

Dear Partners in Education,

The Children's School at Carnegie Mellon is a laboratory school that is actively involved in preschool and kindergarten education, developmental research, undergraduate teaching, and professional development of pre-service and practicing educators (10.A.01). We offer a model half-day preschool and full-day kindergarten program for 108 children ages 3-6, plus an extended day program for 42 of those children. 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 and has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 2003. 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 continually strive to use developmentally appropriate goals for young children as a framework for planning our 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 capitalizing on our talents in all of these areas, our laboratory school explores new directions 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 actively 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.psy.cmu.edu/childrenschool). 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 of the learners at the Children's School. We provide this handbook in a three-ring binder for easy organization of important papers. All subsequent newsletters and other important information will come three-hole punched for easy insertion into the notebook. In addition, 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 finding useful links to accreditation standards and a variety of parent resources. Please have all of your children's primary caregivers (e.g., extended family, nannies, etc.) review the handbook and other materials regularly. As your interests and schedule permit, please respond to our varied offers to become involved in learning at the Children's School. We look forward to collaborating with you.

Warm regards,

Sharon M. Carver, Ph.D., Director (on behalf of the entire staff)

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EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY (2.A.01)

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.

Goals -> Program -> Assessment

We use our developmental goals as a systematic framework for focusing our program and assessment design. Our teachers 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. Teacher observations and documentation of individual development are used to adjust the program to better challenge individual development, as well as to conference with parents about ways we can work as a team to support each child.

LABORATORY SCHOOL

As part of the Psychology Department (10.A.01), we serve as a laboratory for research in child development. Our director and teachers 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 Questions & Answers document in your prospective parent packet or on the web 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 a series of workshops each August, as well as offering consultation and seminars in a wide range of local and national venues.

Our program is strengthened by our relationship with Carnegie Mellon (8.B.02). 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 post office, food services, and the robotics lab, and have visits from university musicians, security officers, construction workers, et cetera (8.B.04). 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.

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 communicate the child's progress to the family.
- 5) Promoting the **nutrition and health** of children and protect 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 maintain collaborative relationships with each child's **family**.
- 8) Establishing relationships with and use the resources of the **community** to support the achievement of program goals.
- 9) Providing a safe and healthy **physical environment**.
- 10) Implementing strong personnel, fiscal, and program management policies so that all children, families, and staff have **high-quality experiences**.

Though the programs offered by the Children's School do not fall under the regulatory jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, NAEYC accreditation requires voluntary compliance with all DPW standards (10.B.04). Copies of both the NAEYC and the DPW standards are available to parents in the Children's School office or via links on our web site. The Director and Educational Administrators collaborate to guide the documentation procedures and complete the required paperwork for annual reporting and re-accreditation, as well as the associated DPW compliance checks. We earned our most recent five-year NAEYC accreditation on June 30, 2008 (expiration 6/30/13). We would be happy to discuss any aspect of accreditation with interested families.

STAFF TEAMS

The Children's School is staffed by five teams of educators: an Administrative Team, a Preschool 3's Team, a Preschool 4's Team, an Extended Day Team, and a Kindergarten Team. All teachers 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 (see Staff Team Biographies). Undergraduate interns and student employees complement each team, and pre-service teachers from local colleges often do field placements or student teaching at our school.

Children's School employees are hired and managed according to the Human Resource policies of Carnegie Mellon (10.E). They are thoroughly oriented (6.A.03), earn a competitive salary, have paid planning time, and, if working full-time, receive full benefits, including Carnegie Mellon University tuition. The Children's School provides extensive professional development of approximately 90 hours per year, as well as supporting each individual's goals for growth via additional seminars, publications, and professional experiences.

Our experienced educators participate actively in the local and national early childhood communities by serving in leadership capacities, giving regular presentations, providing consulting to other programs, and, since 2000, by partnering with neighboring high-quality programs to develop new avenues for early childhood professional development (8.C). The partner organizations are seeking ways to support each other and create synergies between their training 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 (7.A.01)

Children's School staff members follow the ethical principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (6.A.01). 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 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.
- 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 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 (3.F.03). 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 (9.C.03). For a complete description of Carnegie Mellon's Commitment to Diversity, please see <http://hr.web.cmu.edu/current/eos/commitment/>.

Because our mission is multifaceted, we aim to build positive relationships with all learning partners by appropriately balancing quality 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 of our staff, families, and university partners.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS (7.A)

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 (7.A.09). During the year, each teacher meets with parents to share information about the child's school and home life. Regular communication is encouraged among families, caregivers, and the school staff so that multiple perspectives on the child's development and interests can be used to enhance the child's school experience (1.A.01). In addition to the detailed family handbook and easily navigable web site, we have scheduled parent meetings and conferences, regular whole school and classroom newsletters, and frequent spontaneous interaction (7.B.01). A family bulletin board in the hallway outside the school office provides duplicate information, extra copies of forms, interesting articles, flyers about local family events and resources, and other parent resources (7.C.05, 8.B.03). Finally, the Administrative Team provides reminders and other tips for families via email.

If any parents would benefit from translation services at conferences or for key documents, we can contact the International Student Office for assistance in finding a translator who is fluent in the relevant language (7.A.02, 7.B.02).

Adult family members can use the one-way-mirror facilities at any time or schedule classroom visits to observe their child in the program (7.A.11). Please register in the office before entering the school. If you want to talk with a teacher, please schedule a time either before or after school (8:00 to 8:30 am or 3:30 - 4:00 pm). All parents can observe their children in the outdoor classroom from the teacher's room, as well as outdoors from the main campus level.

The popular family events, including Open Houses, the Family Festival, and the Celebration Picnic, offer the whole family a chance to participate in the child's school. In

addition, many adult family members extend their involvement by volunteering in school wide and/or classroom activities. We ask that you complete a family involvement opportunities form and return it to the office by September 10th. We will use this information to arrange meetings, compose committees, and schedule activities according to parent preferences as much as possible. Committees support the school by managing our library of over 3,000 children's books, coordinating the Family Social Organization events (such as a hay ride, skating party, family concert, etc.), repairing broken toys and equipment, and organizing events such as book sales, the annual teacher appreciation luncheon, and a year-end celebration picnic (7.A.12-14).

If you have questions or have experienced a problem at home or school, please approach the child's primary teacher or one of the administrators directly (7.C). 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 staff 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 timely and effective manner (3.F.03). 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 (7.B.01).

All adult family members are invited to participate in the Children's School's annual program evaluation via a survey conducted in May (10.F.04), 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 meeting held prior to the school year (10.F.02) and updated as necessary via monthly newsletters thereafter.

DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES (2.A.01)

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 pride in individual characteristics, families, experiences, and accomplishments and each child's responsibility for personal care, actions, and words.
2. **Interaction & Cooperation** - promoting children's social skills for diverse adult and peer relations, including listening, turn-taking, following directions, rules and routines, group participation, care for shared materials, and conflict resolution.
3. **Communication** - facilitating comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral and progressing to written language.
4. **Discovery & Exploration** - fostering a positive attitude toward learning through questioning, observing, and experimenting with varied materials related to diverse themes.
5. **Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety** - giving children opportunities to use their growing bodies in safe ways to develop small and large motor skills, coordination, and healthy living habits.
6. **Artistic Expression and Appreciation** - cultivating each child's ability to express ideas and emotions through art, music, movement, and drama.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT (2.A.02-06)

The staff team 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 (3.F.01) rather than using a fixed curriculum guide. 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 constraints of a part-day, part-year program. 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. 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.

Thematic Approach to Curriculum

The teachers prepare an engaging learning environment for exploring a theme, such as building, light & color, or oceans. Using the money from the materials fee, they choose a rich range of materials, including diverse technologies, to entice each of the children to engage in the thematic study (9.A.13). They 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. They avoid commercial characters and prescribed products in favor of open-ended explorations that promote creativity and imagination. They 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 staff monitors the activities, so that we may facilitate the children's learning and challenge them at an appropriate level. Children's activities enrich their development of concepts related to the theme and strengthen their skills in all areas. They 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. Through these explorations, 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 and healthy habits, and
- means for expressing their creative ideas through drama, movement, music, and visual arts.

Assessment Plan (4.A.01-03)

Assessment 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 the group's current interests and needs and then plan accordingly for the next week's explorations (4.D.02). At times, these reflections indicate the need for altering the classroom environment, shifting the unit focus, trying new teaching strategies, etc. 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 (7.C).

Twice per year, 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, the gym teacher, the Extended Programs teachers, etc., as appropriate. These descriptions are shared with parents, both in writing and via personal conferences. Fall conference reports for the 3's include narrative descriptions of children's progress in self-esteem & independence, interaction & cooperation, and

communication, while the 4's also include physical capabilities / health & safety. Because of the longer time kindergartners spend in school, the fall conferences are more detailed, including both a checklist of skills and narrative description for all six of the school's identified developmental objective domains. Spring conference reports for all children have this latter format (4.B.02). Staff – parent dialogue during conferences strengthens our understanding of each child's developmental profile and often leads to ideas for individualizing both staff and parent 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.

Occasionally, staff and/or parents identify the need for additional screening and referral for professional diagnostic assessment (7.B.04, 7.C.01-04). In those cases, staff 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.) and what type of health insurance the family has.

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. Child care is not provided at the school during conferences, so parents should make other arrangements for their children. Many families share these responsibilities by arranging play dates or sharing babysitters.

Assessment Procedures (4.B)

Most Children's School assessment is informal, with direct observation by staff members as the primary method. Teachers 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, a teacher might assess knowledge of letters and numerals by having the child be the caller in a bingo game played with peers (see Children's School web site for a downloadable version of these assessments). Gross motor skills may be assessed by having children practice an obstacle course set up in the classroom or outside. With individuals, teachers often use puzzles or other

manipulatives¹ to check a child's knowledge of shapes, counting ability, etc. All of 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 more informal observations, the assessment will be repeated, conducted by another staff member, 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 sections of conference reports written by the child's primary teacher in November and April for the preschool and kindergarten students (4.E.02). For conference reports that include checklists, teachers then rate the child's development of skills such as making independent choices, cooperating with peers, participating in conversation, throwing and catching bean bags, etc. as either consistently demonstrated, beginning to emerge, or not yet evident (as explained in the conference report statement below).

"The checklist portion of this conference report is designed to provide a brief overview of the child's development relative to the primary goals within each developmental area as expected for the child's age. A ~ symbol is used for characteristics that are beginning to emerge. A √ mark is used to indicate characteristics that are consistently demonstrated by the child. When a child rarely or never demonstrates a characteristic in the Children's School context, no symbol is used."

Children's School assessments and conference forms are sensitive to diversity in the following ways (4.B.01). 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. Teachers may eliminate from the conference report any items that cannot be fairly assessed because of the child's language abilities. Conference forms 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. In these cases, a level of independence rating is often added to the proficiency rating (e.g., √ with level 5 support would mean proficient with the highest level of support vs. with level 1 support means proficient independently).

The Children's School does not conduct any norm-referenced or standardized assessments of preschool or kindergarten children for comparison purposes (4.B.03). At present, we are using the assessments described above, together with our professional judgment, rather than a standardized screening to determine whether to

¹ Manipulatives are concrete 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.

recommend that further professional screening should be initiated (4.C.01). 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.

Uses of Assessment Results (4.B.06, 4.D.02&04)

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.

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 in May in preparation for enhancements implemented for the next school year (10.B.07, 10.F.01).

Each fall, we offer a staff-parent brown-bag discussion related to general school choice issues among public, private, and parochial options, together with individual consultation related to choices for specific children (7.C.05-07). 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, a member of the Administrative Team 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, a member of the Administrative Team 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.

Confidentiality (4.E.07)

Because the staff at the Children's School works as a team, each adult knows and interacts at times with every child. Therefore, all 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. It is of the utmost importance that I realize that all such information is strictly personal and confidential and can only be shared within the confines of the Children’s School. I will discuss children's behavior out of the hearing distance of the children, and I will discuss the families, children, and staff for professional purposes only. 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 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 understand and practice the Children’s School confidentiality policy 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 staff and parents. However convenient, hallways, classrooms, or the outdoor classroom are not appropriate places for conversations about sensitive matters. A child’s teacher or the director may suggest a phone call or meeting to discuss concerns raised initially in regular conversation that would be more appropriately addressed privately.

In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, official written records for each child are kept in files in a locked office and released only to the individuals working with a child, as described above, or those for whom parents sign a written release (7.C.08). These files include enrollment forms, final conference reports, health assessments provided by physicians, results of health screenings conducted at school after parent authorization, 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 special 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 as described above.

SCHOOL HOURS

Three Year Olds (Monday through Thursday)

Morning Session: 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM Afternoon Session: 12:30 PM - 3:15 PM

Four Year Olds (Monday through Friday)

Morning Session: 8:30 - 11:30 AM (M-F) Afternoon Session: 12:30 – 3:15 PM (M-Th)
8:30 - 11:30 AM (F)

Preschool Extended Day Programs (Monday through Thursday)

Morning Session: 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM Afternoon Session: 3:15 - 5:30 PM

Kindergarten (Monday through Friday)

8:30 AM - 2:30 PM (M-Th) 8:30 AM - 12:00 AM (F)

ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN (10.B.08)

The entry process is carefully planned to make the children's first days of school as reassuring as possible. The child's first school experience for the year is a visit with a parent or caregiver to become familiar with the space, the teacher, and begin to meet other members of the school community. After that, the scheduled phasing-in days involve only half of the class at a time, with the teachers focusing on helping the children get to know each other, become familiar with the space, and learn the classroom routines. Parents should plan to be available during these days in case the child is not yet ready to separate. Even if the child separates quickly, we suggest that parents observe from the booth or get a cup of coffee in the office so that we can update you on the child's adjustment. The regular school schedule, including Extended Day programming, begins during the first or second week of school. For most children, this means attending during the regularly scheduled hours and following the regular greeting and dismissal process. Parents and teachers may collaborate on alternate plans for children whose separation requires a more individualized approach. For children who start school at other points during the year, we develop a unique phasing in program.

Once the regular schedule begins and throughout the year, it is important for the children to arrive promptly so that they can participate fully in the day's activities. The start of the day often affects the child's whole experience. Being picked up on time is equally important. Young children need the security of knowing that they, too, will be picked up when the other children are going home. For this and reasons related to staffing, picking up your child on time is essential. If you should arrive early to pick up your child, please park in a visitor's space and use the alternate entry and exit route. Please send a written note with your child to inform the teacher of changes in your dismissal arrangements. For your convenience, we have supplied "Parent-to-Teacher" notepads. Please call the school office if you need additional pads. Children will not be allowed to leave the school with unauthorized adults.

ROUTINES AND TRANSITIONS (3.D.01)

The Preschool Day

Greeting: Teachers greet each child at their car and escort the children into the school.

Free Choice: After following the arrival routine, children choose from a variety of activity centers and play areas in their classrooms.

Circle Time: Children meet as a classroom community with their teacher to discuss the school day and learn about key concepts related to the theme.

Activity Time: Children choose from a range of independent and/or teacher-directed activities from a variety of areas such as: arts, blocks, computers, cooking, dramatic play, games, writing center, puzzles and other manipulatives, and sensory tables.

Group Time: Children meet with their teachers for bathroom, snack, and story time (5.B.16). Each teacher also plans music, movement, and other skill building activities to target specific developmental needs of the group. One group of children has a focused gym class each day. This activity replaces the latter part of group time and the outdoor time, and is typically conducted in one of the CMU gyms.

Outdoor Time: Children go outside every day except in extreme cold and rainy weather. Children choose from a wide variety of activities including sand play, tricycle riding, dramatic play, nature exploration, climbing, sliding, and other large motor games.

Dismissal: Teachers escort the children to the dismissal area and help them into their cars.

NOTE: Teachers will provide specific schedules at the parent meeting prior to the start of school each fall.

Extended Day Programs

- The extended day programs begin at the end of the children's regular program. The extended program varies on a daily basis to accommodate more extensive projects than are possible during the regular preschool program. The children participate in art, computer, cooking, large motor, music, and science activities.
- The extended morning program is for children enrolled in the morning preschool program. The children bring their own lunch to eat at school (5.B.16).
- The extended afternoon program is available to afternoon preschoolers and occasionally kindergartners. An additional snack is typically cooked by the group.

The Kindergarten Day

Greeting: Teachers greet each child at the car or bus and escort them into the school.

Free Choice: After following the arrival routine, children choose from a variety of activity centers and play areas in their classroom.

Group Time: Children meet with one of the teachers in the group area to discuss the daily news, calendar, weather, and have an introduction to the key concepts related to the current curriculum theme.

Activity Time: Children move among different centers to complete specific language arts, math, science, art, computer, and other theme-related activities.

Lunch/Outdoor Time: Children bring their own lunch and sit at different tables, which change monthly. Then, the children go outside to play except in extreme cold and rainy weather. Children choose from a wide variety of activities including sand play, tricycle riding, dramatic play, nature exploration, and large motor experiences.

Group Time: Children meet with one of the teachers in the group area to play a group game, sing songs, share experiences and read a story.

Journal Time: Children make a daily entry in their personal journal. Depending on their skill level, children may draw, copy words, dictate a story, or use invented spelling to express their ideas.

Activity Time: Children move among activity centers, work on extended projects related to the theme, and play in the block area, housekeeping area, or sand table. On Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons, half of the children participate in gym activities with our gym teacher.

Dismissal: Teachers escort the children to the dismissal area and help them into their cars or buses.

Bus Service for Kindergartners

Bus service for kindergartners may be provided by the school district in which the child resides, depending on their policies. The Pittsburgh Public School District policy requires that families provide car seats for use on the bus. 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. 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.

Snack is typically prepared by our Assistant Teachers, unless a cooking activity is planned for the children. The snack menu is posted in the kitchen and on the parent bulletin board, as well as being distributed with the monthly newsletter (5.B.15). **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.

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**, and each assistant teacher works with all groups at a particular age level so that he or she is familiar with the children and routines for each group and can effectively substitute when a teacher is absent (10.B.11,13). When absences are planned in advance, we recruit substitutes who have long-term familiarity with our program, often former teachers or others who have trained at the Children's School. We invite these individuals to have regular contact with the children and to participate in some of our staff development events to maintain their familiarity over the years.

Because our program runs on an academic calendar, children typically stay in the same class with the same staff from September through May (10.B.14). 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

For your child's safety, dress your child with proper shoes - sturdy, closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes (no flip-flops, crocs, or clogs). **Sneakers are the preferred footwear.** For your convenience, please choose washable clothes. 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!

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 is shaded for much of the day, so providing clothes to layer for warmth is essential (5.A.07). In the winter, send boots, gloves, hats and snowpants. On snowy days, we restrict children to the sidewalks if they are not wearing appropriate outdoor clothing.

Pets are not permitted at school. Encourage your child to bring only books, tapes and CDs that are clearly labeled to share with the other children. We prefer that your child leave toys or things that are breakable at home. These 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 voluntary compliance with the DPW regulations is 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. Siblings may accompany a parent or other caregiver to the classroom at greeting or dismissal time. We encourage siblings to participate in celebrating the birthday of a brother or sister, provided that a parent or other caregiver is present to supervise the child. Families may use our outdoor classroom when school is not in session.

We schedule several evening events during the year, such as Open Houses and the Family Festival, for families to attend together. Our annual Celebration Picnic is a wonderful opportunity for families to interact with each other and the staff. Also, Family Social Organization (FSO) events are often designed for the entire family.

Staff / Parent brown bags are typically scheduled during times that allow us to provide child care in the classroom designed for the youngest children. For parent meetings and conferences that involve the whole staff, we have neither the space nor the staff to provide child care. 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 (5.B.02)

We are a NUT FREE facility. Please do not bring or send any food containing peanuts or tree nuts to the school. Families provide lunches in labeled lunchboxes for children in the Extended Morning and Kindergarten programs. Please send balanced meals in appropriate quantities for your child. To facilitate meal planning, the USDA meal patterns for children and considerations for planning are included in this handbook. 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 nutritious snack items. Please check with the staff before bringing food from home to share among children. These snacks must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers. Because of these restrictions and the high frequency of food allergies, we typically prepare special snacks at school (see below). Families of children with dietary restrictions should consult with administrators to develop an individualized plan.

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 (3.F.03). 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 related to the meaning of holidays. 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. Because the children may prepare their own special snack related to holidays and because many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to candy and other sweets), **please do not send any food as gifts for children.** In all of these ways, we can create meaningful celebrations with the young children in our educational context. **Birthday celebrations** for young children at school 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. Because of the NAEYC restrictions on foods brought from home for sharing with classmates, teachers will consult with the birthday child to choose a nutritious birthday snack that will then be prepared by a group of children in the class. We avoid foods with high sugar content, food additives or highly processed food, and we plan carefully around any food allergies that children in the group may have. Nutritious snack alternatives include bagels, muffins, pancakes, fruit, and frozen yogurt. Families are welcome to come and enjoy the treat. If you plan an additional birthday celebration outside of school time, please mail invitations from home unless the entire class is invited.

FIELD TRIPS (8.B.02, 9.C.15)

On Carnegie Mellon's Campus

We are fortunate to have access to many interesting facilities on the Carnegie Mellon 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. Teachers always notify the school office before taking children out of the school, always walk to their destination, and take cell phones and first aid / emergency packs with them.

Off-Campus Trips

Occasionally, we schedule field trips that require longer walks (e.g., Carnegie Museum) or transportation (e.g., Pittsburgh Zoo). 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. Siblings are not invited to attend field trips. The children are all assigned in advance to specific adults and all wear nametags with the school name and phone number on them.

Adult family members are also recruited to drive for field trips because our teachers are not allowed to transport students in their vehicles (10.D.07). We are required to verify that all drivers have a valid license, as well as current car insurance. At all times when transporting children, all passengers are required to use approved child and adult safety-restraint devices in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions (9.C.15). For kindergarten trips, we occasionally use a hired bus, in which case adults and children are required to follow the bus company's safety procedures. For field trips, we use the dismissal and greeting procedure for the Children's School parking lot to pick children up from and return them to the school (see Greeting, Dismissal, and Parking). Occasionally, because of time constraints, we may greet or dismiss children at the field trip destination. In all cases, plans and relevant maps are provided along with the field trip permission form.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES (9.C.08, 10.D.01)

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 (5.C.01-05). We begin with our own health by submitting annual health appraisals and following even more strict illness exclusions than those required for children. All full-time staff members submit criminal record and child abuse clearances as part of the employment process. We participate in an annual pediatric first aid / CPR class (5.A.03), fire safety class, and review of our emergency procedures. Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit, as does the bathroom and outdoor shed (9.C.10). Each teacher has a fanny pack with basic first aid and emergency information that is used for all field trips, as well as a backpack with additional supplies for emergency situations. We practice a variety of evacuation and lock-down drills specified in our Emergency Action Plan (10.D.08) in a serious but non-dramatic fashion with the children at a rate of one per month. A member of the Administrative Team pairs with a member of the teaching staff to conduct monthly health and safety checks of the entire facility 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, discarded cigarettes or food in the outdoor classroom, etc.

The Children's School is a smoke-free environment (9.D.06) with a safe water supply from the Pennsylvania Water and Sewer Authority (9.D.02) and heating, ventilation, and cooling systems maintained in accordance with national standards (9.D.05). 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 (9.D.01) and using an integrated pest management program (9.D.08). [Overall 10.D.02]

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 (5.C.01,03,10). All staff members follow standard precautions to minimize spread of infectious disease (5.C.02) 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 mammals with semi-annual vet checks (5.C.05). 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 (5.A.07, 9.D.03). Our

entire outdoor classroom is shaded for most of the day, and there is always some shade available in the pavilions and play structures. 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 (5.A.07). 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 (5.A.07).

Because hand washing is the #1 preventive measure to avoid the spread of disease (5.A.09), 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 10 seconds (the length of the alphabet song), followed by paper towel drying. We and the children wash our hands upon entry, before snacks and meals, before and after food preparation, after toileting and diapering, after contact with bodily fluids, 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 assisting with toileting, handling garbage or cleaning, and before and after feeding a child or administering medication.

The Children's School contracts with outside agencies to provide vision screening and hearing/speech/language screening annually (4.C.01). Participation in this optional service requires permission from a parent or guardian, as well as a small fee determined by the agency.

Staffing & Supervision

We maintain required staff:child ratios at all times and better ratios most of the time (10.B.12).

- Minimum of 1:8 for 3's Programs
(though we aim for 1:6 with undergraduate support)
- Minimum of 1:10 for 4's Programs
(though we aim for 1:6 with undergraduate support)
- Minimum of 1:12 for Kindergarten
(though we aim for 1:8 with staff support)

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, at least one of which is a staff member (i.e., the other could be a student employee or intern). Staff members, as a group, supervise **preschool children** primarily by sight (3.C.04). 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 or outdoors. 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 3.C.05). 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 (5.A.04)

Staff members greet children at the beginning of the day, being watchful of their appearance as they enter and throughout the day. Children who become sick at school are removed from the group and cared for until parents can be contacted to come for the child.

Young children often experience falls or bumps during the course of a day, especially in the outdoor classroom or in gym class. Usually, they do not result in injury and are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic bandaid or ice pack (i.e., not necessary but yet comforting). When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training (10.D.09). They will report the injury to parents, guardians or caregivers, recommend treatment by a medical professional if appropriate, and complete an injury report within one day. Copies are kept in a central office file, the child's file, and given to the family.

Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident and prompt action will be taken by contacting Carnegie Mellon Security and EMS personnel. If necessary, we will accompany the child to the hospital preferred by the family, either in a campus security vehicle or ambulance. In these cases, injury 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, so we typically conduct it when parents are at school for their conferences. In addition, parents or guardians should contact the school 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.

Prior to the child's first day of school, parents are required to submit a current health assessment of the child (5.A.11), 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 (10.D.05). 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 as necessary (7.A.02, 08). Parents of children with allergies must complete an additional form 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 (5.C.04, 9.D.07). Parents of children with other special needs should contact an administrator for guidance regarding necessary documentation and advance planning with the staff.

Sick Children (5.A.04)

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. Any of these may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children.

- Oral temperature above 99 degrees within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea
- Rash, bump or other out-of-the-ordinary skin conditions
- Flushed face, "watery" or "glossy" eyes
- Excessive running nose
- Deep or dry cough
- Continuous sneezing
- Sore throat
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Unusual irritability, listlessness, fatigue

When your child will not be in school, please call the school at (412) 268-2199 between 8:00 and 8:30 AM. Please let the main office know if your child has contracted a contagious condition or disease so that we can notify other families and staff members who might be affected (5.A.05).

In most cases in which medication is required, physicians recommend that the child be on medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school. In addition, please keep your child home until the child is well enough to participate fully in both indoor and outdoor activities because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors. If medication needs to be given while the child is at school, please bring the medication in its original labeled container with written directions from the doctor to the office and complete a medication authorization form (5.A.11, 10.D.10). Do not send medication in the child's lunchbox or backpack.

GREETING, DISMISSAL AND PARKING (10.D.06)

Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot

The Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot is off Margaret Morrison Street, beside our building (please see the attached map). With your handbook is a card that will open the gate to the Margaret Morrison Visitor Parking Lot. 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 two "L" spaces are for the Psychology Department Laboratories.

Parking

Included with your family handbook are the new 2010/2011 Parking Permits (please do not use last year's permit). This permit is for "short term" parking and must be displayed on your car's dashboard when you visit the Children's School. If you plan to stay all day (longer than 2 hours), please come to the Children's School office for a one day "long term" permit. Carnegie Mellon parking tickets are expensive. The Children's School cannot "fix" parking tickets.

If you are coming to the Children's School for a conference, birthday snack or just to visit, you may park in our lot. There are only eight spaces available for families to park in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot, so please 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 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 backseat, 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. The Family Name Card found in your handbook is for the front dashboard. Clearly displaying this sign will help the teachers to quickly identify your car, thus making dismissal a smooth process. If you would like to park and walk your child in to or out of the school, please use the side doors to our building, which are located near the top of the upper parking lot stairs. For safety reasons, do not walk through the parking lot by the awning while we are greeting or dismissing.

If you arrive at school late, please walk your child into the classroom. If you are late picking up your child, you may park in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Parking Lot and come into the school. Please come to the school office where your child will be waiting and sign the "sign out" book.

Please be patient and courteous while driving in our parking lot. Please drive slowly and refrain from passing. 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" (e.g., afternoon preschool greeting and not extended morning dismissal). If we work together, then the system will run smoothly for all!

Preschool Program

The children in the three-year-old and the younger four-year-old groups will be greeted and dismissed under the awning in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot. The children in the older four-year-old group will be greeted at the rotunda area in the front of the Margaret Morrison building and dismissed under the awning.

Greeting Schedule

Morning Sessions:	8:30 AM	Three and Four-Year-Olds
Afternoon Sessions:	12:30 PM	Three and Four-Year-Olds

Dismissal Schedule

Morning Sessions:	11:30 AM	Three and Four-Year-Olds
Afternoon Sessions:	3:15 PM	Three and Four-Year-Olds

Dismissal Schedule for the Extended Programs

The extended programs dismiss from the same area.

Extended Morning:	1:00 PM
Extended Afternoon:	5:30 PM

Kindergarten Program

The children in the kindergarten (and older four-year-old group) will be greeted at the rotunda area in front of the Margaret Morrison Building. Kindergartners are dismissed in the same area, but 4's are dismissed from the awning area in the parking lot.

Greeting/Dismissal Schedule

8:30 AM	Teachers Greet in front of the Margaret Morrison Building
2:30 PM	Teachers Dismiss in front of Margaret Morrison

On Fridays Only: The teachers will dismiss at 12:00 PM in front of the Margaret Morrison Building.

PLEASE do not bring children to school early, because teachers need time to prepare their classrooms or take a break between morning and afternoon programs.

CAR SEATS (10.D.06)

So that teachers can focus their full attention on the children and keep their hands free for assisting them, we ask that adults who need to move car seats from one car to another (for example, when a parent brings the child but a nanny takes the child home) carry and install the car seats themselves. To make this a smooth process, families who need to make car seat switches should park in the Children's School Lot and walk the child and his/her car seat into or out of the school.

Injuries suffered while riding in cars are the number one preventable cause of death in young children. Here are guidelines to follow to keep your child safe in the car:

- The rear seat is the best seat for children 12 years or younger.
- All car passengers must wear a seat belt. Be sure that you wear a seat belt, because children learn by example.
- Children under 4 years of age are required to use a child restraint device. Children older than 4 but under 8 years of age are required to use a booster seat.
- Never hold a child in your arms or lap while traveling in the car.
- Please don't take children out of seatbelts/car seat while waiting in the greeting or dismissal line.

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.

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 the interior doors allow visual confirmation of visitors requesting entry, as well as anyone leaving the school. Adult family members may enter and exit the Children's School through the two main corridor doors by pressing the code on the keypad (we will give you this number) and then the * sign. In keeping with our first goal, please do not allow your child to know the code.

The two main corridor doors are fire exits, so people can exit without using the security code. But, **the alarm will ring** if you do not use the code. To avoid the alarm ringing unnecessarily, please remember to enter the security code and press the * sign before you leave the school.

The two doors to the outdoor classroom are emergency exits only but can be disarmed when the children are outside. Please do not use them as exits when the doors are closed.

CHILD RELEASE AND OBSERVATION (7.A.11)

A child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must provide a list of adults to whom the child can be released (10.D.06).² Any of these adults may observe the child at school at any time during the program's regular hours of operation. We request that these adults follow the procedures listed below when observing at the Children's School.

- Register in the Office upon arrival and sign out prior to departure so that we can contact you in the event of a phone call, etc.
- 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.
- 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 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.

² 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.

BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES (1.E., 1.F.)

At the Children's School, 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 (3.B.12).

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 (1.E.02). 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 (1.E.01).

Prohibited Practices & Reporting Child Abuse (10.D.03-04)

If any staff member or person from the child's family, while in the vicinity of Children's School, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director 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 hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain. (1.B.09)
- Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted. (1.B.10)
- Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted. (1.B.10)
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted. (1.B.09)
- Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child is not permitted. (1.B.09)

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 will call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 and/or the Allegheny County CYS at (412) 355-5701 to report suspected abuse or neglect. The Director 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 will follow the guidance of the child protective agency regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian.

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. Parents or legal guardians of suspected abused children will be notified. Parents or legal guardians of other children in the program will be contacted by the Director if a caregiver is suspected of abuse 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

We announce any school closings or delays on WTAE (channel 4), KDKA (channel 2), and WPXI (channel 11) . Please listen to the radio or television if you suspect that the Children's School may close/delay due to the road conditions. WTAE also announces school closings on their web page, wtaetv.com. Plus, the Administrative Team sends an e-mail to our families announcing changes in our day.

Because Children's School staff 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, determine what other schools in the city are doing, and make our best judgment on whether to have, delay or close school that day. Since our children do not walk to school or wait for buses, we do not typically delay or close 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 will greet the Kindergarten at 9:30 AM, the Morning Four Year Old Classes at 9:30 AM and the Three Year Old Classes at 9:45 AM. Dismissal will be at the normal times and the Extended and Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedule. Option #1 enables us to conduct the morning preschool classes, while giving our staff and families time for the road conditions to improve.

2. **Two Hour Delay/No Morning Preschool**

During a two-hour delay, we will greet the Kindergarten Class at 10:30 AM and dismiss at the normal time. The Morning Preschool and Extended Morning Programs will be canceled but the Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedules.

3. **School Closure**

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.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (10.D.08)

The Children's School's Emergency Action Plan 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 outdoor classroom or the parking lot. For longer evacuations, we go to the University Center. If we have to evacuate the whole campus, the university will provide buses to take us to one of three pre-arranged locations, each in a different direction from the campus. 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.

UNIVERSITY TUITION REGULATIONS

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). The family keeps the original and the Administrative Team puts a copy in the child's file. This agreement form must be reviewed every semester, so we typically conduct it when parents are at school for their conferences.

Deposit:

A five hundred dollar (\$500) 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 to the Administrative Team in order to reserve a child's space. The deposit is non-refundable but is applied to the fall tuition.

Tuition & Fees:

The full tuition and fees are due by the first day of school each semester, unless other arrangements have been made with the Administrative Staff. The accounting department will send an invoice for each semester's tuition, plus the snack and materials fee. The snack fee covers all kitchen activities, as well as snacks, and the materials fee covers all classroom expenses for consumables, equipment, furniture, etc. Payments should be mailed to the accounting department at the address indicated on the invoice.

Late Fee:

A late settlement fee of \$20 may be assessed for all financial settlements made after the first day of school. After the next ten days, an additional \$10 late fee will be assessed each class day to a maximum of \$250.

Refund Policy:

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

- Within the first ten class days of the semester, the full tuition charged will be credited with the exception of \$500.
- After the first ten days of a semester, but prior to Carnegie Mellon's mid-semester break, parents who withdraw their children will be credited one-half of the tuition fee charged.
- After mid-semester, no tuition is credited for withdrawals.

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 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 of the school.

