



JOWONIO PARENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

**Jowonio School
3049 East Genesee Street
Syracuse, New York 13224
(315) 445-4010**

Welcome to Jowonio School! We see parents, students and staff as part of a learning community. We want to share information and communicate together about what is best for our children. While we serve preschoolers, we see ourselves as an educational setting and we do a lot of planning and problem solving about our classroom program. For an overview of the school, take a look at our website, www.jowonio.org.

It is a gift to spend our days with your child and we look forward to working with you. We ask that you as parents:

- make your needs and those of your child known to us, through notes, phone calls, e-mails, our Remind app, and conferences with staff;
- notify us in writing about any changes in your life or routine that affect the ways we contact you (e.g., change in address, phone numbers, emergency numbers, baby-sitter) or that affect your child's school day (e.g. daily transportation plans, illnesses, etc.);
- participate in the Jowonio parent and family events (e.g., Open House, parent groups, "Family Fun Nights", classroom celebrations) and in formal and informal activities that provide support to our school such as the Jowonio Board and its committees, fundraising events, newsletter contributions, or being a classroom volunteer/room parent; and
- give us feedback about how things are going for your child.

For our part, we as a staff will try to communicate what is going on in school through class schedules, notes through the Remind app, e-mails, phone calls, and conferences. We are open to your suggestions. Don't hesitate to call us at 315-445-4010 with comments or questions. We welcome you to visit our classrooms and hope you and your children enjoy your time here.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Our Mission

The mission of Jowonio School is to provide model inclusive programs for young children, where diversity is celebrated and all are free to learn and grow.

Jowonio is dedicated to:

- Creating innovative educational settings where children of all abilities are full participants, encouraged to reach their potential;
- Offering a wide range of therapeutic and family support services;
- Providing training and development for teachers, therapists, and parents in collaboration with educational institutions and community agencies; and
- Advocating for the inclusion of all children in schools and in society.

Approved by the Jowonio Board of Directors, 4/19/2006

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Jowonio accepts students irrespective of sex, gender or gender expression, race, creed, color, religion, national origin, or ability/disability. Jowonio is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE).

Program Oversight

Jowonio is governed by the Jowonio School Board, composed of parents and community volunteers; this board sets the direction of the school, provides programmatic and fiscal oversight, and supports fundraising. The Friends of Jowonio owns and manages our building, and also has a Board providing oversight. Both Boards seek parents as members when there are openings. Jowonio is authorized to provide services by four New York State agencies: the Department of Health, the Education Department, the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, and the Office of Children and Family Services. Each of these agencies provides programmatic and fiscal guidelines and compliance with their regulations is mandatory.

History and Philosophy of Jowonio

The name Jowonio comes from the word in the Onondaga Indian language which means "to set free." Our goal is to free the minds and emotions of children and adults from stereotypes and prejudices and to support them to learn and grow.

Jowonio began in 1969 as an alternative school for children whose families wanted a more open and individualized approach than they felt they could find in the public schools. From the beginning, Jowonio accepted a wide range of children. Since 1975, when we received special support from what was then called the N.Y.S. Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, we have operated as a planful inclusive educational program where typically developing children and children with special needs can learn in the same classrooms. Many of our staff members have training, certification, and experience in both special education and early childhood or elementary education.

Our goal is to provide a developmentally appropriate individualized program where each child is nurtured and supported as a learner. Jowonio's approach is based on the following beliefs:

- All children grow and learn, with their own unique capabilities and learning styles.
- Children grow through their relationships with adults and peers.
- A quality classroom grows out of a balance of adult-provided structure with ample opportunities for children to explore, initiate, make choices, play, and problem-solve about their world.
- Social and emotional growth must be nurtured as carefully as cognitive, motor, and language development, with the purpose of helping children become caring human beings who feel good about themselves and others.
- A planful environment, clear expectations and positive models can help young children learn diverse and appropriate ways to interact with materials and people.
- Parent involvement is welcomed and needed; teachers and parents should be partners in achieving their hopes for their children.

Curriculum

We seek to provide a rich and stimulating curriculum that will facilitate curiosity, creativity and excitement in learning, as well as build a foundation for success in school in later years. We want children to learn to respond to peers in helpful ways, to make choices and become independent in their work, and to maintain a strong and

positive sense of themselves while adapting to the routines and demands a group setting like school requires. We hope to model non-sexist behaviors and encourage nurturing and active play in both boys and girls. We value the great diversity in our community in terms of cultures and needs and the learning opportunities this brings to us all.

Aligned with New York State's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) framework, which emphasizes play-based, inquiry-driven learning across multiple developmental domains, Jowonio incorporates principles of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) into its curriculum to ensure that learning experiences meet children where they are. Our goal is to challenge children enough to grow while respecting their individual pace and abilities.

The Power of Play and Self-Direction

Play and self-directed learning are the center of Jowonio's programs and curriculum. Our classrooms provide a range of opportunities for kids to engage and play on their own terms with goals connected to the curriculum that we're teaching.

Research shows that young children learn best through hands-on, active engagement with their environment, peers, and educators. Through play, children develop essential skills in problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Play fosters independence, curiosity, and resilience—key qualities that set the stage for lifelong success.

Through carefully planned activities and open-ended exploration, we create opportunities for children to:

- Engage in meaningful, self-directed learning that allows them to follow their interests and make choices.
- Build critical thinking skills through exploration, discovery, and problem-solving.
- Develop strong social-emotional skills by working collaboratively, expressing their feelings, and learning to navigate peer interactions.
- Strengthen language and communication through storytelling, dramatic play, and interactive discussions.

Assessment

While each child progresses at their own pace, we routinely monitor development in social-emotional, communication, motor, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, and other key learning areas. Parents receive progress updates at least twice per year, reinforcing a strong home-school partnership to support each child's unique learning journey.

Key components of our approach include:

- **Social and Emotional Development**

We help children build self-regulation, empathy, and confidence while fostering positive relationships in an inclusive setting. Positive interactions and relationships are fundamental for children's learning and success in school and in life; social-emotional competence is a significant factor in positive school experiences. We help students understand and have strategies for managing and expressing their emotions, to develop empathy and compassion for others, and to have positive approaches to social problem-solving and self-advocacy. These skills are directly taught through teacher-led activities utilizing both Second Step, a nationally recognized evidence based social skills curriculum, and program-developed strategies, as well as playful modeling and support while children are engaged in play.

- **Communication, Language, and Literacy**

Our literacy approach aligns with the New York State Core Body of Knowledge standards. We support early literacy through rich conversations, storytelling, interactive read-alouds, and exposure to print in meaningful ways.

- **Mathematics and Cognitive Development**

We encourage hands-on exploration of number sense, patterns, measurement, and problem-solving through real-world applications and play-based activities.

- **Science, Technology, and Inquiry-Based Learning**

We inspire curiosity and critical thinking through observation, experimentation, and discovery. We recognize and celebrate the value of nature and the outdoors on children's self-regulation as well as building a wealth of science skills, and classrooms spend a good deal of time engaged in outdoor activities.

- **Physical Development and Health**

We promote motor skill development, self-care routines, and healthy habits through movement, outdoor play, and active engagement. We have a commitment to fitness and a healthy lifestyle. Each day includes free and adult-structured movement inside, in classrooms, the gym, the Secret Garden, and Enchanted Forest, as well as outdoors. We have a wonderful outdoor space that includes our playground, Trike Town, hill and dome area, and a nature trail,

Sarah's Path, with the Play Perch tree house. A fenced yard in the front of the school creates a safe space for periodic activities such as water play, ball games, and our annual summer carnival. Outdoor play is encouraged year-round, except when rain, bitter cold, or excessive heat prevents it.

- **Creative Arts and Expression**

Art experiences at Jowonio focus on the creative process rather than the product, providing children with opportunities for self-expression through music, movement, visual arts, and imaginative play.

- **Field Trips**

We have two school vans that allow each classroom the opportunity to access enriching spaces in the community on a bi-weekly basis. Field trip destinations are chosen to highlight and expand on classroom themes, as well as to offer opportunities to explore different parks, playgrounds, and spaces of interest. Parents are notified of upcoming trips through the classroom's weekly schedule/newsletter, and we welcome parents joining us.

Children learn by doing and we create opportunities for them to construct their own knowledge and represent it, through art and words. The focus is on process rather than product. By approaching content through a variety of modalities, we can address children with different learning styles.

The weekly schedules, which will be shared electronically or sent home to you in your child's backpacks, can serve as information for you about the content of your child's day, as a way to prepare your child for what's happening and to talk about it afterwards. The day is planned to vary active times with some focused sitting activities. Each classroom holds a class meeting or circle time to support children in connecting with each other, fostering a sense of belonging within the group, and sharing what's coming up during the day. This time also celebrates each child's unique contributions and provides space to explore thoughts, experiences, and feelings, honoring every individual's way of engaging. Much of the rest of the day is spent in independent exploration, skill times, or creative arts and music activities.

Inclusion

Jowonio has had a long-term commitment to welcoming and including children of all abilities and needs in our program. Through "universal design" everyone should have

access to all parts of the school and playspace; the environment is arranged to address children's sensory and motor needs, and other resources are provided to help all participate as independently as possible. Teaching strategies address unique learning styles. Predictable routines, adaptive equipment, visual and auditory cues, and a variety of response options facilitate success for each learner. We ensure children have continuous access to communication throughout their day by providing a range of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools, from low-tech options like picture boards to high-tech devices, tailored to each child's needs. An essential goal of our classrooms is to create a sense of community, where adults teach positive social skills and model acceptance and appreciation of each child and highlight his/her gifts and interests.

Anti-Bias Curriculum

One of the benefits of Jowonio is our diverse population of students, including those from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, family structures, and economic situations; we also have a number of children for whom English is a new language. We want each child to feel good about themselves, be curious and comfortable with people who are different from themselves, be aware of bias, and stand up for themselves and their peers. We encourage children to express their feelings and ideas, listen to others, and gain empathy for their friends. We teach ways for children to negotiate and solve problems.

Holidays at Jowonio

Conversations about our approach to holidays at Jowonio have often been complex and emotional, as we work to recognize and celebrate the diversity of our school population, and avoid anyone feeling excluded or marginalized because their beliefs, culture, or traditions may be different from someone else's. In general, Jowonio's approach to, and curriculum regarding, holidays has been guided by the following ideas:

- Whatever is presented to preschool children should be appropriate to their developmental state and understanding
- While many have become highly secularized and commercialized, when traced back, the vast majority of holidays are based on religious doctrine and historical events. Families are the appropriate people to explain the significance of holidays to their children, thus the family home is the appropriate place to celebrate such holidays
- In our curriculum at Jowonio, rather than emphasizing faith-based or

commercially supported holidays, we hope to develop celebrations and special events that make memories and foster a sense of community. Some of these occur as we acknowledge the flow of daily life and the seasons across the school year (e.g. fall harvest, the first snow of winter, spring changes) and milestones that are important to young children (e.g. a new tooth, a birthday, a baby sibling born, transitioning to kindergarten).

- At the same time, we recognize that family culture and traditions, including those connected to holidays and celebrations, are an important part of young children's lives, and should be respected and shared; at any time of the year we may invite parents to share with the class aspects of their culture (music, clothing, stories, food, etc.)
- Curriculum and activities offered to our preschool children should reflect a balanced blend of the traditions and cultures represented by the children and adults in the classroom. No one culture or tradition should be emphasized over another, and none should be treated as unusual. We strive to have children recognize that each individual's traditions are significant and meaningful for them.

Birthdays

Many families are committed to the importance of birthdays and the opportunity they offer to celebrate children. We want to acknowledge each individual and their growth and let every child feel included. There are many ways that this can happen. We know that some families have used the support of teachers to help them create a celebration that is comfortable and meaningful for their child. For others, it is a financial stretch to bring in food for the class, and also create a party at home. Some families from other cultures may have traditions about a child's birthday with which we are unfamiliar. And other families do not celebrate birthdays at all because of their religion.

Our obligation is to be responsive to each child and family, be open to including their needs and perspectives in what we do, and to make conscious the values that underlie our own decisions and actions. Please talk with us about any ways you'd like to acknowledge your child's birthday.

Guiding Children's Behaviors

At Jowonio, we respect each child and respond to his/her needs and abilities; we view behavior as communication and realize that young children are learning to negotiate and play with others. We find there are two important variables in helping

children develop control and learn social skills: consistent and warm responses by the adults in their environment and attention to preventive classroom structure (e.g. routines, organization of space, choice of materials, visual cues and presentation of tasks). If an issue arises between children or between adults and children, we first seek to use a problem-solving approach, encouraging children to express their own wishes, consider the perspectives of others, and generate alternatives for dealing with a particular situation. We may do this by discussion or role-playing.

The most effective intervention with behavior is prevention. We interpret behavior as communication and a reaction to what is going on around a child. We assess the reason for behavior. And we teach children positive ways to express their needs and wants. So many of the behaviors that are frustrating to adults are the result of children expressing their independence, the need for attention or a response to sensory overload; youngsters may not have control of their bodies or have sophisticated strategies for getting what they want. We assume that "all children would be good if they could" and we know that accidents happen in the world of preschoolers. Rather than only saying "No" and focusing on what a child should *not* be doing, we use positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and natural consequences (e.g. if you throw your cup of juice, you have no more juice and you need to clean up the mess). When children are not able to respond to a verbally directed problem solving approach because of their ability to communicate or their emotional state, adults intervene to keep all individuals safe. This may include actions such as holding a child's hand when crossing the parking lot (even if they are protesting), or briefly catching and redirecting the hand of a child who is attempting to hit another child, to prevent them from making contact. We do not believe in aversive approaches such as seclusion, physical punishment or physical restraint.

School Staffing

We have 4 or more teachers in each classroom. There is one lead teacher and one assistant teacher who work together to coordinate the rest of the classroom team; their backgrounds reflect training in early childhood and inclusive education. There is at least one teacher certified in special education in each classroom. Teacher aides and undergraduate and graduate intern teachers also participate in the school program.

Jowonio offers a wide range of special services. Our resource staff includes Speech/Language Pathologists, Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists, and a Play Therapist. Speech/language pathologists focus on communication, including receptive and expressive language, use of language, articulation, and fluency.

Occupational and physical therapy are professions that promote and facilitate independent functional abilities of children who have limitations due to pain, trauma, and/or delayed development. They seek to improve children's strength, endurance, balance, coordination, problem-solving, motor learning, object manipulation, and sensory integration skills through a child-friendly play-based approach. Therapy occurs in classrooms, in the gym, on the playground, on field trips, and in Pooh Corner (speech-language) and the Secret Garden (sensory-motor), spaces especially designed to meet children's goals. Our therapists work in concert with teachers and parents to meet each child's individual needs.

Some Jowonio students are also being served by professionals who are not employed by Jowonio. Usually these services will not take place at our site unless the discipline is one that we do not provide (e.g. Music Therapy, Teacher of the Visually Impaired). If we do not have the staff available to provide a service and parents and staff agree that it is beneficial for the child, we arrange for an external provider to see the student during the school day. The services should occur at a regularly scheduled time approved by our staff and the parent and documented through a Service Agreement. Efforts will be made to establish on-going communication between the teaching and therapy team, the parent, and the external provider.

Jowonio is committed to having an Evaluation Team, and is approved by the County Health Department to assess preschool children at the request of parents and school districts, and at the suggestion of Early Intervention providers and physicians. If you have concerns about your child and would like to discuss an evaluation, talk with his/her teacher, or the classroom liaison. Please note: while we are often able to provide supplemental speech language, occupational, and/or physical therapy evaluations to children who have had a previous preschool evaluation, full initial evaluations are currently on hold while we work on hiring a psychologist to complete our team. However, we will be happy to provide information about the evaluation process and assist you with a referral to another evaluator if you have concerns about your child's development and we are unable to complete the evaluation.

Our office staff includes the Director, Assistant Directors, Human Resources Manager, Administrative Liaisons/Clinical Coordinators, Nurse, Social Workers, Financial Manager, Office Manager, and Office and Accounting Assistants.

Jowonio hires only qualified and appropriately licensed or certified staff in all positions. Our teachers and therapists reflect experience and a commitment to inclusive education and their own growth as professionals. We are lucky to have limited turnover in our lead staff, a tribute to their belief in their work. All staff

members must participate in annual training to meet the requirements of the NYS Office of Children and Families. All staff are cleared through the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment and are fingerprinted for a criminal background check. We interview each person hired and check their references. In addition every employee participates at least annually in a staff review process to reflect on areas of strength and weakness and identify professional development goals and strategies.

In accordance with the NYS Social Service Law, employees of Jowonio are mandated reporters, and as such must report to the State Central Registry any suspected incident of child abuse, maltreatment or neglect. If you ever have a concern about the welfare or safety of your child, contact the classroom Administrative Liaison/Clinical Coordinator or Lori Saile, the Director. If the matter is not addressed to your satisfaction, you may contact the Jowonio School Board or the Statewide Central Registry of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

University Affiliations

Jowonio is a training site for education and therapy students in both their undergraduate and graduate programs. Many of these interns come to us with teaching experience and wonderful energy. They are provided supervision during their Jowonio placement by our paid staff and University faculty. They may be full or part-time and usually stay for 6-12 weeks. We have had interns from Syracuse University, Lemoyne College, Cazenovia College, SUNY Cortland, Bryant and Stratton College, Empire State College, and Onondaga Community College. In addition, Jowonio staff periodically make presentations in graduate and undergraduate courses. We are committed to our role as advocates for inclusion for all children in schools and in society. Supporting student interns to learn effective strategies for supporting students in inclusive classrooms, and working with Universities to stay current with evolving practices in the field, are both important pieces of that role.

Parent Involvement

We have a variety of ways for parents to be involved at Jowonio. We welcome parents to join us on field trips, to volunteer in their child's classroom, be a Room Parent, and participate in classroom and school-wide social events. We offer a variety of activities for parents throughout the year, including daytime and evening speakers and discussions. There is typically a fall Parent Open House to acquaint parents with the school, the staff and our teaching approaches. Social activities often include a family potluck supper, a spring Family Fun Night, end of the year

graduation celebrations, and a summer "Ice Cream Social" and concert. We are committed to continuing to find ways to nurture and sustain our partnerships with families, and to support connections between families. We welcome help in planning and implementing these activities as well as fundraising events where monies raised enrich the school offerings for children and families. Individual classrooms may set up social experiences as well. We will stay in touch with you as plans for various types of events unfold.

Four times a year Jowonio issues a Parent Newsletter, and we are always looking for contributions to it. We encourage you to pledge some time to the school, by reviewing the list of ways that you can be involved with us; please complete our Volunteer Form and turn it into the office.

The Jowonio School Board of Directors is made up of parents and community professionals, and when terms end, we seek individuals to join this group. Friends of Jowonio is a not-for-profit organization and the owner of our building that also has a Board of Directors. Please let us know if you'd like information about the School Board as well as other parent activities.

Communication

We hope for clear and open communication between families and staff. Our teachers work to make themselves available to talk with parents, and in addition they are happy to use our Remind app, e-mail, a notebook, or a phone call to share information. To ensure the privacy of communication, as well as facilitate fast and efficient communication of announcements, Jowonio uses the Remind application for phone calls and texts. Staff should no longer be providing their personal cell phone numbers for communication. You should have already received information from your child's classroom teachers about how to download the app and get linked to your child's classroom. If you do not have access to e-mail or the Remind app or check it regularly, let us know so that we can ensure that you receive a paper copy and/or arrange a communication system that works well for you and your child's teacher and therapists. Each classroom also has a parent bulletin board for notices; and written messages will also be left in your child's cubby or backpack. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to read all written communication from Jowonio, including weekly schedules, newsletters, texts, and personal notes. Please notify us in writing of any important changes in your child's family situation, health, daily schedule, address/ phone number, or attendance.

Check our first floor bulletin boards for information about current events. We create a parent listserv for school-wide communication; in addition we publish on our website (www.jowonio.org) and in our Parent Newsletter information about school events and approaches.

We also have a Jowonio Facebook page, which we try to keep updated with photos and information about school events. Please note, pictures posted on Jowonio's Facebook page reflect parent consent for use of their child's photos specifically for Jowonio publicity and marking. For confidentiality reasons, we ask staff and we are asking you to not post photos of Jowonio children other than your own on personal Facebook pages or other social media platforms. Also, for reasons of confidentiality and professionalism, please be aware that we have asked staff to not initiate or agree to "friend" requests with families through social media while their children are enrolled in Jowonio. While we recognize that some families and staff members may be comfortable using these platforms for open communication, we also have discovered how quickly and easily information spreads on these platforms. This can create a risk that confidential information about other children and families and/or the school gets inadvertently or inappropriately shared. Therefore we require our staff to refrain from being "friends" with families on social media sites while their children are enrolled in Jowonio, but we continue to encourage open communication through more direct and confidential means.

We plan formal parent conferences with all families to discuss your child's feelings about school and progress at least two times a year. A written summary of progress is generated for each student at least annually and given to parents. Parents of children with special needs may have additional meetings with staff to discuss their child's Individual Education Plan and its updates. It is our expectation that teachers and/or therapists will arrange face-to-face contact with parents, in person or through video conferencing platforms, at a mutually convenient time. We hope that you will feel free to initiate a meeting around any issues of concern during the course of the year. We are available to meet with parents on an informal basis; please call to arrange this with teachers and/or administrators so we can ensure appropriate coverage for the classroom and availability of staff to talk.

In a family situation where parents are living separately, we expect to communicate with and give access to both parents, unless otherwise noted in legal custody arrangements. It is the custodial parent's responsibility to give Jowonio a copy of any official custody or restraining order on file that might curtail or deny such access. It is expected that necessary releases, emergency contacts and authorizations will be directed to the custodial parent. We encourage the custodial parent to share

information with the non-custodial parent, if appropriate, with regard to conferences and school events.

Classroom Placement

Classroom placements for the following school year are made in the summer. We take into consideration parents' requests for a particular class although we are not always able to fulfill all requests. Class compositions change each year in terms of how children are grouped by age or learning needs. We try as best we can to be sure that all students have an appropriate peer group and that each class is balanced in terms of age, gender, needs, and experience at Jowonio. Since family plans often change over the summer, class lists will be sent to families in August.

Arrival and Dismissal

Jowonio currently offers four lengths of day in our classrooms. Drop off for all classrooms is at your convenience, between 8:45 and 9:00. If your child is enrolled in a part day classroom, their dismissal will be at 11:15, 11:45, or 1:00, depending on the length of day selected at enrollment. Full day classrooms dismiss anytime between 2:15 and 2:30. On Wednesdays we dismiss at 12:30 for regular staff development time, rather than taking any of the school district Conference Days.

Regular and punctual attendance is a benefit to students. We plan activities for the whole length of the child's day, and the more time a child is in school the more quickly he/she is comfortable with the routine, builds relationships with adults and classmates, and learns. If a child is consistently late, he/she misses the child-initiated time at the beginning of the day that allows for warming up and settling into the classroom.

For your child's safety please be sure that teachers know who is allowed to pick up your child each day and keep this list current. We need to know in writing if someone other than the usual adult will be getting your child at the close of their day.

It is also important that children are picked up on time, at their regular dismissal time. Jowonio teams meet after school to talk with therapists, to review the day and plan for the next, and to participate in staff development activities. A number of teachers have additional work or family obligations. We realize that there are occasional crises; in that case, call us at 315-445-4010 so we can relieve your child's

anxiety and make arrangements for coverage. But our expectation is that children will be picked up at the agreed-upon time. Fees will be charged if late pick-up becomes an ongoing concern. If your schedule is not working for you or your child, our staff may be able to help you make different arrangements. While our teachers can take a few minutes to talk at pick-up time, they are always open to scheduling a longer time to meet (just ask). Many will communicate through e-mail or the Remind app at the end of the school day.

Settling into School

We know that the beginning of the year can be a difficult time for parents and children, as both may be struggling with anxiety about separation and adjusting to new routines. Sometimes leaving a picture of family members and/or a small personal belonging of yours at school can be comforting. Teachers can help you create a "social story" that may help, and you can also read books at home about starting school. When you are ready to leave for the day, be sure to let your child know you are leaving---don't just disappear! It will help to make a plan about how the goodbye time will look; for example, "we will read a book together and give each other two hugs, before I head out to work". Our teachers will reassure and comfort your son or daughter if needed, and we will have lots of engaging activities for diversion! We are happy to let you know how your child is settling in during the day.

School Calendar

Jowonio develops its own school calendar. We often parallel the Syracuse City School District calendar for holidays and vacations. However we do not use their in-service days. Instead, we dismiss school early on Wednesday to allow for ongoing in-service training and team meetings for the Jowonio staff. A calendar is given to families at the beginning of the school year, and is available on our website. Following is a list of the holidays we observe: Indigenous People's Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas/ New Years, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Lunar New Year, Good Friday, Memorial Day, and Juneteenth. Jowonio will be closed those days. In addition, we have a break at the end of December, a mid-winter recess in February and a spring recess in March/April.

Summer School

Jowonio operates a six week program during the months of July and August. We offer our regular classroom curriculum and opportunities to explore the community and our terrific outdoor space in the good weather. Many of our school year staff teach in the summer. In the spring, we will send out an interest questionnaire about your summer plans.

Emergencies/School Closings

While we are located in the Syracuse City School District, and look to what they do for guidance in times of inclement weather, Jowonio administrators will make a separate decision about Jowonio's status, and announce any closings or delays, under Jowonio's name, on various news media. Announcements about our plans will be made on local radio and television stations, and an announcement will be sent out via the Remind app, generally between 5:30 and 7:15 in the morning.

If your child rides a bus to or from school, please be aware that buses cannot travel through a closed district. Thus, bussing will not be provided (or will be delayed) if the Syracuse City Schools are closed or delayed or if the district where your child is picked up or dropped off is closed or delayed. If Jowonio is open, you are welcome to transport your child to and from school so they may attend.

In case of a mid-day/early closure, we will announce the closing via the Remind app and on local news stations, and contact parents to come pick up their children if busing is not available. Therefore, we need to know how to reach you during the day or, in an emergency, whom we can call in your absence. If you are not at a number that we have, and the weather is bad, please call us (315-445-4010) and check on school closing plans. If we need to close because of a building emergency (i.e. no heat), a decision will be made as early as possible. In all cases, check the Remind app and/or your local radio and television stations.

Health and Safety

Child Abuse Policy. In accordance with New York Social Service Law, employees of Jowonio are mandated reporters, and must report to the State Central Registry any suspected incident of child abuse, maltreatment or neglect. Immediate action must be taken to ensure the health and safety of the child(ren) involved, and to preserve any potential evidence of maltreatment with as little disruption as possible to the

daily routine of the children at school. The Jowonio School Board has developed Code of Conduct Policies and Procedures to ensure the provision of a safe, healthy and nurturing school environment. This is available in the office at parent request.

Health. We are required by law to have a completed physical form for all children who attend our school which includes a list of immunizations, and a written statement signed by a health care provider stating that "the child is free from contagious and communicable diseases, and is able to participate in daycare," or "is eligible to participate in all school activities." The Office of Child and Family Services has stated that children cannot be in attendance without a current physical form on file. In the last few years, New York State has also passed much more stringent regulations regarding vaccinations. By law, the only allowable exemption from vaccine requirements is a medical exemption. This has created confusion and stress for families who have been on a delayed vaccination schedule or elected not to immunize their child. In order to remain in school, children must either be up to date on their immunizations within 14 days of starting school, or minimally have received at least the first dose of each vaccine series, and have scheduled appointments to receive remaining doses that comply with the published state catch-up schedule. Please talk with your pediatrician, and with us, if you have any questions about this. If your child has special health care needs (e.g. allergies, asthma, diabetes), please notify us so that together we can develop a plan for while your son or daughter is at school.

Attendance and Exclusion. Jowonio serves well children only. The potential for contagion is great with young children and our staff do all they can to minimize it through frequent handwashing, use of gloves, proper diapering and toileting, and sanitation of toys and furnishings. When a child develops symptoms of an illness, parents/guardians are called to pick them up if a child is unable to participate in normal class activities, requires more intense care than we can provide, or has an illness that is a potential risk to the child or to others. Parents and staff share responsibility for protecting children against contagion and infection. As part of the school's preventative health program, a child who shows any of the following signs or symptoms of illness must be kept home:

- An elevated temperature of 100 degrees or more (*The child may not return until 24 hours after the temperature is normal without the use of fever-reducing medication*).
- "Pink Eye" ...conjunctivitis or eye that is draining (*Consult your doctor*)
- Rash on face or body (*Consult your doctor*).
- Vomiting, upset stomach, diarrhea (*The child may not return until 24 hours after the last episode of diarrhea or vomiting*).
- Sore throat, earache, swollen glands (*Consult your doctor*).

- Cold with substantial nasal and/or chest congestion, discharge of thickened or colored mucous, or a deep cough.
- Any contagious disease: flu, impetigo, chickenpox, head lice, strep throat, etc.

Since the pandemic, respiratory viruses and symptoms have been a particular concern. If your child is showing symptoms of or tests positive for any respiratory illness, including COVID or flu, they must remain home until they have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND their symptoms are resolving.

Medication. In the New York State Education regulations any medicine, including over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or cough medicine, can be dispensed only by trained medical personnel or a parent. For us to give a child medication, we must have written permission from a parent and the child's physician stating:

- A. What the medication is
- B. What strength it is
- C. What the dosage is
- D. Why it is being given
- E. The time(s) of day/circumstances under which it should be dispensed

Additionally, all medications must come in labeled containers. If you anticipate that the medication must be dispensed during school hours, please ask your pharmacist for 2 containers: one for home and one for school. The convenience of this practice eliminates the necessity of transporting medicine between home and school on a daily basis. All medications will be kept in a locked box or bag. We encourage you to alert us about potential side effects of any medication your child is taking, so that our teachers and therapists are able to be on the lookout for them. We hope to work closely with parents at all times, but especially when a child is under the care of a physician and taking any medication. If your child requires medication for a chronic condition (such as asthma), our staff will work with you to arrange for its administration, which might include parents doing so. We do have a number of staff who are trained to administer medication.

First Aid and Emergencies. In the case of the normal bumps and scrapes that occur with young children, an Incident Report is completed by staff and parents will be notified by note or phone call. Our goal is to have at least one staff member in each classroom certified in CPR and First Aid. Each classroom, therapy space, and our vans are supplied with first aid kits. If our staff are concerned that your child needs to see a doctor, we will call you (and if we can't reach you, your emergency contact). Upon enrollment we ask you to sign a Medical Authorization for any situation requiring immediate medical attention when a parent cannot be reached. In an emergency, we

will call 911 and a staff member will accompany the child to the Emergency Room if it is deemed necessary. If a child needs medical treatment as a result of an injury sustained at school, we are required to report that to our daycare licenser at the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), who may reach out to you.

Absences. If your child will be absent from school, please call the school office (315-445-4010) in the morning to let the office and teaching staff know. If your child rides a bus to school, it is important that you also call the bus company to cancel their transportation for the day. If a child is out due to illness, please let us know the nature of the illness. If it is contagious, staff need to be aware, in order to watch for symptoms in other children and to alert the families of your child's classmates. If a child is absent for an extended period of time (in circumstances other than recovery from an accident or surgery), we will talk with parents about the appropriateness of a school setting at this time.

Alternate child care arrangements can best be made in advance to be prepared for the time when a child is too ill to attend school. If a child becomes ill at school, it is our policy to try to reach their parent(s). If this fails, we will notify the person you have listed as an emergency contact to come and pick your child up. Please be sure that your contact has agreed to fulfill this role, is listed as an approved pick up person, and that the contact information Jowonio has is up to date and accurate; let us know of any changes (i.e. telephone numbers, contact person) as they occur.

Be sure to share with us information about any allergies your child has. When a student has a severe food allergy (e.g. peanuts), we will adapt the food allowed in a room and/or the school to be sure that every child is safe. Our school nurse will work with you and your doctor to complete an allergy/anaphylaxis plan.

Fire Drills. Fire drills will occur at least monthly, in accordance with state regulations, so that all children will become aware of the appropriate procedures. Our building has a fire alarm system that rings directly into the fire department. Jowonio has an Emergency Evacuation Plan, in case the building needs to be shut down. We have alternative sites in the neighborhood where we can be accommodated while the situation is being addressed. We also have a "Shelter in Place" plan in the event of a crisis where children should remain in a lock-down mode in their classrooms.

Food At Jowonio

Children eat in their classrooms at Jowonio and bring their own snack and drink. If they are in an extended or full-day class they bring lunch as well; it is fine that each child brings food reflective of his/her own family and culture. Each classroom has a microwave oven and a refrigerator if lunches need to be heated or chilled. Jowonio has a small "food bank" in the event that your child might need food for the day; this can be accessed through your child's teacher or our Social Work staff. If your child is celebrating a birthday and you want to bring in a treat, please consult with the teachers regarding any dietary issues of class members. Be sure to notify us if your child has particular food allergies or other dietary restrictions. Many of our classrooms have cooking activities as part of their curriculum.

We know that many young children have unique eating habits, and some are learning to eat and drink. Because of this we have developed a Philosophy and Mission Statement around eating and developing the skills needed to eat and drink.

We Believe

- in a low pressure/no pressure environment when trying new foods
- there are no "good" or "bad" foods; instead, we focus on what each food does for the body
- food is part of our curriculum, we encourage activities and exposure regularly around new foods
- mealtimes are an opportunity to grow and foster social skills, we support and encourage interactions regularly

Ask your teachers or therapists for our complete eating philosophy for more information, and/or reach out to them if you have concerns about your child's eating or drinking.

Clothing

We hope you will dress your child in practical clothes that will withstand floor and outdoor play; we like for children to be comfortable and unafraid of getting their outfits dirty. We also encourage you to send your child in sneakers or shoes with rubber soles for outdoor or gym play, so they are safe for climbing and running. Also, leave a few complete changes of clothing at school in case they are needed. Each classroom has a supply of spare clothing, so if your child wears home "Jowonio spares" one day, we ask that you wash them and return them to school. During the winter,

the children often go outside and play in the snow so your child should be dressed appropriately for the weather; we will note on the weekly schedule when more extensive outdoor times are planned. Jowonio maintains a clothing closet; contact a member of our family support staff, if your family is ever in need of extras or if you would like to donate outgrown clothes to the closet. We usually have a baby and kids' rummage sale at some point in the year, where families can donate outgrown items and pick up things that might fit their children.

Toilet Learning

We do not require children at Jowonio to be toilet trained. We believe that each child needs to be ready for this and will approach the toileting process on his/her own schedule. When a child is hurried, it may impede their movement toward self-control. All our classrooms have a bathroom with child-sized facilities, and we often find that modeling other children is an effective step in gaining independence in toileting. If your child is not yet using the toilet regularly, please provide a supply of diapers/pull-ups and wipes to the classroom, as well as extra clothes, labeled with your child's name, in case of accidents. Talk with teachers about your family's approach to toileting.

Safety as You Enter and Exit

There is a great deal of traffic when families are coming and going in the parking lot. Hold your child's hand, be particularly watchful about cars in the parking lot, and help students carefully navigate the stairs. If you need assistance with drop-off and pick-up, please talk with your child's teacher.

Building Access and Security

For safety, we have a "single point of entry" to our building, which is the front door. The doors of the building are locked at all times, except the front door when someone is seated at the reception desk. The front and west doors of the school are handicapped-accessible and accessible parking spaces are identified in the west parking lot. Please do not ask other parents or staff to let you in the other doors - this is for everyone's protection. You can exit the building through any of the doors.

No child will be released to an adult other than his/her parents without written permission from the parents or guardian. Our goal is to protect the safety and mental health of the child.

Visitors are asked to sign in at the front desk and indicate the purpose of their visit and their destination within the building. Therapists from other agencies providing services to Jowonio students at our site may only do so with prior permission from the school and in accordance with an agreed-upon plan between Jowonio staff, the parents, and the therapist. The therapist must follow the expectations for all visitors and no other child may join the therapy without express permission of the parent of that child.

Transportation

There is no transportation for typically developing preschoolers.

Children who qualify for a full program of special education services are eligible for busing, although parents are encouraged to transport their child and may be reimbursed for doing so. Busing is arranged on a county-wide contract basis. Parents are usually notified by the bus company about the time of pick-up and drop-off for their child. If there are any problems with the bus, deal directly with the vendor and let Jowonio know. The county also has a contact person for transportation issues. Parents must notify the bus company if your child will not be riding due to illness or changed plans such as a parent dropping off a child. If parents are late meeting the bus, the county has a right to cancel busing.

Many students at Jowonio are transported by their parents or guardians. We try to connect families who are seeking cooperative carpooling through our office.

Family Tuition

Jowonio has a sliding scale for tuition for students. Those receiving a full program of special services, as well as 3 and 4 year olds who reside in the City School District and are enrolled in the Universal PreK Program attend for free, as their tuition is paid by the State. The Jowonio Board and staff have a scholarship fund and parents who are required to pay tuition are able to apply for a reduction in the amount. Parents who contract with Jowonio to pay tuition are urged to keep their payments up to date. If the annual tuition is paid at the beginning of the year, we offer a 2% discount; tuition paid in two lump sums (September and January) receives a 1% discount. To arrange when payments will be made, talk with our Office Manager, at the front desk. We do not bill you. We typically operate on a tight budget and timely receipt of parent tuition is required for us to meet our expenses. If your payment

must be delayed for any reason, what we ask is a willingness on your part to talk with us, even though we know this may be difficult to do. We will try to help you develop a plan for the payment of your tuition. We pass on to families the cost of any bank charges incurred if a check is returned for insufficient funds.

Questions or Concerns

We want to stress our hope that you will feel comfortable communicating with the classroom, resource and administrative staff at Jowonio. Feel free to call 315-445-4010 and to arrange with teachers to visit and talk, expressing your questions, concerns, or suggestions. Our administrators, liaisons/clinical coordinators, and social workers are also available to listen to your concerns and help you access community resources. In general, concerns about your child's daily experiences at school should be addressed to the classroom staff that works with him/her everyday. Questions or concerns about the school as a whole can be addressed to administrative liaisons and/or the director. In addition, administrative liaisons and/or the director are happy to help if you have concerns that you feel are not being adequately addressed by the classroom team and/or are unsure how to approach. Jowonio is a community that includes parents, staff, and children. We want you to feel welcome, to see us as helpful for you as a parent, and to find ways to participate and contribute to the quality of our program. We are seeking a partnership between staff and parents for the good of our children. We all look forward to a great year!