



# The Florida Environmental Education Center "Zoo School" Parent Handbook 2009-2010



## **Our Mission: To connect people with the living earth.**

To schedule a tour of the Zoo School:

Jennifer B. McLachlan, Director of Education (813)935-8552 ext. 209

After you have scheduled your tour:

- Fill out and return the Registration Packet. To return via fax (813)933-7949 or return in person to the Zoo School (Resource Center).
- Remember, program reservation is a first come, first serve basis.
- A one time only \$50 processing fee must be collected with your completed Registration Packet.
- A confirmation letter will be sent within two weeks via email (if provided) or U.S. Postal Service.
- Original Shot and Physical Records must accompany your child on his/her first day of school.
- Your full month or prorated month tuition will be charged the month that your child begins.
- If you have any questions please email [Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com)

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2009-2010 Calendar

January 18, 2010	Martin Luther King Jr Day (Kindergarten Closed)
April 12-16, 2010	Spring Break (School Closed)
April 19, 2010	Students return to School
May 31, 2010	Memorial Day (Kindergarten Closed)
June 11, 2010	Last Day of School (for children not attending summer session)
June 14, 2010	First Day of Summer (for Summer only Children)
August 12,13, 2010	School Closed for Teacher Workday
August 20, 2010	Last Day of School (2009-2010)

2010-2011

August 23, 2010	First Day of New School Year
September 6, 2010	Labor Day (Kindergarten Closed)
November 11, 2010	Veteran's Day (Kindergarten Closed)
November 25, 26, 2010	Thanksgiving (School Closed)
December 20-31, 2010	Winter Break (School Closed)
January 3, 2011	Students Return to School
January 17, 2011	Martin Luther King Jr Day (Kindergarten Closed)
February 21, 2011	Presidents Day (Kindergarten is Closed)
March 28-April 1, 2011	Spring Break (School Closed)
April 4, 2011	Students return to School
May 30, 2011	Memorial Day (Kindergarten Closed)
June 9, 2011	Last Day of School

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

**Zoo Phone Number: (813) 935-8552**

**Extensions:**

Director of Education at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, Jennifer McLachlan_____	209 (office extension)
<b>Early Childhood Education Manger, Ms. Kellie Hales_____</b>	<b>262 (office extension)</b>
Early Childhood Education Assistant, Ms. Maranda Holley_____	277 (office extension)
Kindergarten Teacher, Ms. Aimee_____	327 (classroom extension)
Pre-School Teacher, Ms. Holly_____	328 (classroom extensions)
Pre-School Teacher, Ms. Danielle_____	326 (classroom extension)
ECE Teacher, Ms. Jennifer and Ms. Latoya_____	325 (classroom extension)
Pre-School Teacher, Ms. Roxanne_____	324 (classroom extension)
Pre-School Teacher, Ms. Leslie_____	323 (classroom extension)
Pre-School Teacher, Ms. Samantha_____	322 (classroom extension)
ECE Teacher, Ms. Gina and Ms. Mandi_____	321 (classroom extension)
Youth Programs Coordinator, M.C. Degood_____	479 (office extension)
Tuition Payment; Jamie Myers_____	268 or Jamie.Myers@LowryParkZoo.com

**Emergency Situations- When you cannot reach the teachers at the above extensions:**

- In the event of an emergency and your child is currently in class, please hang up dial "0" for the operator and ask them to radio unit 117.

- If all phone lines are not able to connect you in an event of an emergency please call (813) 933-7949.

### **WEATHER RELATED CLOSING**

1. Listen to the radio or local news for announcements regarding school closings. We follow the Hillsborough County School calendar as closely as possible for emergencies. In the event of a hurricane or any other event that would put the students or staff in an unsafe position, we will be closed.
2. Call (813)935-8552, listen closely to see if the main Zoo will be closed. If the main Zoo is closed during inclement weather the Zoo School will also be closed.

### **MISSION STATEMENTS**

#### **Mission of the Florida Environmental Education Center at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo (Zoo School)**

To provide a safe, clean, pleasant and caring environment in which each student may develop his or her physical, social, emotional, and intellectual potential at his or her own pace while fostering a respect for wildlife and wild places through unique Zoo interactions.

#### **Mission of American Zoological Association (AZA)**

AZA zoos and aquariums are places where people connect with animals. We are therefore dedicated to excellence in animal care and welfare, conservation, education, and research that collectively inspire respect for animals and nature.

Our professional association's mission is to provide its members and their visitors the best possible services through:

- establishing and maintaining excellent professional standards in all AZA Institutions through its accreditation program;
- establishing and promoting high standards of animal care and welfare;
- promoting and facilitating collaborative conservation and research programs;
- advocating effective governmental policies for our members;
- strengthening and promoting conservation education programs for our public and professional development for our members, and;
- raising awareness of the collective impact of its members and their programs.

#### **AZA Vision**

The American Zoo and Aquarium Association envision a world where all people respect, value and conserve animals and nature.

#### **AZA Values of the Association and its Members**

We value the AZA in its entirety. We respect the roles that each, the association and its members, play in collaboratively achieving our vision. We value our members, and open, honest and respectful communication.

- Conservation of the Living Natural World—We value the living natural world and recognize the role of our animals as ambassadors. We value the integration of environmentally responsible practices into all aspects of our business.
- Conservation Education for Members and the Public—We value our roles as trusted messengers for the natural world and seek to accelerate positive conservation action through individual and collaborative educational efforts of AZA member institutions.
- Animal Care and Welfare—AZA cares deeply about animal care and welfare, within and beyond its member Zoos and aquariums, and is guided by Accreditation Standards, the Code of Professional Ethics, the Animal Acquisition/Disposition Policy, and science-based animal care standards.

#### **Science**

We believe in a science-based approach to animal care, conservation and education programs.

#### **Excellence**

From our Code of Professional Ethics and Accreditation Standards, to our daily conduct and programs, AZA values, establishes, upholds and promotes the excellent professional standards of our profession.

## **Diversity**

AZA recognizes and embraces the values of human diversity, and accepts both the moral imperatives of our changing society and the impacts of these changes on our personal and professional lives.

### **Cooperation and Partnership**

We value, encourage and foster cooperation and partnerships within and beyond the zoo and aquarium community.

### **Outstanding Quality Experience for Visitors**

We recognize that visitors expect and deserve an outstanding quality experience when they visit an AZA accredited zoo or aquarium.

## **ABOUT TAMPA'S LOWRY PARK ZOO SCHOOL**

### **History**

In 1998, plans to build the Florida Environmental Education Center at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo known to us as "Zoo School" were accelerated by then chairman of the Lowry Park Zoological Society board, Richard L. Stohler, president of Cummins Southeastern Power. The Zoo was previously accommodating nearly 70,000 school students a year without classrooms. Tampa resident and Lowry Park Zoological Society board member Patricia C. Sullivan, herself a former school teacher, provided a \$1 million leadership gift for construction. The Frank E. Duckwall Foundation provided a \$500,000 grant as the namesake for the exhibit hall (e.g. the Lecture Hall).

In 2005, board member and Zoo School founder Patricia C. Sullivan issued a challenge grant to expand the Zoo School. The grant was successfully met in full by the Thomas Family, represented by fellow Zoo board member Robert M. Thomas. The grant provided funding for an Annex with additional classrooms and a Youth Center to meet the needs of the community, and provide for teen programs as future funding permitted. In 2007, the Zoo received a grant from Jane's Trust that provided two years of programming for the ECCO (Education, Conservation and Community Opportunities) Leadership Program. Since June 2008, the Youth Center has been opened Monday through Friday 3pm to 7pm for all Zoo Youth Program participants. The ECCO Leadership Program has served 97 teens, ages 12 to 17.

In the Fiscal Year 2007, the Zoo was able to serve more than 180,000 students in education programs. We also have had over 50 teens ages 16 to 18 involved in the Zoo Crew Explorers Program, since January 2008. The Zoo Crew Explorers program is the Zoo's teen internship program, which has been in existence for 11 years and has enabled many teens the opportunity to transition into acquiring paid positions at the Zoo.

In February 2009, 28 of the teens in the ECCO Leadership Program graduated from the 9 month program, each accumulating a minimum of 100 service hours, some totaling over 225 hours each. We currently have 55 enrolled teens scheduled to graduate in December 2009. Zoo School facilities enable the educational department to serve more students, teachers and parents more efficiently, year-round. For more information please visit [LowryParkZoo.com](http://LowryParkZoo.com).

### **Facilities**

The Florida Environmental Education Center at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo (Zoo School) is dedicated to serving as an educational resource for the community. The facility offers:

- 17,500 square-feet of hands-on learning areas;
- 13 classrooms equipped with computers, TVs and DVD/VCRs to support innovative learning;
- The Frank E. Duckwall Foundation Exhibit Hall for conservation education programs and meetings.

### **Programs**

Zoo School programs are designed to be fun, innovative, imaginative and investigative for all ages. The vision of the education department is to provide quality experiences and build new programs for new audiences based on the needs of the community. To do this the Zoo School offers an onsite kindergarten and year-round early childhood education programs, licensed by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners Child Care Licensing Office #CTA 430588. The only accredited school in the country run by a Zoo itself, **Zoo School**.

## **STAFF CREDENTIAL**

The staff at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo School that work with the Early Childhood Education, Preschool and Kindergarten are highly experienced with early childhood education. The Lead Kindergarten teacher possesses no less than a B.S. in Education with K-3 certification (certification will be completed or will be required to receive within 5 months of accepting position). The staff is committed to the safety and comfort of students in this important stage of learning and development. Our staff has a love for

students, teaching, animals and environmental conservation. All Lead and Assistant Teachers must attend a 40 hour licensing module (module must be completed within one year of employment if the teacher does not already possess it); 10 in-service hours are required each year, as well as 0.5 unit of approved training of continuing education or 5 clock hours of training in early literacy and language development. Currently 5 of our Lead Teacher have their Child Development Associate. The director is required a Director Credential.

### **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CHILD CARE LICENSING**

**License Number: C TA 43058** License Issued on 07/01/2010 License Expires on 06/30/2011

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo Preschool, which is licensed by the State of Florida, Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing, is in operation Monday through Friday, 7am-6pm. The license is posted at the entrance of the Zoo School. The laws and rules are available at the school. The school's licensing record, including compliance report forms and evaluation forms from the health, building, and fire departments, are available upon request.

### **DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES LICENSING**

**License Number: S. 402.3125(5), F.S.**

Every licensed child care facility must meet the minimum state child care licensing standards pursuant to s. 402.305, F.S., and ch.65C-22, F.A.C., which include, but are not limited to, the following requirements. To report non-compliance with state licensing standards, please contact Hillsborough County licensing office.

#### **General Requirements**

- Valid license posted for parents to see
- All staff are appropriately screened
- Maintain minimum staff-to-student ratio:
  - Under 1 year old – 4 students to 1 teacher
  - 1 year old – 6 students to 1 teacher
  - 2 years old – 11 students to 1 teacher
  - 3 years old – 15 students to 1 teacher
  - 4 years old – 20 students to 1 teacher
  - 5 years old & older – 25 students to 1 teacher

#### **Health Related Requirements**

Emergency procedures that include:

- Posting Florida Abuse Hotline number along with other emergency numbers
- Staff trained in first aid and Infant/Child CPR on the premises at all times
- Fully stocked first aid kit
- A working fire extinguisher and documented monthly fire drills with children and staff medication and hazardous materials are inaccessible and out of student's reach

#### **Record Keeping**

Maintain accurate records that include:

- Student's health exam/immunization record
- Medication records
- Enrollment information
- Personnel records
- Daily attendance
- Accident and incident reports
- Parental permission for field trips and administration of medications

#### **Parent's Role**

The parent's role in quality child care is vital to the child care provider's success. In partnering with the Zoo School to achieve this goal, parents should:

- Inquire about the qualifications and experience of staff
- Know the Zoo School policies and procedures
- Communicate with the teachers and staff

- Visit and observe the facility
- Participate in special activities, meetings, and conferences
- Talk to your child about their daily experiences at Zoo School
- Arrange alternate care for your child when they are sick

### CONFIDENTIALITY & DISCRETION

Confidentiality of information is a very important aspect of our program. Sometimes we encounter situations such as parents who express a concern about another child’s behavior. This typically happens during a Parent Conference (formal and informal). Although we understand your concern for the welfare of your child, we cannot discuss detailed information about other children and families with you. Please keep in mind that children develop at very different rates and it’s not realistic to expect all children to behave the way you expect them to. What is disturbing to one parent (name calling, hitting, etc.) is not as upsetting to another. As professional staff we have to decide what behavior is unacceptable and beyond what is considered typical for that age. Please know that we are always working with individual children and families, but we can not disclose this information to you. Parents need to be assured that we won’t discuss their child’s development or progress with others, so this applies to your child as well.

We expect the staff as well as the parents to use their best judgment and avoid any discussions about other parents, teachers and students. It is not acceptable to use confidential information such as telephone, addresses or email address as a sounding board for confidential information about children and families. If it is found out that this policy has not been upheld then your family will be asked to leave Zoo School.

#### **Grievance Steps**

1. If there is a matter of concern regarding another child’s behavior in the classroom, please feel free to address it with the classroom teacher.
2. If you feel appropriate measures were not taken by the classroom teacher please come by or set up an appointment with the Early Childhood Education Manager Kellie Hales (Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com or call (813)935-8552 ext. 262).
3. If you feel appropriate measures were not taken by the Early Childhood Education Manager please come by or set up an appointment with the Director of Education, Jennifer McLachlan ([Jennifer.McLachlan@Lowryparkzoo.com](mailto:Jennifer.McLachlan@Lowryparkzoo.com) or call (813) 935-8552 ext. 209).

Any sensitive or personal information pertaining to students, teachers, families or related matters will be kept confidential.

### AGE LEVEL CLASSIFICATIONS

#### **Admission Requirements for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Pre-School**

##### Admission Requirements

**Admission Requirements for ECE and Pre-School:** A student whose birthday is on or before October 1 of the current school year shall be eligible to enter the next age level of our program. **We are no longer able to move students up to new classrooms on their birth date after October 1. The biggest request for moving up usually happens in the Two Year Old room, please be aware they will not be able to move to the Three Year Old room until the new school year.**

**Admission Requirements for Kindergarten:** A student whose fifth birthday is on or before October 1 of the current school year shall be eligible to enter kindergarten. If you student’s birthday is October 1- 31 and you want your child to attend Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo’s Kindergarten, our Kindergarten teacher will conduct an assessment to determine eligibility.

##### SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

- Kindergarten students runs a 10 month academic year cycle (August –May).  
*During the summer you will have an opportunity to enroll children in Summer Camp at the Zoo.  
Please see page 13 for details about Summer Camp Enrollment.*
- Pre-K, Early Childhood Education runs in a 12 month academic year cycle (August- July).

##### HOURS OF OPERATION

- Pre-K and Early Childhood Education (ECE) begins at 8:00am and ends at 2:30pm

- Extended day hours are 7am-8am; and 2:30-6:00pm and can be purchased for an additional cost
- Kindergarten begins at 9:00am and ends at 3:00pm
  - Extended day hours are 7:00am-9:00am; and 3:00-6:00pm and can be purchased for an additional cost

### **CLASS SIZE AND STAFF/CHILD RATIOS**

ECE (12-24 month) 12 students to 2 teachers  
 ECE (24-36 month) 12 students to 2 teachers  
 Pre-K (3-year-olds) 12 students to 1 teacher  
 Pre-K (4-year-olds) 12 students to 1 teacher  
 Kindergarten (5-year-olds) 6 students to 1 teacher

### **DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES**

Developmentally appropriate practices allow us to approach learning and teaching from a developmental perspective. It is recognized that, even at the same age, no two students are at the same point in their physical, emotional, social or academic development. Teaching practices will provide students with guidance and instruction at his/her own level. For example, a student who is ready to read is taught reading skills and a student who is not yet ready to read will be taught letter recognition and pre-reading skills. At Zoo School, we utilize developmentally appropriate practices in lessons, activities, and daily events to provide each student with the optimum environment for their growth and development.

### **PRE-SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN ACADEMIC APPROACH AND CURRICULUM**

We provide a unique environmental curriculum that includes hands-on experiences in science, math, reading, writing, art, health, and social skills. We believe that students learn through play and action – by touching, tasting, smelling, seeing and doing. Since each student is unique and learns at a different pace and in a different style, the curriculum is geared toward developmentally appropriate activities and includes both planned and free choice activities. The classrooms are organized to accommodate various activities that invite and encourage exploration and discovery. Our goal is to prepare the students for a life of learning by emphasizing problem solving and decision-making, as well as, providing an opportunity and support for cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, language, and self-help development.

Our approach to curriculum is unique and is specifically designed to incorporate all of the Zoo’s resources and benefits. We use a combination of theme based learning and quality curriculum programs and tailor them to best meet the needs of each student.

One of the curriculums we utilize is *The Kids Incorporated School Readiness Express Curriculum* and *Growing Readers Early Literacy* by *High/Scope Educational Research Foundation*. The goal of this program is to expose pre-school students to diverse concepts concerning pre-reading skills and literature.

In addition, *Think Earth* is a supplemental curriculum that introduces conservation and environmental science at a preschool level. Students learn how and why their actions affect the environment and positive steps they can take to help our environment.

#### **In addition to theme topics, instruction will enable students to:**

Experience:

- Meet, discover, and interact with animals as a means of learning
- Be a member of a group and function as a productive member of the group
- Develop the skills needed to get along with others, to take turns, and to respect all creatures; both human and animal, as well as the environment
- Learn to follow the direction of an adult, other than a parent/guardian or relative
- Build self-esteem in a loving/caring environment
- Lay the foundation for social, academic, and personal success
- Build with blocks, dramatize stories, cut without assistance, use glue, and paint
- Learn letter names and talk about their sounds by using animals as examples for each letter of the alphabet

Reading Readiness:

- Build vocabulary and create complete sentences

- Enjoy books and learn how to use them
- Listen to stories, read aloud, and answer questions about the stories
- Learn to recognize words using sound spelling and visual cues

#### Writing Skills:

- Develop great and fine motor skills
- Develop hand-eye coordination
- Manipulate toys, puzzles, play dough, and clay
- Finger paint, draw, paste, and color
- Use invented spelling and sound spelling to write words
- Learn to write their names correctly
- Learn to use a capital letter for the first letter and lower case letters for the rest of their name
- Draw illustrations to express ideas and communicate thoughts

#### Math Skills:

- Build number skills
- Feel comfortable with numbers by using cubes, blocks, and other counting materials
- Compare sizes, recognize different shapes, colors, textures, likenesses and differences, how many and how few, tell time, count the days of the week and months of the year and use materials that give meaning to terms such as smaller and larger, over and under, and equal to
- Create, extend and use patterns using both man-made and natural materials getting a feel of numbers by using uni-fix cubes, blocks, and other materials

#### Environmental/Animal Science:

- Learn to respect and love our natural world
- Develop a strong appreciation of animal species
- Understand the importance of conservation, reusing and recycling
- Learn about and define the environmental terms such as: “threatened”, “endangered”, and “extinct”
- Learn about the important role that aquariums and zoos play in preserving wildlife
- Generate questions about the world around them
- Make observations while exploring our natural world
- Cultivate curiosity about how things work and grow
- Predict outcomes
- Learn about processes of life, learn categorizing, classification through characteristics
- Distinguish between threatening and non-threatening environments (strangers, stray dogs, etc.)

#### Health:

- Learn about proper nutrition, healthy foods, exercise, and hygiene
- Practice daily self-care by washing hands, brushing teeth, grooming, etc.
- Know sources of health information (doctor, nurse, dentist, etc.)
- Identify safe and unsafe behaviors

#### Social Skills:

- Learn and recognize their name, address, and phone number
- Develop an appreciation for the values and opinions of others
- Respect individual differences
- Name and recognize Florida wildlife

#### Art:

- Learn how to color and paint and mold using control and concentration
- Use glue with little to no assistance
- Follow simple, visual directions when folding a piece of paper
- Use scissors with little to no assistance
- Learn and identify eight basic colors (green, yellow, orange, blue, black, brown, red, and purple)
- Identify various textures
- Create projects using items collected from our natural world and from recycled materials

Music:

- Memorize the words to songs, rhymes, and finger plays
- Recognize familiar songs
  
- Respond to traditional rhymes
- Participate in music activities
- Appreciate music from other cultures and countries

Physical Education:

- Effectively walk, hop, jump, skip, gallop, etc.
- Maintain balance and gross muscle control
- Coordinate body movements with others
- Begin to learn basics of common team games and sports
- 

**SAMPLE PRE-SCHOOL SCHEDULE (3-4 YEARS OF AGE)**

A.M Extended Care		
7:00-8:00		Breakfast and Centers
Class Time Begins		
8:00-9:00		Welcome & Open Centers
9:00-9:30		Circle Time
9:30-9:45		Snack
9:45-9:55		Bathroom Break
9:55-11:00		Zoo Hike or Outside Time
11:00-11:45		Art and Centers
11:45-12:00		Clean Up
12:00-12:45		Lunch
12:45-2:30		Nap/Quiet Time
2:30-3:00		Quiet Activity
Afternoon Extended Care		
3:00-3:45		Outside Time or Zoo Hike
3:45-4:00		Snack
4:00-6:00		Centers or Outside Time

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION APPROACH AND CURRICULUM**

At the Zoo School we are teaching early childhood skills such as colors, shapes, numbers and social skills. During this period we try to teach these skills revolving around the Zoo's animals and environment. We are encouraging independence and a life-long love of learning.

**In addition to theme topics, instruction will continually focus on:**

- Potty training
- Colors
- Shapes
- Body parts
- Senses
- Textures
- Following simple directions
- Dealing with emotions
- Starting to share
- Using words

## **SAMPLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) SCHEDULE (12 MONTHS-36 MONTHS)**

### Morning Extended Care

7:00-8:00 Breakfast and Centers

### Class Time Begins

8:00-8:45 Free Centers and Creative Play  
8:45-9:00 Bathroom Break/Diaper Changing/Clean Up  
9:00-9:15 Circle Time with Stories and Songs  
9:15-9:45 Snack  
9:45-10:30 Zoo Hike or Outside Time  
10:30-11:00 Bathroom Break/Diaper changing/Hand Washing  
11:00-11:30 Art and Centers  
11:30-11:45 Clean Up  
11:45-12:15 Lunch  
12:15-12:30 Bathroom Break/Diaper Changing  
12:30-2:30 Nap/Quiet Time  
2:30-3:00 Clean Up and Bathroom Break

### Afternoon Extended Care

3:00-3:20 Snack  
3:20-4:15 Outside Time or Zoo Hike  
4:15-6:00 Centers or Outside Time

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Our programs are structured to minimize the incidence of inappropriate student behavior. We will apply the following techniques to help students develop self-control and self-esteem:

- Positive reinforcement and praise will be used to encourage appropriate behavior.
- Reasonable limits will be set and will be consistently enforced.
- Engaging and interactive lessons and activities will be continually introduced.
- Students will be offered choices of play activities and materials when appropriate.
- We will encourage the students to use their words to solve problems rather than hitting, screaming, or crying. We will encourage independent problem-solving skills and guide the students to talk the problem out, in order to find a solution that is pleasing to all students involved.
- The students will be made aware of the consequences of inappropriate actions and concrete rationalizations of the rules and expectations will be presented.
- Students will be offered choices when appropriate.
- Students will be encouraged to use their words instead of crying, screaming and/or hitting.
- Problem solving and conflict resolution skills will be modeled by teachers and staff.

In the event that a student is disruptive to the class, abuses Zoo property, abuses another student or teacher either verbally or physically, or exhibits any other inappropriate behavior while attending Zoo School, the following procedures will apply:

- The student will be removed from the situation. The student will be offered another space, away from other students, where he/she can calm down and regain control.
- The student may return to the group whenever he/she and the teacher feel that the behavior is under control. Written incident documentation will be given to the parent/guardian about the student's disruptive behavior.
- After the third written incident documentation and after speaking with the parents/guardians, if a change in the student's behavior is not being exhibited and the student's behavior continues to disrupt the classroom or the student continues to physically harm other students or staff members; Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo School reserves the right to dismiss the student from the facility.

## TUITION PRICE

Kindergarten and Pre-School Academic Day prices per month (8:00am-2:30pm):

- Kindergarten: Monthly \$499 (M-F)
- 5-Day Class: Monthly \$499 (M-F)
- 3-Day Class: Monthly \$331 (M, W, F)
- 2-Day Class: Monthly \$247 (T, TH)

Kindergarten and Pre-School Extended Day prices per month (7:00am-8:00am and 2:30am-6:00pm):

- Kindergarten Extended Care: Monthly \$200
- 5-Day Extended Care: Monthly \$200
- 3-Day Extended Care: Monthly \$120
- 2-Day Extended Care: Monthly \$80

Early Childhood Education Academic Day prices per month (8:00am-2:30pm)

- 5-Day Class: Monthly \$581(M-F)
- 3-Day Class: Monthly \$361 (M, W, F)
- 2-Day Class: Monthly \$253 (T, TH)

Early Childhood Education Extended Day prices per month (7:00am-8:00am and 2:30am-6:00pm)

- 5-Day Extended Care: Monthly \$200
- 3-Day Extended Care: Monthly \$120
- 2-Day Extended Care: Monthly \$80

## TUITION PAYMENT OPTIONS

**Tuition is DUE by or on the first of each month.**

Tuition is paid once a month or in a lump sum for 10 months.

- Via automatic debit from credit card or debit card.
  - Sign off of on the Credit Card Information Sheet for direct withdrawal.
  - Between the first through the fifth of the month our reservation staff will debit your credit or debit card/account.
- Cash/Check payments must be made to our reservations staff in the Resource Center and placed inside the Tuition Mailbox located at the top right corner of the staff mailboxes (in the middle of the Resource Center).
  - Please make checks payable to: **Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo**
  - If paying in cash please place cash in a marked envelope

If you would like to change your payment to a credit or debit card please contact our Reservation Staff at [Jamie.Myers@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Jamie.Myers@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 268.

## **FREE DAYS**

- Two weeks of vacation can be used after your child has attended at least five months of school.
- To account for winter holiday school closings, tuition for the academic day and extended care for the month of December will be at half the normal rate.
- Refer to page 13 for more details.

***Parents are still responsible for tuition on days the Zoo school is closed and services are not being rendered.***

## LATE TUITION PAYMENT POLICY

**Tuition is due by or on the first day of each month.**

- A 5% late fee will be added to your regular monthly tuition for the first late week.
- A 10% late fee will be added to your tuition if it is more than two weeks late. The credit card on file will be charged.

- You must have a valid credit card kept on file, even if the card is not charged monthly. This is only used in case payment has been late over two weeks.

- After the third week, if payment has not been made, you will be charged on your credit card for the full month's fee plus the additional late fees. No notification is required.

## VACATION, ABSENTEE AND PRORATED TUITION POLICY

### Vacation Policy

**Vacation weeks are two FREE weeks during the school year obtained when your child has attended at least five months of Zoo School.** An Absentee and Vacation Notice must be filled out TWO weeks prior to vacation. If vacation weeks are not used during the school calendar year that runs August-May; you **cannot** receive a reimbursement at the end of the year nor can they roll over to the following year. Please contact your classroom teacher or Jamie Myers at [Jamie.Myers@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Jamie.Myers@LowryParkZoo.com) or call (813)935-8552 ext. 268 to request a vacation form to be picked up, sent via email, fax or U.S. Postal Service.

### Absentee Policy

Whether your child is absent or present, tuition payments are applied to benefit the Zoo School, so that your child can enjoy Zoo School opportunities when he/she is present. Daily and/or weekly absences are still payable, except in the case of extenuating circumstances with approval. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Early Childhood Education Manager (Kellie Hales at [KellieHales@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:KellieHales@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 262).

### Prorating for December

To account for winter holiday school closings, tuition for the academic day and extended care for the month of December will be at half the normal rate.

## DISCOUNT OFFERED TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS

- **Sibling Discount**—A sibling discount is offered to those with more than one student attending the Kindergarten, Preschool or Early Childhood Education programs. You will pay regular price tuition for the first student, and each student after that will receive a **5%** discount. Discount applied to the lower tuition rate.
- **Membership Discount**—Families of students currently enrolled in Zoo School will receive a **10%** discount off the price of an annual Zoo Pass. To receive your discount you must email the director (Jennifer McLachlan at [Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com) to request a special "Zoo Parent" membership form.
- **Winter, Spring and Holiday Camps**—Students who are 5-years-old and enrolled in our Kindergarten have the opportunity to attend the **Winter, Spring and Holiday Camps at 50% off** when the Pre-School and Kindergarten are closed. Payment for camp must be paid in advance and booked through reservation staff located in the Resource Center to receive discount. Discount cannot be applied to extended care.
- **Summer Camps**—currently enrolled Kindergarten students can attend **Summer Camps** at the Zoo for a discounted rate of **20% off** per week enrolled. Payment for K-1 summer camp must be paid in advance and booked through reservation staff located in the Resource Center to receive discount. Discount cannot be applied to extended care.
  - There is no discount on Pre-School and Early Childhood Education during the summer months (June and July). Summer programs are completely separate from our K-8<sup>th</sup> grade Summer Camps.

## EARLY/LATE PICK UP AND DROP OFF POLICY

### Early/Late Pick Up

#### **Non-Extended Care:**

- 8:00am drop off and 2:30pm pick up (9:00am and 3:00pm—Kindergarten)
- \$15 early/late fee will be charged for drop-off/pick-up any time before 8:00am and after 2:30 pm (9:00am and 3:00pm—Kindergarten)
- \$1 per minute fee will be charged for pick up any time after 6:00pm

#### **Extended Care:**

- Pick up is by or before 6:00pm
- \$1 per minute fee will be charged for pick up any time after 6:00pm

### Late Drop Off

Daily activities begin at 8:00am (9:00am—Kindergarten) and instructional time begins at 9:00am. Drop offs later than 10:00am WILL NOT be permitted without prior arrangements with the classroom teacher as late arrivals are very disruptive to the class and routine. Please be courteous to the class by remaining outside of the classroom until circle time is completed.

### **REFUND POLICY AND CANCELLATION NOTIFICATION**

#### **Refunds for Newly Enrolled Students**

- \$50.00 processing fee paid at the time of registration is non-refundable.
- An 80% refund will be given if you cancel less than seven days after the first of the month.
- A 50% refund will be given if you cancel 8-20 days after the first of the month.
- A 10% refund will be given for anything more than 21 days.
- Cancellation must be received in writing by mail, in person or by fax. Fax # (813)933-7949. *Cancellation Notification must be in writing. Any other form will not be accepted.*
- **PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

#### **Cancellation Notification**

- Two weeks notice is required to remove a student from Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo School.
- Please contact Jamie Myers at Jamie.Myers@LowryParkZoo.com to request the cancellation notification paperwork.
- Cancellation must be received in writing by mail, in person or by fax. Fax # (813)933-7949. *Cancellation Notification MUST be in writing. Any other form will not be accepted.*
- If less than TWO weeks notification is given or if cancellation is not submitted in writing, you may be responsible for the full month's tuition.

### **RESERVING SLOTS FOR CHILDCARE**

To reserve your child's slot upon initial enrollment you must:

1. Complete the full registration packet
2. Provide \$50 processing fee
3. If you do not start at the beginning of the month; pro-rated tuition will need to accompany your registration packet.

**This is the only way you can reserve your child's slot at Zoo School.**

In the event that you must temporarily remove your child from our year-round program, you must continue to pay enrollment fees (even if your child is not physically attending our program.) Paying your regular monthly tuition is the only way to guarantee that your slot will be held. Unfortunately, we are unable to sell the slot for just a few weeks or months. You have the choice to hold the slot by continuing to pay tuition, or risk losing the slot by not paying tuition.

### **SECURING SLOTS IN OUR SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM**

**Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) /Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policy:** Our Pre-K, ECE program follows a 12 month school year. During the month of February ECE parents will receive a confirmation letter form that will enable you to share with us if you will be taking any vacation weeks for the summer.

**Kindergarten Policy:** Our Pre-K follows a 10 month school year. During the month of February, Kindergarten parents will receive advance registration for our K-8<sup>th</sup> grade Summer Camp. You will be the first to receive the Zoo School Summer Camp catalog in addition to receiving **20%** off each week of summer camp (excluding extended care). Payment for summer camp must be turned in with registration form and given to the reservation staff in the Resource Center. We strongly suggest securing your summer camp slot as soon as you are presented the Summer Camp registration form because our K-8<sup>th</sup> grade camps sell out quickly.

### **ONGOING FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Zoo School has enrolled in Target Take Charge for Education. If you have a Target Credit Card, you can assign the Zoo School to receive a percentage of charges through Target twice a year.
  - You can call to designate Zoo School 1-800-316-6142 (125407)
  - Or visit [www.target.com/tcoe](http://www.target.com/tcoe) and enter our school ID (125407) to view and designate our school
- Zoo School is enrolled in Box Tops for Education. Each school year we collect Box Tops for Education from our Zoo School families. If you are interested in being our Box Top Coordinator for the 2009/2010 school year please contact Kellie Hales at [Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 262.
- Zoo School is enrolled in Tyson Project A+. Each school year we collect Box Sides from Tyson products from our Zoo School families. If you are interested in being our Box Top Coordinator for the 2009/2010 school year please contact Kellie Hales at [Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 262.

### **DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES**

#### **Signing In and Out**

Please remember to sign your child in and out and include initials and time. This helps us ensure that each student is accounted for at all times.

#### **Drop Off**

All students should be dropped off at or before 9:00am. Students arriving after 10:00am WILL NOT be permitted into class without prior notification to the classroom teacher or the manager of the ECE, Pre-K and Kinder programs (Kellie Hales at [Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 262). We would appreciate a quick drop off and exit by parents to make the transition smooth for all involved. Please drop your child off in his/her classroom as quickly as possible. Many students have difficulty separating from a parent when arriving at school. One of the best methods for helping students adjust is to demonstrate confidence in the teachers and enthusiasm for the day's activities, give their students a hug and kiss, smile, and say good-bye. Parents who are concerned after a difficult separation may call the school later in the day to find out how their child is doing. If you wish to talk to other parents, you may do so in the breezeway.

#### **Pick Up**

Please let us know in person and in writing if you need to add to your child's Authorized Person for Pick Up List. We will not release a student to anybody who is NOT on the Authorized Person for Pick Up List. Also, we will ask to see a photo ID from the person who is picking up the student. This is a security measure for the safety and well being of all the students at the Zoo School.

### **REST/NAP TIME**

Our nap/quiet time occurs between 12:30 – 2:30pm for Pre-School and Early Childhood Education. Students will have their own mat to rest or sleep on. You can send in a SMALL cuddle blanket and/or soft sleep toy for them to rest with. We ask that you please do not send large pillows because they are too big to store in our classrooms. Linens will be sent home each Friday for washing and can be returned on Monday. Please label all blankets, toys, pillows and sheets as many items look alike. It is not our practice to force the students to sleep, nor do we force them to stay awake. If you are having difficulties with sleeping at home, please talk to one of the teachers to come up with a nap/quiet time solution.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is a key aspect of the teacher and parent/guardian relationship. It is imperative to work together with you, the parents/guardians, to provide the best experience for children. If you have any questions, concerns, ideas or compliments, please feel free to speak with the classroom teacher or the manager of the ECE, Pre-K and Kinder programs (Kellie Hales at [Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 262). We are all here for the student's well being, let's all work together to make his/her time at Zoo School a happy and memorable one.

### Daily Communication

Please check your child's file daily to assure that you receive all messages, art, work, calendars, notices, etc. Please remember that detailed discussions about day's events are often difficult during drop-off and pick-up times. Feel free to schedule a private meeting with your child's teacher anytime to discuss events in detail.

### Monthly Newsletters and Calendars

A monthly newsletter containing general information about upcoming school activities and events will be emailed during the first week of the month and one copy will be posted in your child's classroom. Additionally, you will receive a monthly classroom calendar from your child's teacher that will include specific classroom information and will be posted in the classroom as well.

### Parent/Teacher Conferences

Classroom teachers and staff are available for parent/teacher conferences throughout the year. Please feel free to schedule a conference with your child's teacher or with the Early Childhood Education Coordinator (Kellie Hales at [Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Kellie.Hales@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 262) at anytime.

### Formal Conferences for Kindergarten

Conferences are scheduled and held in October and March to discuss student's progress and future growth and development goals.

### Special Daily Instructions or Advisements

If there are any recent changes at home or any changes in the behavior, health or life of your child, (moving, ear aches, parents away on trips, nightmares, etc.) please inform the classroom teacher in person or in writing. Issues from changes in schedule or mood at home may arise during the school day as well. Any information you can provide will help the teacher to appropriately and sensitively handle any issues or disruptions that may occur during the day.

## ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTS

Anytime a student is injured, an accident report will be filled out for parents to read and sign at the time of pick-up. We will keep these reports in your child's folder for our records, if you would like a copy for yourself, one of the staff will be happy to make a copy for you.

Incident reports are used to keep a record and inform parents of disruptive behaviors or other events that the classroom teacher determines necessary.

## BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND SNACKS

### Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo DOES NOT provide lunch or snack for the students.

If your child is only participating in the academic portion of the day:

- A morning snack and a lunch need to be provided.

If your child is enrolled in extended care:

- Breakfast may be eaten in the morning extended care before 7:45am.
- Two snacks (morning and afternoon) and a lunch need to be provided.

All students should have:

- A bottle of water and a hydrating and/or nutritional drink for lunch and snack times.
- Healthy snack and lunch items help us to teach the students about good health and nutrition.

**Please DO NOT bring/send:**

- Food that needs to be cooked or refrigerated (an icepack in their lunch box may be used)
- Any food or drink that comes in a glass container
- Soda, sugary drinks, or beverages that do not provide hydration
- Gum or candy

**PEANUTS AND CHOKING HAZARDS**

Peanuts are not approved in the Early Childhood Education (12-36 months) classrooms. Before sending peanuts with a Pre-School or Kindergarten student, please check with the classroom teacher to ensure that there are no students in the classroom with severe allergic reactions to peanuts.

If you pack grapes, carrots or hot dogs in the Early Childhood Education (12-36 months) classrooms please slice the item down the middle or slice the item into bite size pieces. Grapes, carrots or hot dogs are the cause of the highest choking hazards for children under the age of 36 months.

**WHAT TO WEAR TO ZOO SCHOOL**

- Please label all clothing and personal items that come to Zoo School as many student's items look alike.
- Please do not send your child in their "good" clothes or something you do not want to get ruined. We try very hard not to let them get too dirty, but some things are beyond our control. Also, please send them in weather appropriate clothes.
- Please make sure that the students wear closed-toe shoes and socks. Children in the 12 month-two year old classroom we ask for them not to wear "Croc's". Teacher for this age level have seen many newly walking children get injured by these shoes.
- On "water play" days, students will need to wear a swim suit and sunscreen to school and bring water shoes, towel and a complete change of clothes.
- Please refer to the confirmation letter in regards to details about specific request made by your child's teacher.

**OUTDOOR PLAY/ZOO HIKES**

Students will be outside on a regular basis, so please dress your child accordingly. If your child is well enough to come to school, then he/she is well enough to participate in outdoor activities.

- We strongly suggest students bring a water bottle to school each day to keep them hydrated during the day.
- Please make sure your child has breakfast before class so they can stay energized until mid-morning snack. Breakfast is only consumed at school in morning extended care before 7:45am.

**POLICY ON TOYS AT SCHOOL**

Please DO NOT send in any toys or other items with your child that you do not want to be broken or lost. If students want to bring a toy from home, please try to bring something that all the students can enjoy like books, nature objects or anything else that can be used for a classroom discussion. We discourage the students from using violence, so please, no toy guns, knives, swords or anything else that can be used as a weapon.

**CELEBRATING SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE CLASSROOM**

We encourage parents to share the celebration of a student's birthday with his or her class. If you would like to provide a treat for the class, please speak to the classroom teacher ahead of time to make arrangements. Please ask your teacher for an updated list of the number of students and any allergies in the class. We encourage parents to share a selection of fruit or "healthy" treats and ask that any "favors" or "goody bags" be saved to dispense at the end of the school day.

## **ANIMALS ON SITE**

We are unable to allow any animals on Zoo grounds that are not in care of our Zoo Veterinarian. The Zoo does not accept injured or abandoned animals or wildlife but we would be happy to provide you with a lengthy list of qualified Wild Life Rehabs for Hillsborough and Pinellas County.

## **VOLUNTEERING IN THE CLASSROOM**

We greatly encourage parent/family support in Zoo School. Classroom teachers will coordinate parent volunteer times and activities. Volunteering can encompass a broad range of activities from reading a story to the class, helping with an art project, joining the class for a Zoo Hike, or chaperoning during water play. The teachers, as well as the students, appreciate any time you can offer. Just make sure that you make prior arrangements with your child's teacher. All volunteers must fill out a volunteer application and background check prior to volunteering. Applications can be obtained by contacting the director Jennifer McLachlan, [jennifer.bacon@lowryparkzoo.com](mailto:jennifer.bacon@lowryparkzoo.com).

## **HEALTH POLICY**

The first line of defense against illness or injury is prevention. Zoo School provides a clean and safe learning environment for the students. Hand washing is promoted before and after snack, after using the restrooms, after outside exploration and play, and any other "messy" activity. Even with the precautions taken, there will be times when your child is ill, and we ask that you inform the Zoo School as soon as you know your child may be sick and/or absent. Please keep your child home if he/she is exhibiting any signs of illness, in order to not infect any other students or staff. Please do not send your child if he/she is unable to participate in class activities.

All of the staff and administration have been trained on the prevention and detection of communicable diseases in students. The teacher and director (Jennifer McLachlan at [Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com](mailto:Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com) or (813)935-8552 ext. 209) will make the determination that your child is or is not exhibiting symptoms of a communicable disease. Please be aware of the following signs and symptoms that have been set by the State Child Care Licensing Division. Students who are observed having any of these signs of illness or communicable disease will be isolated to avoid infecting the other students and a parent/guardian will be notified and asked to have the student picked up as soon as possible. Isolation of a student from the group means removing the student from the room but not out of sight of a staff member. The student will most likely be taken to the administrator's office until the parent/guardian can pick him/her up. A doctor's note will be required in order for the student to return to the center.

H1N1-Update Information and Action Steps

[HTTP://WWW.HILLSCOUNTYHEALTH.ORG/ARTICLES\\_TEMP/H1N1 ACTION STEPS FOR PARENTS.PDF](http://www.hillscountyhealth.org/articles_temp/H1N1_Action_Steps_for_Parents.pdf)

## **COLDS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

If a student is suspected of having a communicable disease or shows any other signs or symptoms, such as those listed below, the student will be isolated as not to infect the other students, and a parent/guardian will be called and asked to pick the child up as soon as possible.

### **Diarrhea**

Your child should stay home or will be sent home if experiencing:

- Frequent, watery, mucousy, and/or bloody diarrhea
  - Your child may return to Zoo School after the stools are no longer explosive or watery. Stools may still be loose but not loose enough to be disruptive to the class or child.

### **Colds and Fevers**

Your child should stay home or will be sent home if experiencing:

- A persistent temperature of at least 101° F, thick nasal drainage and/or is mopey or sluggish
  - Your child can return to Zoo School after temperature is 100° F or less and nasal drainage has thinned.

### **Cough**

Your child should stay home or will be sent home if:

- Cough is accompanied by fever of 101° F, chills and/or coughing up of green or yellow mucous
  - Your child can return to Zoo School after fever subsides. The cough may linger for a week or two.

### **Sore Throat**

Your child should stay home or will be sent home if experiencing:

- Fever of 101° F and/or throat spots
  - Your child can return to Zoo School after the fever and throat spots are gone.

### **Eye Drainage**

Your child should stay home or will be sent home if experiencing:

- Eye drainage accompanied by bloodshot eyes
- Experiencing symptoms of Pink Eye or Conjunctivitis
  - Your child can return to Zoo School 24 hours after antibiotic eye drops or ointment has been applied.

### **Rashes**

Your child should stay home or will be sent home if experiencing:

- Any type of rash accompanied with fever of 101° F
  - Your child can return to Zoo School 24 hours after the fever is gone.

### **Head lice**

- Your child must be nit free to return to the center
  - Your child can return to Zoo School after treatment and must be checked by a staff member.

## **DISPENSING MEDICATION AND SEIZURES**

If your child needs to take medication during the day, a Parent Authorization for Medication Form needs to be filled out and medication and form should be given **DIRECTLY** to the teacher or director (Jennifer McLachlan at Jennifer.Bacon@LowryParkZoo.com or (813)935-8552 ext. 209). All medication will be kept in our refrigerator or in the office and needs to go home at the end of each day. We will not administer any medication without proper written permission.

### **Epi-Pens**

If your child does have an Epi-Pen, and is over the age of 3 he/she **MUST** be trained by a physician and be fully knowledgeable of how and when to use the Epi-Pen. If your child is under the age of three or becomes incapable of administering the Epi-Pen themselves, a Zoo Staff member would administer the Epi-Pen under the *Good Samaritan Law*. In both circumstances we will immediately call 911 for your child to be checked over by emergency medical personal. This could include a trip to the Emergency Room if emergency medical personal deem necessary. Your child's teacher will contact you if/when this situation occurs; in addition a staff member will accompany your child to the Emergency Room.

### **Seizures**

If your child experiences a seizure and does or does not have a history of seizures it is our policy, that we will immediately call 911 if/when the seizure takes place for your child to be checked over by emergency medical personal. This could include a trip to the

Emergency Room if emergency medical personnel deem necessary. Your child's teacher will contact you if/when this situation occurs; in addition a staff member will accompany your child to the Emergency Room.

PRESS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

## Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo has a kindergarten where lessons come alive

By [Dong-phuong Nguyen](#), Times Staff Writer

In Print: Friday, October 9, 2009



[DANIEL WALLACE | Times]

Liam and Fiona visit the okapi exhibit, a short walk from their Zoo School classroom. "It's like a field trip every day," says the school coordinator.

Kindergarten teacher Aimee Bozylinsky hands tags to Muftiah Al-Refaie, from left, Liam Longen, Hailee Bridges and Fiona Watson-Canning for a lesson in the zoo garden.

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### LOWRY PARK

The kindergarteners sat on the carpet as their teacher classified different organisms as producers, consumers or decomposers, using stuffed animals and pictures as examples.

Then she took them just outside their classroom door, to the zoo.

They observed a giraffe-and-zebralike okapi (a consumer) eating leaves (a producer) behind a wooden fence (a decomposer).

The six kindergarteners attend school at Lowry Park Zoo, the only zoo in the nation to run an accredited school, officials said. The school is in its sixth year, and parents pay \$499 a month in tuition.

At Zoo School, students are taught the same lessons as their counterparts in traditional schools, except their studies come alive in outdoor "classrooms." They take daily strolls along the zoo grounds, where they learn math by visiting concession stands and do graphing based on their favorite animals — all lessons designed to meet state curriculum objectives. "It really is nature's classroom," said Kellie Hales, the zoo's preschool and kindergarten coordinator. "It's like a field trip every day."

Right now, the class meets on secured property next to the zoo and is led by Aimee Bozylinsky, who is in her second year teaching zoo school. Previously, she taught at Cahoon Elementary, an animal sciences magnet school, which brings in animals from the zoo and Busch Gardens. She came to the zoo when she saw how much the children at Cahoon learned in just five minutes with an animal.

Imagine how much knowledge the children soak up here, she said.

The kindergarten class averages 10 students. The economy may be a factor in the lower-than-average number this year, zoo officials said, but Bozylinsky sees this year's class of just six students as a good thing.

"The class size is brilliant and there's more freedom to teach what they're interested in," she said. "It's better than a book."

They walk around the zoo on number hunts. They search for opposites and learn about money and goods and services at merchandise stands.

In addition to the zoo, the children have a garden where they grow plants and flowers so they can personally feed animals, such as the hibiscus-loving reptiles. There's a rain barrel and tree stumps that serve as seating for an outdoor reading circle. They recycle, write in their journals, raise tadpoles to become frogs and watch caterpillars morph into butterflies.

"The children have an interest in every living thing," Hales said, "and they're given a foundation to respect the earth."

So what happens after kindergarten?

The zoo would like to extend the program to upper grades, but there's not enough space, Hales said. There is a row of classrooms overlooking playgrounds and gardens, but most of them accommodate the zoo's preschool program.

So it's off to traditional schools where the adjustment becomes a big obstacle for some, one parent said.

Monique Bell's two daughters attended the zoo's preschool and kindergarten. One is in third grade now; the other just started her first year in public school.

The first-grader, Makayla, wants to know why there is so much sitting in a classroom and why she isn't surrounded by animals.

"For them, it's a whole different way of learning," Bell said. "But (Zoo School) has given them such a good foundation that the kids can spend this next part of their lives more involved with wanting to take care of animals and the environment."

Bell said the family just returned from a trip to the Mayan Ruins in Cozumel, where iguanas roam free. She told Makayla to stop chasing the iguanas.

"They don't bite," Makayla told her mom. "Miss Aimee said they might whip you with their tails."

Bozylinsky, also known as Miss Aimee, seizes every opportunity to teach. On a recent day, her students were walking by a pygmy hippo when she stopped to ask: "Are hippos' teeth pointy or flat?"

"Both!" said 5-year-old Fiona Watson-Canning. "The hippos' front teeth are pointy in front to scare predators; the back teeth are flat to eat!"

Students asked to see the giraffes, visit with the blue duiker and talked about the hyena as a consumer.

On the walk back to class through a private path, they saw a grasshopper on the sidewalk.

"Don't hurt it!" they screamed.

Just outside the classroom buildings, Miss Aimee stopped her students again.

"The verb of the day is 'fly,'" she said.

The children stretched out their arms and flapped them like wings.

Then they took off to their classroom. Soaring.

*Dong-Phuong Nguyen can be reached at (813) 909-4613 or [nguyen@sptimes.com](mailto:nguyen@sptimes.com).*

[Last modified: Oct 08, 2009 05:09 PM]

Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Lowry Park Zoo Receives 2009 Best of Tampa Award**

**U.S. Commerce Association's Award Plaque Honors the Achievement**

WASHINGTON D.C., June 8, 2009 -- Lowry Park Zoo has been selected for the 2009 Best of Tampa Award in the Preschools category by the U.S. Commerce Association (USCA).

The USCA "Best of Local Business" Award Program recognizes outstanding local businesses throughout the country. Each year, the USCA identifies companies that they believe have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. These are local companies that enhance the positive image of small business through service to their customers and community.

Various sources of information were gathered and analyzed to choose the winners in each category. The 2009 USCA Award Program focused on quality, not quantity. Winners are determined based on the information gathered both internally by the USCA and data provided by third parties.

#### About U.S. Commerce Association (USCA)

U.S. Commerce Association (USCA) is a Washington D.C. based organization funded by local businesses operating in towns, large and small, across America. The purpose of USCA is to promote local business through public relations, marketing and advertising.

The USCA was established to recognize the best of local businesses in their community. Our organization works exclusively with local business owners, trade groups, professional associations, chambers of commerce and other business advertising and marketing groups. Our mission is to be an advocate for small and medium size businesses and business entrepreneurs across America.

SOURCE: U.S. Commerce Association

#### CONTACT:

U.S. Commerce Association

Email: [PublicRelations@us-ca.org](mailto:PublicRelations@us-ca.org)

URL: <http://www.us-ca.org>

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