hazards from a scraped knee to bee stings and ant bites. Please let us know if we need any additional information about your child playing in nature.

**Discipline**

**Behavior Management:**

A caring positive approach will be taken regarding behavioral issues. Positive behavior will gain the most attention and be reinforced as much as possible.

We take into account the child’s emotional, physical, intellectual, social, growth and well-being, the staff will provide comfort and help when needed as well as:

Promote ways of positive interaction and ways of getting along.

Encourage independent thinking, decision-making abilities, and self-direction.

Respect personal privacy.

Respect each others difference cultural, ethnic and family backgrounds.

Guidance will be constructive, age appropriate and shall be intended to redirect children to appropriate behavior to resolve conflicts.

**Program Dismissal Policy:**

The staff of CAATINGA! reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program but first will try everything possible to correct the behavior before doing so. When serious disciplinary challenges occur dismissal from the program may result, such as but not limited to, inability to stay with the group or participate, hitting, biting and failure to abide by The Code of Conduct.

The following procedure will be followed:

**First Offense**- Written Warning (Staff will talk to child & notify parent).

**Second Offense-** Conference with parent and a director.

**Third Offense**- We shall determine the next course of action, which may result in suspension or dismissal from the program.

The director may modify this policy based on their discretion. Refunds will be denied under such circumstances.

Dismissal from CAATINGA! may also result from repeatedly late payments and or non-payment of program fees. Parents shall receive a written and verbal reminder when payment is past due. Your child’s spot in our program may be forfeited if payment is not made after that.

**Code of conduct**

The staff at CAATINGA! will always try to understand the reason behind the actions of the child. We will see some positive actions and some negative actions; we realize that there is a reason for both. We will always try to understand and take time with the child so that they can understand the benefits of replacing the negative with positive.

**Things to Know**

**Special Needs Children:**

Every attempt will be made to accommodate a special needs child in our program. However, our program may not be able to best serve every child’s needs. If a child is having difficulty adjusting to the program, or if the health, safety, and welfare of a special needs child or other children are at risk, the directors of CAATINGA! will schedule a conference with the parents and discuss observations. It may be necessary to make modifications within the program environment, or make alternate provisions that best suit the child’s needs.

\*CAATINGA! is suitable for children who are able to work well in small groups and/or independently. CAATINGA! is not suitable for children who need 1:1 ratio, as we are unable to provide the staff for this ratio.

**Creating Community:**

We strive to have a program where parent and families feel involved and welcomed. The exchange of ideas to build community and solid relationships is important to us. We plan to hold several events throughout the school year and encourage families to attend. We also invite parent volunteers throughout the year for fundraising, event planning, organizing, giving suggestions or to just come to experience art and nature with us!

I have received, read and understand the 2021-2022 Parent Handbook set forth by CAATINGA!

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Parent/Guardian Signature Date