

Dear Partners in Education,

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School is a laboratory school that is actively involved in preschool and kindergarten education, interdisciplinary research on development and learning, undergraduate teaching and mentoring, and professional development of pre-service and practicing educators. We offer model preschool and kindergarten programs for 72 children ages 3-6. Our program runs from September through mid-May, with the option of a half-day summer camp in June. The Children's School was founded in 1968, has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 2003, and has been licensed by Pennsylvania as a Private Academic School since April of 2014. Serving as a laboratory school in a Psychology Department on the campus of a major research university enables our staff to both learn about and participate in current developmental research. We intentionally strive to use developmentally appropriate goals for young children as a framework for planning our inclusive educational program and assessing children's progress in all aspects of the social, cognitive, and physical foundations necessary for success in primary schooling. We emphasize diversity throughout our program, and our individualized, developmental approach lends itself to meeting the unique needs of most children. Similarly, we utilize theories of adult development to support the lifelong learning of the wide range of staff, family members, researchers, undergraduates, and colleagues that participate in our programs. By continually striving for quality improvement in all aspects of our mission, including the foundational finances and facilities, our laboratory school exemplifies progressive design in education that can be utilized by professionals in various disciplines to meet the changing needs of society.

We invite each Children's School family to become involved in all aspects of our mission. As prospective families, you gained basic familiarity with our philosophy, staff, programs for children, approach to meeting learning goals, and research involvement. We hope that you have and will continue to utilize our web site to explore each aspect of our laboratory school in more depth ([www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs](http://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs)) and that you will feel welcome to visit our school at any time.

The purpose of this Family Handbook is to provide an organized source of detailed information specifically related to the ways that families can partner with the school to ensure a high-quality experience for all learners at the Children's School. The handbook and all subsequent communications will be delivered digitally. Additionally, interested families can review and/or download supplemental materials, such as the staff handbook, developmental objectives, research policies, presentations/publications, Emergency Action Plan, etc. from our web site, as well as find useful links to accreditation standards and a variety of family resources. Please have all your children's primary caregivers (e.g., extended family, nannies, etc.) review the handbook and other materials thoroughly. As your interests and schedule permit, please respond to our varied offers to become involved in learning at the Children's School. During this 2024-2025 school year, we especially encourage your involvement in our STORIES & STORYTELLING Whole School Unit. Listening to and telling stories is a great way for all of us to learn, grow, and build relationships.

We look forward to collaborating with you.  
Warm regards,



Sharon M. Carver, Ph.D., Director (on behalf of all our educators)

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**Note** that the numbering throughout this handbook corresponds to the 2022 NAEYC accreditation standards.

## **EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

The Children's School's approach to preschool and kindergarten education is based on theories and research in Developmental Psychology, together with years of educational practice. Our approach is also aligned with the guidelines set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for developmentally appropriate practice and with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards.

### **Goals -> Program -> Assessment**

We use our developmental goals as a systematic framework for focusing our program and assessment design. Our educators are well versed in a wide variety of educational approaches, and we choose teaching strategies, daily routines, classroom arrangements, and curriculum structure that will encourage each child's development in all domains. Educator observations and documentation of individual development are used to adjust the program to better promote individual growth, as well as to conference with parents/guardians about ways we can work as a team to support each child [2A.8, 4A.1].

## **JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POSITION STATEMENT**

The Children's School JEDI Committee exists to promote and implement justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout our entire school community. At The Children's School, our commitment to JEDI values is continuous, and we recognize that this commitment requires ongoing learning and growth. We fully embrace the [Dietrich College DEI statement](#) in that we strive to be a place where "people of all identities, perspectives, and experiences feel welcome, able to present their authentic selves, and empowered to reach their full potential." We are a continuous learning community where *all* feel welcomed, valued, and empowered.

### **CMU Children's School Definitions of JEDI terms - What does Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion mean to US?**

**Justice:** We are committed to standing up for and [centering](#) the voices of those who have experienced injustice. We look for opportunities in our school community to share power and seek input on our policies, practices, and ideas. We strive to notice injustices and commit to standing up against them, to advocate for change, and to help children learn to do the same.

**Equity:** True equity is when all individuals receive what they need to be successful. We practice equity in the Children's School community by learning about and working to remove barriers that may prevent the ability to achieve success. We support the creation of tools and environments that amplify marginalized voices and seek to increase access to resources and networks.

**Diversity:** We recognize and highly value the unique backgrounds and identities of all individuals. We know that this uniqueness is shaped by race, ethnicity, national origin,

gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, neurodiversity, and lived experiences.

**Inclusion:** We believe that everyone is welcome and should feel as though they belong here. An inclusive environment is one where everyone's needs are addressed, and they feel empowered to fully participate. We are learning to involve more unique perspectives, and we seek to be a space where everyone is warmly welcomed, respected, supported, and valued in their personhood.

### **LABORATORY SCHOOL**

As part of the Psychology Department, we serve as a laboratory for research in child development and related fields. Our Director and educators interact with researchers to strengthen studies so that our children eagerly participate in their "special games" and the resulting data meet scientific standards. Parents receive brief descriptions of ongoing studies and summary results of completed research. Please refer to the [Research Section](#) of our website for further information.

Undergraduates taking the introductory child development course, and other related courses, make detailed observations during our program hours in order to gather data for course projects. Many of them return as undergraduate interns and student employees who enhance our children's experiences while their involvement here strengthens their connections between theory, research, and practice.

To support the professional development of both pre-service and practicing educators, the Children's School staff models and shares the educational approaches that we develop. We offer workshops, consultation, and seminars in a wide range of local and national venues, and we provide related resources on our web site.

Our program is strengthened by our relationship with Carnegie Mellon. As part of the University community, our classes have access to facilities such as the gym and track, can schedule walking field trips to interesting places such as the campus post office, food services, robotics lab, and the Purnell Center for the Arts, and have visits from university musicians, security officers, construction workers, etc. [8B.1]. The Psychology Department provides funding for computing services and part of our administrative costs, and the University provides facilities management, accounting, human resources, legal, and security services, as well as managing environmental health and safety for the entire campus.

## NAEYC ACCREDITATION

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has created 10 standards that measure the quality of early childhood programs. The standards were created by a blue-ribbon panel of early childhood experts and are based on the latest early childhood research.

As a NAEYC-accredited program, the Children's School meets a high-quality standard by:



- 1) Promoting **positive relationships** for all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth.
- 2) Implementing a **curriculum** that fosters all areas of child development: cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social.
- 3) Using developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate **effective teaching approaches**.
- 4) Providing **ongoing assessments** of a child's learning and development and communicating the child's progress to the family.
- 5) Promoting the **nutrition and health** of children and protecting children and staff from injury and illness.
- 6) Employing a **teaching staff** that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests.
- 7) Establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships with each child's **family**.
- 8) Establishing relationships with and using the resources of the **community** to support the achievement of program goals.
- 9) Providing a safe and healthy **physical environment**.
- 10) Implementing effective **leadership** to support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program **management** so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.

Each staff member is responsible for engaging fully in all professional practices related to maintaining the Children's School's status as a high-quality NAEYC Accredited program, as well as the NAEYC self-assessment process leading to renewal every 5 years. Our current accreditation is valid from 7/1/23 through 7/1/28, and we complete annual reports each spring to document our continuous quality improvement. The programs offered by the Children's School also fall under the regulatory jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania's Board of Private Academic Schools, so we are licensed as a Private Academic School. The Administrative Team collaborates to guide the documentation procedures and complete the required paperwork for our NAEYC annual reporting and renewal, as well as the annual PA licensing renewal.

## **STAFF TEAMS [6A.6]**

The Children's School is staffed by four teams of educators – an Administrative Team, a Preschool 3's Team, a Preschool 4's Team, and a PreK/Kindergarten Team – plus an Educational Support Staff member who can substitute on any teaching team. All [educators and administrators](#) have many years of experience in education, as well as a bachelor's degree and often an advanced degree in early childhood education, psychology, or a related field. Undergraduate interns and student employees complement each team, and pre-service teachers from local colleges do field placements or student teaching here.

Children's School employees are hired and managed according to the Human Resource policies of Carnegie Mellon. They are thoroughly oriented, earn a competitive salary, have paid planning time [6A.7] and, if working full-time, receive full benefits, including tuition [6A.13], and retirement [6A.14]. The Children's School provides an extensive professional development program of approximately 90 hours per year, as well as supporting each individual's annual goals for growth via additional seminars, publications, and professional experiences.

Our experienced educators participate actively in the local, national, and international early childhood communities by serving in leadership capacities, giving regular presentations, providing consulting to other programs, and partnering with high-quality programs to develop new avenues for early childhood professional development. All of our partner organizations are seeking ways to support each other and create synergies between their professional development initiatives that will enhance the quality of reflective training opportunities and serve as a resource for early childhood educators across the broad continuum of professional development.

## **INTERACTION GUIDELINES**

Regardless of position, each staff member's job description includes the following priorities for action and interaction:

"Speak and behave in a professional manner at all times with staff, children, parents, undergraduates, university partners, visitors, service people, etc. Strive to be a team player, fulfilling individual responsibilities based on job description, taking initiative to help with tasks, sharing space and materials, offering support, communicating, and reflecting constructively, etc., for the benefit of the whole staff. Keep the "big picture" of our school's entire mission in mind to effectively balance competing demands according to our priorities. Follow the school and university policies and procedures carefully and with attention to timeliness. Be prepared to flexibly adapt to the diverse situations that arise in early childhood education, particularly in a university laboratory school. Use the core values and standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to guide all aspects of program implementation and enhancement, while also following additional guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Abide by the ethical standards of NAEYC, with particular attention to confidentiality."

Children's School staff members follow the ethical principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children [6B.2]. We share the following core values as guides for interactions among staff members, between staff and children,



between staff and parents, between staff and undergraduates, researchers, university employees, etc.

- We use direct eye contact, smiles, warm tones of voice, positive touch, social conversations, and joint laughter to support the development of effective working relationships.
- Our partnership in learning is supported by regular, reciprocal communication, affirming recognition of effort and accomplishment, predictable, developmentally appropriate responsiveness to initiative, emotion, and concerns, and proactive conflict resolution.
- We strive to respect each individual and work to create a positive emotional climate for all learners, with sensitivity to differences in age, ability, background, language, culture, religion, and family structure [2A.6, 2A.7].
- We aim to eliminate gender bias by using gender-neutral terminology, such as “friends” instead of “boys and girls” or “firefighter” instead of “fireman”, encouraging learners of all genders to explore all the activities we offer, and focusing our affirmation on approach, effort, and accomplishment rather than appearance.
- We are committed to reaching out to people of different races, genders, ethnicity, and ability, and we strive to create an environment of inclusion that celebrates our differences and highlights our commonalities. Our program accepts children with special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child consistent with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. For more information, please see [Carnegie Mellon's Commitment to Diversity](#).

Because our mission is multifaceted, we aim to build positive relationships with all learning partners by appropriately balancing equity of care for the group with services tailored to individual needs. Our goal is to develop the school's caring community for learning through broad participation and involvement in program improvement for all our staff, families, and university partners.

## **PARENTS AS PARTNERS**

The Children's School offers adult family members and other caregivers a variety of ways to become involved in the child's school community, to participate in family activities, and to confer with the staff to build a strong bond between home and school. All staff members aim to communicate regularly and effectively with families and other caregivers so that their perspectives can be incorporated into our understanding of the child's development, our curriculum planning, and our assessment process [2A.6, 4E.1]. In addition to the detailed online family handbook and easily navigable website, we have digital whole school and classroom newsletters. Each teaching team provides a daily classroom update via their blog to promote family communication at home about the school day. Finally, the Administrative Team provides reminders and other tips for families via email.

Visitors to the Children's School must comply with all current university health and safety measures before entering the building.



Adult family members extend their involvement by volunteering in school wide and/or classroom activities. We ask them to complete a family involvement opportunity form and then use the information to arrange meetings, compose committees, and schedule activities according to parent preferences as much as possible.

Throughout the year, we offer several family events including Open Houses, Family Festival, and the end of year celebrations. These events provide an opportunity for families to visit the school with their child and to experience first hand the learning that children participate in each day.

If you have questions or have experienced a problem at home or school, please EMAIL the child's primary teacher or one of the administrators directly. Recent potty-training efforts, changes in care-giving arrangements, the death of a pet, an extended absence of a parent, etc. can all cause changes in a child's demeanor and behavior at school, so timely communication helps the educators respond most effectively to the child. We make every effort to dialogue with children and families in a positive manner to plan strategies, resolve issues, and provide assistance in a proactive and effective manner. Please also feel free to suggest ways that we can strengthen our partnership with you as together we seek to provide a high-quality learning environment for everyone in our school community. If any parents would benefit from translation services at conferences or for key documents [10E.5], we can contact the Office of International Education for assistance in finding a translator who is fluent in the relevant language.

Staff members begin the school year with a parent orientation to facilitate introductions and to review school policies and procedures. They then collaborate with adult family members during the phasing in process to help the child transition smoothly to the new school year. Consistent routines and behavior expectations are introduced gradually, and teachers adapt procedures to the individual needs of each child and family, based on the questionnaire they send prior to the start of school [7A.3-5].

Adult family members can schedule use of the one-way-mirror facilities or schedule classroom visits to observe their child at any time in the program day. Adults are expected to register in the office before entering the school to sign in and obtain a visitor's badge. Teachers are easily accessible by phone and/or email during planning time to answer questions, schedule classroom volunteering, or discuss effective ways for staff and parents to handle changes and challenges, such as a new sibling, a move, an extended illness, the parents' separation, etc.

All adult family members are invited to participate in the Children's School's annual program evaluation via a survey conducted in May, as well as to contribute to our continuous quality improvement via committees and fundraising efforts. Evaluation results, plans and opportunities are highlighted in the parent orientation meeting held prior to the school year and updated as necessary via monthly newsletters thereafter [10F.2].

All staff members, students, researchers, observers, interns, student teachers, student employees and volunteers must sign a Statement of Commitment to Confidentiality

before entering our classrooms (see below). According to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct [6B.2]:

"We shall not engage in or support exploitation of families. We shall not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain, or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our effectiveness working with their children."

Accordingly, no private arrangement for childcare shall be made during the Children's School hours of operation as this may interfere with a staff member's job responsibilities, performance or ability to abide by the Statement of Commitment to Confidentiality. We strongly discourage our undergraduate staff members, volunteers or others actively involved in the classrooms at the Children's School from babysitting or providing childcare for children and their families who are currently enrolled at the school. For that reason, we do not recommend staff members to families or distribute advertisements for childcare to our staff members.

### Confidentiality

Because the staff at the Children's School works as a team, with every adult knowing and interacting at times with every child, all admissions, observations and other assessment data may be shared with all staff members. Information about family situations, special needs, and other sensitive issues is shared on an as needed basis. Student workers, volunteers, and other adults working within the school are only informed of such sensitive issues when they are a part of keeping the child safe, supporting the child's inclusion, or when the information might impact their coursework. All adults working in the Children's School sign the following confidentiality agreement.

"As an adult working, observing, conducting research, and/or regularly volunteering at the Children's School, I may become privy to confidential information regarding children and families. I realize that all such information is strictly personal and confidential and, therefore, will only share such information within the confines of the Children's School. I pledge to discuss the families, children, and staff for professional purposes only. I will also choose carefully whether to discuss children's behavior within their hearing distance, doing so only when it is in the child's best interest. When I encounter families, children or staff outside the school, I will be courteous but use discretion.

I understand that written authorization is required before disclosing any information regarding a child to an outside agency or individual. I further understand that any photographs I take while at the Children's School are intended for authorized professional uses only; they may not be electronically shared over the internet, posted on social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, or electronically tagged in any way with individual names.

I know that confidentiality is an ethical obligation and that it is a requirement for my continued involvement at the Children's School. By signing this statement, I agree to learn all aspects of the Children's School confidentiality policy and practice them at all times."

In addition, we require that families respect the privacy, not only of their child(ren), but of all other children and families. We encourage open, honest, informal, and frequent communication among educators and parents. However convenient, hallways, classrooms, or the outdoor classroom are not appropriate places for conversations about sensitive matters. A child's teacher or an administrator may suggest a phone call or meeting to discuss concerns raised initially in regular conversation that would be more appropriately addressed privately. With regard to the images on the school web

sites and any photos or videos taken at school (e.g., during playground play dates, class birthday celebrations, etc.), families may only share photos that include their own child as the sole individual pictured (i.e., no other children, teachers, interns, etc. in the photo).

In accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines, official written records for each child are filed in the locked Educational Administrators' office in the Children's School and/or our secure FACTS Student Information System and are immediately released upon request only to the individuals listed above, the parent(s) or legal guardians, regulatory agencies, or those for whom parents sign a written release [10D.6]. These files include enrollment forms, final conference reports, health assessments provided by physicians, results of health screenings conducted at school after parent/guardian authorization, incident reports, reports of diagnostic assessments released to the school by parents, individual education plans, etc. Staff documentation of children's behavior and development, including specialized records for children whose individual circumstances require extra classroom documentation are kept in classroom locations accessible to teachers but out of the reach of children and out of sight of classroom visitors. In addition, researchers follow ethical standards with respect to confidentiality of individual data and, therefore, cannot share children's individual data with educators or families.

#### Negotiating Difficulties and Differences [10B.20]

Despite the best efforts of educators and families to build a positive and productive partnership, occasions may arise when educator and family perspectives differ.

At the Children's School, we begin with the shared goal of seeking effective strategies to support each child's development and learning. The first step for conflict resolution is communication with the individuals directly involved in the situation, most likely the parent/guardian and the educators on the child's teaching team. If possible, we meet in person at a mutually convenient time. We encourage respectful listening while each person shares their thoughts and concerns, so that everyone can see the situation from the varied perspectives represented. We encourage everyone to be as clear and direct about the issues and to keep an open mind regarding potential solutions to the conflict.

For issues that persist or involve a crisis, we include an educational administrator, educational support educator, and/or the director, who may have additional insights about the situation, deep experience with similar situations in the past, and/or authority to allocate additional resources to support a resolution. Similarly, if the child is already being supported by medical or therapeutic professionals, it may be helpful to have them participate in the meeting. In most cases at the Children's School, meetings at one of these two levels are sufficient to resolve differences between educators and families. We follow the meeting with a written summary of responsibilities for both the school and the family, and then we work together on implementation, communication, and revision as needed toward positive school experiences and strong developmental outcomes for the child in the context of the current classroom.

If these initial discussions between school personnel and families do not lead to resolution and a plan for moving forward, there are several additional resources available through Carnegie Mellon University. Which one(s) are the most appropriate depend on the situation. Issues related to the school's philosophy, policies, and practices can be directed to the Psychology Department Head, Dr. Susanne Ferber, or Dietrich College's Dean Scheines. Concerns regarding ethics issues can be reported via the [CMU ethics hotline](#), those with legal implications to the [Office of General Counsel](#), those related to discrimination to the [Office for Institutional Equity and Title IX](#), those related to research to the [Office of Research Integrity and Compliance](#), etc. The Director will guide families to appropriate resources within CMU as appropriate to the situation, all with the goal of negotiating an effective resolution with a stronger partnership moving forward.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES**

Since 1968, the highly skilled Early Childhood Educators at the Children's School have nurtured young children's social, cognitive, and physical development. We have specified learning goals for 3, 4, and 5-year-olds in each of the following domains.

1. **Self-Esteem & Independence** - encouraging each child's growing self-concept and confidence, as well as increasingly independent self-regulation and self-care.
2. **Interaction & Cooperation** - promoting children's social skills for effective adjustment to school, group participation, classroom citizenship, and peer interactions.
3. **Communication** - facilitating comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral language (listening & speaking) and progressing to written language (reading & writing).
4. **Discovery & Exploration** - fostering a positive attitude toward learning through scientific and mathematical inquiry with varied materials to build strong concepts related to diverse themes.
5. **Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety** - giving children opportunities to develop small and large motor skills, healthy living habits, and essential safety practices.
6. **Artistic Expression & Appreciation** - cultivating each child's ability to express ideas and emotions through art, drama, and music and movement, as well as to appreciate the artistic expressions of others.

## **CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT**

The educators developed the Continuum of Developmental Objectives to reflect our understanding of young children's natural developmental progression. Teaching teams use the six categories of objectives as a flexible framework for planning learning experiences to promote the growth of each individual child rather than using a fixed curriculum guide. We incorporate children's home languages into the program wherever possible, particularly during routines and transitions, as well as with respect to key theme-related vocabulary [2A.7, 2D.5 & 6]. We develop our own plans to provide children with a variety of opportunities for learning and encourage broad exploration. We support children in doing as much for themselves as possible, given the time constraints of a part-day, part-year program. In addition, we strive to support a variety of social experiences by organizing our time and space to balance individual, pair, small group, and large group activities, making accommodations as necessary for children with disabilities and providing all children with access to semi-private areas to play or work alone or with a peer. Staff members serve as coaches while children practice social skills involved in peer interactions, friendship formation, and conflict resolution. Throughout the day, we engage children in conversation, with extra support for peer conversation at snack and lunchtime. Whenever timing permits, adults sit with children during snack and mealtimes to engage them in conversation and scaffold peer conversation. One opportunity during this time is for children to share unique family perspectives, practices, etc. [2A.6&7].

## **THEMATIC APPROACH TO CURRICULUM**

The teachers prepare an engaging learning environment for exploring a theme, such as birds, artists, or transportation. We plan the themes for the year to include opportunities for integrating key areas of content, including life, earth and physical science, as well as social studies and the arts. Using the money from the materials fee, we choose a rich range of materials, including diverse technologies, to entice each of the children to engage in the thematic study. We use a group meeting time each day to set the stage for the investigation and introduce relevant concepts. Then the children pursue a variety of activities that reinforce the learning goals. We avoid commercial characters and prescribed products in favor of open-ended explorations that promote creativity and imagination. We also limit screen time to short periods of activity that is not otherwise possible in the classroom, such as child-controlled computer design or internet viewing of animals in their natural habitats. The educators monitor the activities, so that we may facilitate the children's learning and challenge them at an appropriate level. Children's explorations enrich their development of concepts related to the theme and strengthen their skills in all areas. We extend and apply their concepts by experimenting with various materials in the school, and they express their understanding by creating their own representations in a variety of media.

### **Thematic Explorations Enhance Skills**

Through varied explorations during each theme, the children develop:

- a sense of themselves as competent learners,
- strategies for collaborating with peers and adults,
- approaches to communicating their ideas verbally and visually,
- means of discovering new ideas about physical properties,
- skills for small motor manipulation of tools and materials as well as large motor actions, together with an awareness of health and safety practices, and
- means for expressing their creative ideas through drama, movement, music, and visual arts, as well as appreciating the ideas of others.

## **ASSESSMENT PLAN**

Assessment [4A.1-2, 4E.4] is naturally integrated into the course of every day as ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development is used to adjust the program to better support group and individual progress. Teaching teams meet weekly, typically on Friday afternoons, to identify children's current interests and needs and then plan accordingly for the next week's explorations [4D.4-6]. At times, these reflections indicate the need for altering the classroom environment, shifting the unit focus, trying new teaching strategies, etc. [2.A.3]. If concerns about individual children's development arise and are not readily remedied via classroom adaptations, teachers initiate a dialogue with colleagues and parents to plan approaches to try at both home and school [2A.8].

Twice per year [4E.2], the teachers combine these informal assessment techniques with more systematic assessment of each child relative to the school's developmental



objectives for the purpose of describing each child's developmental progress. Teaching teams work together to conduct these systematic assessments, though the child's primary teacher takes the lead in summarizing the findings. The process is typically collaborative, with the primary teacher drafting the report and then getting input from the teaching team. These descriptions are shared digitally with parents in advance of the conference meeting so that families who need online support for translation can access that service [2A.7]. Fall conference reports include narrative descriptions of children's progress in all six of the school's identified developmental objective domains: self-esteem & independence, interaction & cooperation, communication, discovery & exploration, physical capabilities / health & safety, artistic expression & appreciation. Spring conference reports include bulleted descriptions for each of the four component skills in each developmental domain. Teacher-family dialogue during conferences strengthens our understanding of each child's developmental profile and often leads to ideas for individualizing both educator and family support of children's learning, as well as plans for smooth transitions into the next level of Children's School programming or to elementary school [2A.6, 2A.8, 7A.4-5, 7C.1].

Occasionally, educators and/or parents identify the need for additional screening and referral for professional diagnostic assessment. In those cases, educators and parents typically include the Director in the dialogue for the purpose of more precisely identifying the focus for screening / diagnosis and to review the resources available to children and families in our community, which depends heavily on where the family lives (i.e., within Pittsburgh city limits or not, within Allegheny County or not, etc.), as well as what type of health insurance the family has [7B.3].

Because of the detailed discussion of child progress, conferences typically last 20 to 45 minutes and are not appropriate for children other than nursing infants to attend.

### **Assessment Procedures**

Most Children's School assessment is informal, with direct observation by multiple educators as the primary method. Educators document observations in their own unique ways, though most record anecdotes, take photographs of constructions and interactions, and collect samples of the children's artwork, journal entries, and other projects.

Because even young children are savvy enough, however, to avoid tasks in areas that are difficult for them and to rely on peers to support their performance when avoidance is not possible, Children's School educators occasionally conduct more formal, individual assessments focused on precisely determining what a child knows or can do. Whenever possible, these assessments are designed as typical classroom activities and are widely distributed in time. For example, an educator might assess knowledge of letters and numerals by having the child be the caller in a bingo game played with peers. Gross motor skills may be assessed by having children practice an obstacle course set up in the classroom or outdoors. With individuals, educators often use



puzzles or other manipulatives<sup>1</sup> to check a child's knowledge of shapes, counting ability, etc. All these assessments are conducted within the regular program space and during the typical program hours. In cases where a child's performance on these more formal assessments is not consistent with our informal observations, the assessment will be repeated, conducted by another educator, or conducted in one of the quiet research rooms, etc. so that the results can be verified.

Data from both informal and formal assessments are incorporated into the narrative conference reports written by the child's primary teacher in the fall and the spring [4E.2]. During the face-to-face conference reports, teachers and parents review the narrative about children's progress and dialogue to create strategies to support the child's next developmental steps both at school and at home [4E.3].

Children's School assessments and conference forms are sensitive to diversity in the following ways. Assessments involve only activities that are familiar to the children, and every effort is made to eliminate verbal directions that might not be understood by a child with a language disability or limited English proficiency [2D.5]. Educators may note in the conference report any aspects of development that cannot be fairly assessed because of the child's language abilities [2D.5]. Expectations for age-level progress are routinely adapted for children with special needs at the level that qualifies them for the support of itinerant therapists or full-time therapeutic support staff, and narratives explain what the child can do independently as well as with adult support.

The Children's School does not conduct any norm-referenced or standardized assessments of preschool or kindergarten children for comparison purposes. At present, we use the Ages & Stages screening tools within 30 days of a child's enrollment to gather developmental observations from parents that help in determining whether to recommend that further professional screening should be initiated [4C.3]. Eligibility for special services is determined by diagnostic assessments conducted by professionals after referral by Children's School Staff. Standardized assessments may be conducted as part of research projects at the Children's School, together with novel assessments and task measures designed by the researchers. All researchers closely follow ethical standards for treatment of research data, so no individual scores are given to the school, the teaching teams, or to the child's parents. They are in no way connected to the child's school records.

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<sup>1</sup> Manipulatives are physical objects that are designed to help young children learn concepts in a developmentally appropriate, hands-on way. For example, unit blocks are designed to help children learn the relationship between ones, tens, and hundreds as a foundation for understanding place value.

### **Use of Assessment Results [4D]**

Results of Children's School assessments are primarily used to shape the current year's program planning and to discuss individual children's developmental progress with parents so that we can work together to best support each child's growth [2A.8]. In addition, the group results impact the school's quality improvement process via each teaching team's annual evaluation and the whole school annual evaluation, both of which are conducted each May in preparation for enhancements implemented for the next school year [4A.2].

Each fall, we offer an Educator-Family discussion related to general school choice issues among public, private, parochial, and charter options, together with individual consultation related to choices for specific children [7A.6]. School choice discussions will be offered both virtually and in person.

If parents initiate private elementary school applications for their children, they will be required to provide recommendations from the Children's School. The Children's School staff members are not permitted to complete the rating scales typically requested by the local private schools in the Pittsburgh area. Instead, when given a written request for recommendation by the parents, an Educational Administrator prepares a letter to the school indicating our policy and attaches a copy of the most recent conference report. If several months have passed since the conference, an Educational Administrator will first ask the primary teacher to check the report to determine whether there have been significant changes. If there have, then the teacher will prepare a revised conference report to be sent to the elementary school, with a copy given to the parents.

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

### ***Preschool 3's (Monday through Friday)***

8:30 AM – 1:00 PM (Monday through Thursday) 8:30-11:30 AM (Friday)

### ***Preschool 4's (Monday through Friday)***

8:30 AM – 1:00 PM or 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM (Monday through Thursday)

8:30 AM – 11:30 AM (Friday)

### ***PreK/Kindergarten (Monday through Friday)***

8:30 AM - 2:30 PM (Monday through Thursday)

8:30 AM – 11:30 AM (Friday)

Please visit the FACTS Family Portal for Orientation materials, as well as more detail about the flow of the day for each class.

## **BUS SERVICE FOR PreK/KINDERGARTEN**

Bus service for PreK/Kindergarten students may be provided by the school district in which the child resides, depending on the district policies. The Children's School staff members make every effort to communicate effectively with the bus company professionals to support their work with our children and families, but we have no authority regarding schedules, stops, personnel, etc.

***Will my child need a car seat for the school bus?*** The Pittsburgh Public School District policy requires that families provide car seats for use on school vans but not on mini-buses.

### ***What do I do if my child will be absent or not need bus service on a given day?***

Parents are responsible to communicate directly with the specific bus company regarding their child's transportation, absences, changes in schedules, or any other concerns they may have. Please make every effort to follow a consistent routine. Changes in schedule impact everyone on the route.

***What do I do if the bus is late?*** If the school bus is late or does not arrive, please contact the bus garage first for more information. Then, please notify the Children's School at 412-268-2199. If the problem is persistent, contact your school district transportation office.

***What do I do if my school district issues a school delay or closing?*** Please be aware that the school district providing your bus service may issue a weather-related delay or closing while the Children's School remains open. This information is broadcast via local television or radio stations. Families may choose to bring the child to school or follow the school district busing plan.

## **SNACK**

No food or drinks are provided by the school. Each child will bring an individual snack, a lunch, and a full water bottle to school. Water bottles can be refilled at school as needed. Staff members regularly engage in conversation with the children during snacks and meals.

Educators may include tasting and cooking activities in the classroom or kitchen.

### **NAPS**

Naps are not a regular part of our program, though children who are tired can come to the office for a nap on our couch if necessary. An educator will contact the parent / guardian to determine how to best meet the child's needs that day.

### **EDUCATORS AND TRANSITIONS**

We make every effort for all children to know and be known by all adults in our open school environment so that they are comfortable interacting with and seeking assistance from any adult. Each child is assigned to a **primary teacher** [10B.21], but children will become familiar with all teachers within the teaching team, with the educational floater, and with the administrative team. This way there are several educators who can effectively substitute when a teacher is absent.

Because our program runs on an academic calendar, children typically stay in the same class with the same educators from September through May [10B.21]. If they participate in the optional summer camp program, the children transition to a multi-age group. When making group assignments, we endeavor to foster continuity either with a team member from the recent school year or with the teacher that the child will have during the next school year. All children transition to a new primary teacher when they move to a new level of programming. At that time, we use the phasing-in process described in the orientation section to ease the transition.

## **THE CHILD'S BELONGINGS**

Please prepare the following **items for your child to bring to school** each day (all **clearly labeled** with their name) and practice with your child so they can independently use them.

- Lunch (M-Th) and a small snack (M-F) in an easily cleanable or disposable container
- Filled water bottle (which can be refilled at school from water coolers as needed)
- One helmet to be kept at school for riding the tricycles
- For 3's who are not yet potty trained, a supply of disposable diapers
- Send an extra change of clothing for your child on the first day of school in case a child's clothes become wet or soiled. Please include tennis shoes, shirt, slacks, socks, and underwear, and **label all clothes** with your child's name. Remember to update this extra set as the weather changes and as your child grows.

For your child's safety, dress your child with proper shoes - sturdy, closed-toe, rubber-sole shoes (no flip-flops, crocs, or clogs). **Sneakers are the preferred footwear.** For your convenience, please choose washable clothes. You may wish to send your child to school in layers (i.e., a sweater over a short-sleeved shirt) so that the child can self-adjust to the temperature of the room.

Provide adequate outer clothing for your child and label all items. We spend time outside every day, except in extreme cold or pouring rain. Our outdoor classroom has areas of sun and shade, so providing clothes to layer for comfort is essential. In the winter, send boots, gloves, hats and snow pants. On snowy days, if children are not wearing appropriate outdoor clothing, the staff will limit their snow play.

Pets are not permitted at school. Encourage your child to bring only books that are clearly labeled to share with the other children. Your child should leave toys, costumes, or other objects at home unless they have been approved by a teacher. Special toys often are mislaid and/or picked up by other children, causing upsets and disagreements that could have been avoided.

## **THE CHILD'S SIBLINGS**

Our NAEYC accreditation and Pennsylvania licensing are limited to preschool and kindergarten children. Our staffing is set for the number of children in each class, and the classroom arrangement, materials, and routines fit the developmental level of the class. For all of these reasons, we cannot accommodate family requests for children's siblings to join in classroom or outdoor activities.

Typically, we schedule several evening events during the year, such as Open Houses and the Family Festival, for families to attend together. Our Year-End Celebrations are also wonderful opportunities for families to interact with each other and the staff. Also, Family Social Organization (FSO) events are often designed for the entire family. Please watch the school newsletter for information about these events.

For parent meetings and conferences that involve the whole staff, we have neither the space nor the staff to provide childcare. Please make other arrangements for all of your children during these events so that all staff and adult family members can give their full attention to discussing their important partnership.

### **FOOD BROUGHT FROM HOME**

**We are a NUT FREE facility. Please do not bring or send any food containing peanuts or tree nuts to the school.** Families provide snacks and lunches in labeled lunchboxes for all children. Please send balanced meals in age-appropriate quantities for your child.

Lunch Box Suggestions for a Balanced, Nutritional Lunch	
½ turkey sandwich Celery sticks Raisins Milk/water	Chicken strips Roll Orange wedges Broccoli Milk/water
Sunbutter on graham crackers Apple slices Carrot sticks Milk/water	Yogurt Crackers Sugar snap peas 100% juice

Since we do not refrigerate children's lunches, please use cold packs to keep items at appropriately safe temperatures until lunchtime. When necessary, the teachers will provide supplemental food from our emergency supply of nutritious foods.

### **FOOD ALLERGIES OR RESTRICTIONS**

Food allergies can be life threatening. If your child has a food allergy or restriction, please contact the Main Office. You will need to complete a form that will ask you for an action plan completed by the family physician for emergency care for the child, as well as to list appropriate food substitutions. This form must be updated at least annually.

## **HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS**

At the Children's School, **holidays are viewed as educational opportunities** that give us the chance to learn about our diverse school community. As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we encourage children to talk about their family traditions, and we share stories and songs related to the meaning of holidays [2A.6]. We plan age-appropriate activities to involve the children in preparing for simple school celebrations and to help them contribute to family events (e.g., basic cooking, making gifts, and so forth). We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time (typically one day), attempt to maintain our regular school routine, and, as always, are ready to provide extra attention and comfort as needed. In all of these ways, we can create meaningful celebrations with the young children in our educational context.

**Birthday celebrations** for young children can be a special time for the child to share with friends at school and, when possible, for families to join the celebration. Please contact your child's teacher when your child's birthday is approaching in order to plan the timing of the celebration to best fit your schedule. For birthdays during vacation time, we celebrate a "half-birthday" as close to the half-birthday as possible. If you plan an additional birthday celebration outside of school time, please mail invitations from home unless the entire class is invited.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

### **On Carnegie Mellon's Campus**

We are fortunate to have access to many interesting facilities on the Carnegie Mellon University Campus and in Schenley Park. To take the best advantage of the last minute opportunities that sometimes arise (e.g., hot air balloons on Flagstaff Hill or a robot demonstration), we ask parents to sign a permanent permission slip for on-campus and Schenley Park field trips. Educators always notify the school office before taking children out of the school, always walk to their destination, and take walkie-talkies / cell phones and first aid / emergency backpacks with them.

### **Off-Campus Trips**

Occasionally, we schedule field trips that require longer walks (e.g., Carnegie Museum). Parents are required to sign a permission slip for each trip individually and may be asked to pay a small fee for admission. At all times, we maintain a ratio of one adult to three children for preschool trips or one adult to four children for kindergarten trips. This ratio does not include student employees who may attend as extra helpers, though it can include student teachers. The children are all assigned in advance to specific adults and all wear name tags with the school's name and phone number on them.



## **HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES**

At all times, health and safety are top priorities at the Children's School. Each individual's vigilance regarding health and safety issues contributes significantly to our effectiveness. Always assume that you are the only one who notices a problem or potential problem and bring it to the attention of a staff person.

### **Staff Responsibility**

Staff members are responsible for maintaining a healthful environment. We begin with our own health by submitting annual health appraisals and following even more strict illness exclusions than those required for children [6A.8]. All staff members submit criminal record and child abuse clearances as part of the employment process, as well as having periodic FBI background checks. We participate in an annual pediatric first aid / CPR class, a Bloodborne Pathogens class, the 5 R's of Medication Administration and Epi-Pen Use in Childcare, a fire safety class, and a review of our emergency procedures [5A.20]. Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit, as does the bathroom and outdoor shed. Each teacher has a backpack with basic first aid and emergency information that is used for all field trips, with additional supplies for emergency situations. We practice a variety of evacuation and lock-down drills, as specified in our Emergency Action Plan, in a serious but non-dramatic fashion with the children at a rate of one per month. Members of the Administrative Team conduct monthly health and safety checks of the entire facility [10D.4], and we work with staff and university personnel to rectify any hazards identified. Staff members are responsible for daily checks of their classrooms and shared spaces for hazards such as missing safety covers on outlets, elevated water temperature in the bathrooms, insect nests or tripping hazards in the outdoor classroom, etc.

The Children's School is a smoke-free environment with a safe water supply from the Pennsylvania Water and Sewer Authority and heating, ventilation, and cooling systems maintained in accordance with national standards. Carnegie Mellon's Environmental Health and Safety Department has abated all asbestos and lead from the Margaret Morrison building and does periodic checks for other environmental hazards, as well as diligently monitoring the status of our safety equipment and using an integrated pest management program.

In addition, beginning in 2019, the Children's School began participating in [CMU's Scotty Goes Green Certification](#) because of steps taken to reduce our environmental footprint. Currently, we have a bronze level certification, and staff members are responsible for helping with the school's efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle [10F.2].

Carnegie Mellon also follows a "green cleaning" policy to reduce children's and adults' exposure to harmful chemicals, allergens, and other contaminants that impact health, performance, and attendance [5C.6, 10D.2]. In addition, when strong odors occur in the air, we use ventilation to control them, rather than air-freshening spray [5C.2]. Scented

or unscented candles and air-fresheners are not permitted anywhere indoors at the Children's School [5C.4].

With the help of the university cleaning staff, we follow NAEYC's frequency table for cleaning and sanitation throughout the school, including toys and water play areas. All staff members follow standard precautions to minimize spread of infectious disease and store hazardous materials in locked cabinets. We follow parent and/or health professional recommendations regarding children who have allergies, and we limit classroom pets to birds, fish, amphibians, worms, insects, and small mammals with semi-annual vet checks. We use the Child Care Weather Watch chart to determine safe temperatures for outdoor play, as well as subscribing to an air quality alert system that provides notices of hazards in our area. Our outdoor classroom always has shade available in the pavilions and play structures [9B.4]. During camp, when children are outside for a longer time and wearing bathing suits, we will apply sunblock with a minimum UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 if it is authorized in writing and provided by the family [5A.16]. At this time, our area is not designated by health authorities as high-risk of insect-borne disease; but if that changes, we will use daily application of repellent containing DEET when parents provide written authorization and appropriate repellent. We are not permitted to apply a product that combines sunscreen and insect repellent.

Because hand washing is the #1 preventive measure to avoid the spread of disease, we explicitly teach, scaffold, and monitor hand-washing procedures that involve the use of liquid soap and running water, with vigorous and thorough rubbing for at least 20 seconds (the length of the alphabet song, sung twice), followed by paper towel drying [5A.9]. We and the children wash our hands upon entry, before snacks and meals, before and after food preparation, before eating and prior to serving food to children, after toileting and diapering, after contact with bodily fluids, before and after play in the water table or with infants and toddlers, and after re-entry from the outdoor classroom, as well as after any messy activities or contact with pets. Adults also wash their hands after eating and prior to serving food to children, assisting with toileting, handling garbage or cleaning, and before and after feeding a child or administering medication. Visiting family members are asked to wash their hands upon entry to the school.

The Children's School contracts with outside agencies to provide vision screening and hearing/speech/language screening annually [4C.2]. Participation in this optional service requires permission from a parent or guardian, as well as a small fee determined by the agency.

## Staffing & Supervision [10B.22]

We maintain required staff: child ratios at all times and better ratios most of the time.

Minimum of 1:10 for Preschool 3's

Minimum of 1:10 for Preschool 4's

Minimum of 1:12 for PreK/Kindergarten

These ratios are applicable both indoors and outdoors. Field trip ratios are 1:3 for preschool and 1:4 for kindergarten. Wading pool ratios are 1:5 for both preschool and kindergarten.

At any time when children are present in the school, there are at least two adults present in each classroom suite, at least one of which is a staff member [3C.13]. Classrooms are designed so staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times, without relying on mirrors, cameras, or sound monitors. Staff members, as a group, supervise **preschool children** primarily by sight [3C.12]. Classroom space is designed so that there are no areas of the room where children can hide. Supervision by sound is permissible for short intervals, such as when children go to the children's or private bathroom from the classroom. If a preschooler is out of the direct sight **and** sound supervision of all teaching staff, it is for no more than 1 minute, and the child is in a safe environment. Once **kindergarten children** are comfortable with the spatial layout of the school, they are permitted - after teacher notification - to go to the restroom, run errands to the office, or go check on a younger sibling independently (i.e., out of sight and sound supervision of the kindergarten staff but within the security system area). If a kindergartner is out of direct sight **and** sound supervision of all teaching staff, it is for no more than ten minutes and the child is in a safe environment [3C.14]. Other adults in the school will provide support as necessary (e.g., a preschool staff member could help a child in the restroom, or an office team member could help a child in the hallway), and the kindergarten team monitors the time a child is gone and checks on the child if he or she does not return to the classroom promptly.

## Illness and Injury (10.D.09)

***Educators, staff, and students with any illness will be expected to stay home [6A.8].*** It is imperative that all members of the Children's School community stay home for 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Children should report to school in good health and ready to participate in school activities.

Young children may also experience typical illnesses during school hours. When this occurs, an educator will bring the child to the Main Office to be assessed. If the illness interferes with the child's ability to participate in group activities or poses a risk to others, such as a vaccine-preventable illness, the parent / legal guardian / caregiver will be notified. A member of the administration team will determine the appropriate follow-up course of action on a case by case basis after consulting *Managing Infectious*

*Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide* by Susan Aronson, our health consultant, or the child's doctor. If a child is excluded because of a reportable communicable disease, a doctor's note stating that the child is no longer contagious may be required to return to school. *Please note: Under-immunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department [5A.14].*

Young children will also experience falls or sustain "bumps" during the course of a day, especially in the outdoor classroom. Usually, these situations are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic Band-Aid or ice pack (i.e., not necessary yet comforting). When a child sustains a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide first aid care appropriate to the injury or illness treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training. A parent, guardian or caregiver will be notified following first aid care. An incident report will be completed by staff within one day. Copies of the incident report are kept in a central office file and the child's file in FACTS, with a copy given to the family.

In the event of a serious accident or illness, staff members will provide first aid care appropriate to the injury or illness treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training [5A.15], which may include the additional prompt action of contacting Carnegie Mellon Security and EMS personnel. Parents or legal guardians will be notified. If necessary, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital preferred by the family, either in a campus security vehicle or ambulance. In these cases, center incident reports are supplemented by the EMS reports.

### Family Responsibility

As part of the enrollment process, parents must complete an Emergency Information Form and give permission for staff members to administer basic first aid to their child and to contact Carnegie Mellon EMS for more advanced care. Review of this emergency information is required every semester, but parents or guardians should update their information in the FACTS Student Information System any time there is a change in the emergency contact information. Additional consent forms for research participation, on-campus / Schenley Park field trips, multimedia recording, wading pool use, and sunscreen application are also required. Parents of children speaking English as a second language are asked to complete a form detailing the children's level of proficiency and then invited to dialogue with teachers regarding strategies to assist the child's transition and support the child's home language in the classroom [2A.7].

### Health Assessments

Prior to the child's first day of school, parents are required to submit a current health assessment of the child, including either proof of the recommended immunizations or a signed statement indicating that the family has objections to immunization. Thereafter, parents must submit an updated form after the yearly well-child checkup.

### Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics ([www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)). An Educational Administrator subscribes to the Center for Disease Control website and receives an alert message when there are updates to the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

### Lead Testing

As of January 1, 2018, Allegheny County requires lead testing for all children in the county. **Children entering Kindergarten will need to show that they have had two tests to measure their blood level.** A child will not be excluded from school if they have not had blood lead tests at 9-12 months and at 24 months, or if you don't have documentation of tests that have been performed. However, parents should schedule a "catch up" test as soon as possible.

### Physicals

If a child has a condition, such as seasonal allergies or asthma, that causes a runny nose, cough, or other mild symptoms, we ask the pediatrician to note that on their health form.

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the [American Academy of Pediatrics](http://www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before your child begins the program. Families are responsible for ensuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

### Allergy Prevention and Special Health Care Needs

Families of children with allergies or special health care needs must complete a "Care Plan for Children with Allergies, Medical Conditions, or Dietary Restrictions" giving guidelines appropriate to the child's needs, with detail regarding provision and storage of special foods (labeled with the child's name and date), necessary adaptations of activities or environment, responses staff should take in the event of an allergic reaction, and any necessary staff training. With parental permission, a list of the children's allergies will be posted in the classrooms and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies. Parents of children with other special needs should contact an administrator for guidance regarding necessary documentation and advance planning with the staff.

### Medications

All medications should be handed directly to a staff member. All medications must be accompanied by a complete "Medication Authorization Form" with specific instructions for administration. If special medical or dental training is required that goes beyond the 5R's of Medication Administration and EpiPen use included in our whole staff annual

training, then we will arrange additional training for the child's entire teaching team and members of the administrative team to ensure that an adult trained in the procedure is on-site whenever the child is present [10B.19, 10D.10]. Medications should never be left in the child's locker, backpack, or with the child to administer on his or her own.

When medication administration is necessary for your child during school hours please assure:

1. The child's medication is brought in a child-resistant container.
2. The original prescription or manufacturer's label clearly indicates the name and strength of the medicine.
3. The medication is correctly labeled with the child's first and last name (including over-the-counter medication).
4. The expiration label on the prescription medication covers the period when medicine is to be given.
5. All prescription medication labels include the name and phone number of the licensed health care professional prescribing the medication.
6. A copy of the Child's Health Record is on file with the school and is current.
7. Instructions are clear for the dose, route, procedure and time for administering medication.
8. Instructions are clear for storage (i.e., temperature) and assure that the medication can be safely stored at school according to the instructions.
9. The child has had at least one previous trial dose with no adverse side effects.

### Sick Children [10B.19]

The Children's School community relies on the adult family members' thoughtful assessment of each child's health before sending him or her to school. Even if your child "begs" to come to school, please keep him or her at home if any of the following symptoms are evident. Some of the following symptoms may indicate the beginning of an illness that might be easily communicated to other children, while other symptoms are indicative of illness that will require your child to remain home.

- Child does not feel well enough to comfortably participate in usual program activities (i.e., behavior change, fatigue, pain)
- Child has an illness that poses a risk of spreading to other children
- Child looks or acts ill
- Fever (Oral Temperature above 100°F)
- Uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet
- Diapered children with stool frequency that exceeds 2 or more stools above normal frequency for that child
- Blood or mucus in stools not explained by dietary change, medication or hard stools
- Vomiting (green or bloody) 2 or more times during the previous 24 hours unless caused by non-communicable condition and there is no danger of dehydration
- Abdominal pain continuing for more than 2 hours or intermittent abdominal pain associated with fever or other signs of illness
- Mouth sores with drooling



- Rash with fever or behavior changes, unless a health professional has determined it is not caused by a communicable disease
- Pinkeye (red or pink, itchy, painful eyes with green or yellow eye discharge that may crust over during sleep)
- Impetigo, until treatment has been initiated
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment
- Head lice or nits
- Scabies until treatment has been initiated
- Chickenpox (varicella) until all lesions have dried and crusted (usually 6 days after onset of rash)
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of gland swelling
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash
- Hepatitis A virus infection, until one week after onset of illness or jaundice if the child's symptoms are mild or as directed by the health department
- Any child determined by the local health department to be contributing to the transmission of illness during an outbreak

Children who have been ill may return when:

- Child is able to comfortably participate in usual program activities
- Child does not compromise the ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group
- Child is free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication
- Child is free of vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours unless caused by non-communicable condition and there is no danger of dehydration
- Child has been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours when antibiotics are prescribed
- Child is free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
  - Child's physician provides a written statement indicating that the child's condition is not contagious
  - Involved areas are covered completely by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage while the child is in care
- Child has a reportable communicable disease but a written statement is provided by the child's health care provider stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to group care

### Absences

**Please call the school at 412-268-2199 as soon as possible when your child will not be in school, either because of illness, appointment, vacation, etc.** Please notify the main office as soon as you become aware that your child has contracted a contagious condition or disease so that we can notify other families and staff members who might be affected.



## **GREETING, DISMISSAL AND PARKING**

### **Parking in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot**

The Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot is off Margaret Morrison Street, behind our building (please see the attached map). If you are coming to the Children's School for a conference, birthday snack or just to visit, you may park in our lot, but you must contact the main office for a "short term" Parking Permit in order to avoid getting a Carnegie Mellon parking ticket, which is expensive. The Children's School cannot "fix" parking tickets.

Please park in one of the spaces in the lower lot marked with a "V" for visitor. The spaces in the upper lot marked with an "S" are for staff and the three "L" spaces are for the Psychology Department Laboratories. Vehicles should not idle in parking areas [5A.25].

There are only eight "V" or Visitor spaces available for families to park in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot, so do not park there for other campus errands. Please use the pay-as-you-park Garage on Forbes Avenue if there are no "V" spaces available. There is additional parking on campus for evening and late afternoon meetings. Most university parking lots are open to the public after 4:00 PM. ***Never park behind Donner Hall, which is a private parking lot 24 hours a day.***

### **Greeting and Dismissal**

**Please stay in your car.** The teacher will either get or deliver your child from/to the car. Please place your child's car seat in the back seat, so that when you pull up to the door the child is sitting on the side closest to our building, under the awning. Do not allow your child to get out of the car seat while you are in the greeting or dismissal line. At the parent orientation or school visit, we provide a **Name Card** for the vehicle's visor. Clearly displaying this sign will help the teachers to quickly identify your car, thus making dismissal a smooth process.

Please be patient and courteous while driving in our parking lot. Please drive slowly and refrain from passing. Please wait until the drop off/pick up spaces beside the wall and under the awning are free before pulling into these spaces. DO NOT BACK INTO THESE SPACES. It is difficult to get in and out of parking spaces while greeting and dismissal are occurring, so please take your time and attend carefully to the location of other cars. In order to avoid long lines and traffic "jams", please drop off and pick up your child(ren) at their assigned times. If you arrive early to pick up your child, please wait in a visitor parking space until it is time. Otherwise, you may be in the "wrong line". If we work together, then the system will run smoothly for all!

***Special note to families who are greeted at the Rotunda:*** Please be sure that your child can easily exit and enter the vehicle on the passenger side of the car directly onto the sidewalk. It is a safety hazard to the adults and children to be in the street especially during winter months when the roads can be icy. ***Children who have car***

*seats on the driver's side of the car will need to be buckled by the vehicle's driver and not the educator [10D.1].*

**Greeting/Dismissal Schedule for KINDERGARTEN (and Younger Siblings)**

8:30 AM Teachers Greet at the Rotunda  
2:30 PM Teachers Dismiss at the Rotunda

**On Fridays Only:** The teachers will dismiss at 11:30AM at the Rotunda

**Greeting/Dismissal Schedule for PRESCHOOL 4's**

8:30 AM Teachers Greet Older 4's at the Rotunda **(and Younger Siblings)**  
Teachers Greet Younger 4's under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Lot  
1:00 or 2:30 PM Teachers Dismiss under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Lot

**On Fridays Only:** The teachers will dismiss at 11:30 AM under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Lot

**Greeting/Dismissal Schedule for PRESCHOOL 3's (Without 3's Siblings)**

8:30 AM Teachers Greet under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Lot  
1:00 Teachers Dismiss under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Lot

**On Fridays Only:** The teachers will dismiss at 11:30 AM under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Lot

Children will be brought to school by their parents / caregivers, and they can be met at the car/bus or brought into the building by their parents/caregivers.

If you are late bringing your child to school, please walk your child to one of the interior Children's School entrances and ring the buzzer for school access. Similarly, if you are late picking up your child, please park in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Parking Lot, come to one of the interior school entrances and ring the buzzer.

## **CAR SEATS**

Injuries suffered while riding in cars are the number one preventable cause of death in young children. Please refer to the attached guidelines to keep your child safe in the car. *Please note that Children's School Staff members are not permitted to violate these regulations by buckling a child into an improper position or device.*

Of special note:

- Never hold a child in your arms or lap while traveling in the car.
- Please do not take children out of seatbelts/car seats while waiting in the greeting or dismissal line.
- In the winter, special consideration must be given to the use of winter coats as the coat can impact the effectiveness of a harness-style car seat. ***Children's School educators will remove a child's coat prior to buckling the child into a harness-style car seat at dismissal time.*** During greeting, teachers will also help children to put on coats after removing them from their car seats.

## **THE SECURITY SYSTEM**

Our security system has two goals: (1) to keep all children safely inside the school and (2) to allow entry only for people who have Children's School business. Cameras mounted above both sides of the interior doors allow visual confirmation of visitors requesting entry, as well as anyone leaving the school [10.B.19].

For security reasons, all visitors to the Children's School, including parents / guardians, must use the intercom to request entry and then be "buzzed out" before leaving. The two main corridor doors are fire exits, so people can exit any time. But **the alarm will ring** if you do not stop in the office to alert a staff member that you are leaving so they can temporarily deactivate the alarm. To avoid the alarm ringing unnecessarily, please remember to ask a staff member for assistance before you leave the school.

The two doors on the tennis court side of the building are emergency exits only. Please do not use them as entrances or exits when the doors are closed.

## **CHILD RELEASE AND OBSERVATION**

A child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must provide a list of adults to whom the child can be released [10D.9].<sup>2</sup> Our goal is to ensure that all children are in safe hands as we release them to parents, guardians, or caregivers at dismissal. On rare occasions, educators may be faced with the delicate situation of wondering whether the person picking up the child is in some way impaired and therefore an unsafe caregiver for the child. If such a concern arises, an educator may ask if there are other arrangements that can be made for the child's care and transportation [10D.9].

Typically, any of the listed adults may observe the child at school at any time during the program's regular hours of operation, and we request that these adults follow the procedures listed below when observing at the Children's School.

Adult family members can schedule use of the one-way-mirror facilities or schedule classroom visits to observe their child at any time in the program day. Observe from the observation room or observation window whenever possible. Children's behavior is often significantly affected by a parent's presence. In addition, repeated reunions and separations can be difficult for young children, especially at the beginning of the year. The reflection garden and the playground can also be observed outdoors from the cross-campus walkway that is one level above the outdoor areas.

Adults are expected to register in the office before entering the school to sign in and obtain a visitor's badge. Please sign out prior to departure so that we can contact you in the event of a phone call, emergency, etc.

When in the classrooms, remain as unobtrusive as possible, making every effort not to disrupt the activity in progress. Please turn off your cell phone when entering the

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<sup>2</sup> Parents can only be excluded when a court of competent jurisdiction has limited the parental right of access to the child and a copy of the order is on file at the facility and with the Carnegie Mellon Police.

preschool or kindergarten classrooms, including the observation booth. If you want an opportunity to talk individually with a teacher, please make an appointment to do so during a time that the teacher can meet with you privately.

## **BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES**

The Children's School environment, schedules, routines, activities, etc. are all designed to foster positive behavior management [3B.2, 10B.18]. All staff members guide and support children throughout the day as they gain control of their bodies, learn to use language to communicate needs, practice persisting when frustrated, take turns, and play cooperatively with peers. Our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective interaction and cooperation. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, "Let's keep the sand in the sand table so that we have a lot to pour." Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area that can spark renewed engagement and positive behavior.

### **Basic Behavior Expectations at the Children's School**

Knowing and meeting expectations encourages **independent** action and fosters **self-esteem**.

#### Signals:

**Lights Off** means Stop, Look and Listen

**Bell** means Clean Up and Find the Teacher

#### School Rules:

**Be a kind friend.**

**Listen the first time.**

**Follow the routine.**

**Stay in your own space.**

**Use your words.**

**Use inside voices.**

**Use walking feet.**

**Use things appropriately.**

**Put everything in its place.**

The students in each class will discuss behavior expectations throughout the year. As appropriate, **each class will add specific examples** relating to each of the items listed above. For example, for "Be a kind friend," one year, a 4's class added "share", the Kindergartners added "respect the rights of others," and the 3's specified "if you put down your toy and move on to something else, another friend can use it."

All Children's School staff will:

- Provide limits in a calm, consistent, and respectful manner, which allows the child to grow in self-control and self-esteem.
- Respond to a child's challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and the others in the classroom.
- Help children learn to identify both positive and negative emotions, as well as to express them appropriately.



- Work with children to develop conflict resolution skills necessary to solve their disagreements in an appropriate manner.
- Help children express and acknowledge their choices.
- Help children describe problems, evaluate their actions, verbalize alternatives, and consider the perspective of others. Children are guided and supported as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions.

This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. After a quiet time, the teacher invites the child to rejoin the group and reminds the child of the relevant expectations for the activity in progress.

Staff shall observe all children and document any problem behavior to help ascertain any patterns re: events, activities, and interactions, as well as any precipitating contextual factors. If a child's behavior problem persists or becomes dangerous to the other children in the class (e.g., punching, kicking, temper tantrums), the teacher will bring the child to the school office to regain composure and talk with a member of the Administrative Team. Such situations are rare at the Children's School and are discussed thoroughly with the child, the teacher, and the parent to determine positive steps toward solution. Families are referred to specialists for help with persistent problems that may be linked to developmental issues, with the goal being to support the child's successful inclusion in the classroom while limiting or eliminating the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures [1E.1, 3B.2]. If the results of an outside evaluation suggest the need for accommodations for special needs, the Children's School will provide these, or other appropriate, accommodations, as long as they are not an undue hardship on the Children's School as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or federal / state civil rights laws. If the above steps fail to resolve the behavior problem, the Children's School may ask the parents to find an alternative educational placement for their child. The Children's School will provide the parents with 4 weeks' notice, except where such notice is not reasonable because of safety concerns, and administrators will try to assist the parents with alternative placement that is appropriate for the unique needs of the child.

### **Prohibited Practices: Child Abuse** [1B.8-10]

If any staff member, family member, volunteer, or other person, while in the vicinity of the Children's School, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director and/or Educational Administrator will take necessary steps to assure that there is no reoccurrence of the practice.

- Corporal or any type of physical punishment is not permitted. This includes shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears or other measures that produce physical pain; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.
- Any form of psychological abuse: shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection, seclusion.

- Any form of coercion: Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); physical restraint (forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down) except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).
- Any form of emotional abuse, including coercion, rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child is not permitted.
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted.
- Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted.
- Abusive, profane, or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted.

Appropriate use of restraint for safety reasons is permissible.

### Reporting Child Abuse [6A.10]

All observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to the child protective services agency no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The Director or an Educational Administrator will call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 and/or the Allegheny County CYS at (412) 473-2000 to report suspected abuse or neglect. The Director or an Educational Administrator will follow the direction of the child protective services agency regarding completion of written reports. If the parent or legal guardian of the child is suspected of abuse, the Director or an Educational Administrator will follow the guidance of the child protective agency regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless there is proof that the report is malicious [10D.5].

In the case of a staff member who is accused of child abuse, the Director or an Educational Administrator will work directly with the CMU Human Resources Liaison and Legal Consultant to ensure due process and confidentiality for the staff member. A staff member who is accused of child abuse may be suspended or given leave without pay pending investigation of the accusation. Such caregivers may also be removed from the classroom and given a job that does not require interaction with children. The Director or an Educational Administrator will follow the guidance of the University officials regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian of the suspected abused child, as well as communication with parents or legal guardians of other children so that they may share any concerns they have had. However, no accusation or affirmation of guilt will be made until the investigation is complete. Caregivers found guilty of child abuse will be summarily dismissed or relieved of their duties.

### **SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS**

Beginning this year, Staff and Family Alert messages about school delays and closures will come via the FACTS system. These direct alerts will replace our use of public media listings.

Because Children's School educators and families live in diverse areas in and around the city, we cannot factor travel conditions from every location into our decision about

whether to delay or close school. At 5:30 AM, we listen to the news, assess the weather situation, and make our best judgment about whether to have, delay or close school that day. Since our children do not walk to school or wait outside for buses, we do not typically delay or close school purely for cold temperatures. Depending on the road conditions, we may decide to choose one of three options:

1. **One Hour Delay**

During a one-hour delay, we greet at 9:30 AM and dismiss at the normal times. Option #1 enables us to conduct our classes, while giving our educators and families time for the road conditions to improve.

2. **Two Hour Delay**

During a two-hour delay, we greet at 10:30 AM and dismiss at the normal times.

3. **School Closure**

All classes are canceled.

In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgment about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

Please be aware that the school district providing your bus service may issue a weather-related delay or closing while the Children's School remains open. This information is broadcast via local television or radio stations, but also included in a communication from the school. Families may choose to bring the child to school or follow the school district busing plan.

### **EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

The Children's School's Emergency Action Plan [10B.19] specifies four safety levels including one for normal operations, one for cases when children need to be kept away from a certain area (e.g., a hazardous spill that needs to be cleaned, an accident, etc.), one for emergencies that require a lockdown / containment away from windows (e.g., a chemical spill from the nearby railroad, etc.), and one for evacuation (e.g., in case of a fire). Our first evacuation sites are the reflection garden, parking lot, or outdoor classroom. For longer evacuations, we go to the University Center or The Cyert Center for Early Education. In the event of an emergency in which Carnegie Mellon main campus facilities require evacuation, we will be relocated to the Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) located at 700 Technology Drive, Pittsburgh, PA for shelter and safety. In the event of a long-term evacuation, we contact families as quickly as possible via phone to notify them of the plan for reuniting them with their children. If phone service is not available, Carnegie Mellon officials use local broadcasting services to make announcements regarding status and procedures.

In an emergency or time-critical situation when the Director is not present or reachable by phone, the most senior Administrative Team member present will serve as the Acting Director. If neither the Director nor either of the Educational Administrators is present at the time of an emergency, the most senior educator present will decide collaboratively with other educators on a course of action.

## **UNIVERSITY TUITION REGULATIONS**

We divide the year into quarters instead of semesters, and tuition will be billed accordingly. Scholarship funds will also be allocated by quarter.

Agreement: Parents or guardians are required to sign an agreement indicating the fees and payment schedule, services to be provided, date of admission, arrival and departure times, and services considered extra (e.g., camp). This agreement is stored in the FACTS Family Portal as well as in the FACTS Student Information System. Families should update their contact information in the FACTS SIS any time there is a change (e.g., phone number, address, emergency contacts, etc.).

Deposit: A seven hundred (\$700) deposit is required to reserve a child's space in the Children's School. This deposit must be submitted with a complete set of enrollment forms via FACTS Online Enrollment system in order to reserve a child's space. The deposit is non-refundable but is applied to the fall tuition.

Tuition & Fees: Billing is managed online via FACTS Tuition Management. Families select a Payment Plan and will be invoiced based on those selections for tuition plus fees. Payments are made via ACH or Credit Card. Fees may apply. Tuition and fees will be invoiced by quarter or semester with full payment due the 15<sup>th</sup> of the first month of the quarter/semester (September 15, November 15, January 15, March 15).

Refund Policy: Parents who give written notice of voluntary withdrawal will receive a credit as follows:

- Within the first ten class days of the quarter, the full tuition charged will be credited, with the exception of the \$700 deposit.

Termination Policy: The Children's School may terminate the enrollment and enforce the withdrawal of any child at any time due to delinquent payment, ill health, consistent behavior problems without the requested child guidance evaluation being completed, parent dissatisfaction, and any other problems in accordance with the Children's School Family and Staff Handbooks, or as necessary and determined by the Director.

## **HAND-WASHING TECHNIQUE**

The following is the hand-washing procedure recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children: **Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including back of hands, wrists, areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails and jewelry.** The children are taught the much more detailed version below, along with the accompanying song composed by the Children's School minstrels.

Hand washing Technique:

**Step 1:** Put your hands together. Slide the tips of the fingers of the right hand to the left hand's wrist and then slide hands together in a wave-like motion until the left hand's fingertips are now touching the right wrist. Gently create a wave back and forth to wash the palms of your hands. (If you hold up your hands palms together and look, you can actually see a pocket between your hands. This is why the wave motion is effective in reaching the palms, which is a place germs hide.)

**Step 2:** Build a bridge by placing right hand on top of the left hand. Interlock the fingers and gently move the right hand over the left hand several times. Switch hands and repeat.

**Step 3:** Create a bracelet with the fingers of your right hand over the wrist of your left hand. Slide the fingers of your right hand around and around your left wrist. Now slide your finger bracelet off and on your left hand several times. Switch hands and repeat. (This cleans the outside of the hands, paying special attention to the thumbs and little fingers).

**Step 4:** Pinch fingers together, place finger tips in the palm of the opposite hand and twist, twist, twist in a circle to gently clean your nails. Switch hands and repeat. (*Jeannie Simms, American Respiratory Alliance of Western Pennsylvania, November 2, 2009*).



# Hand-washing Song

*(sung to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")*

Slide, slide, slide your hands,



Make a bridge like this.



Don't forget both bracelets,



Then you have to twist!

