Dear Partners in Education,

The Children’s School at Carnegie Mellon 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 a model half-day preschool and full-day kindergarten program for 104 children ages 3-6, plus extended day programs for 36 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 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. (10.A.01).

We invite each Children’s School family to become actively involved in all aspects of our mission (1.A.01). 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/cs). 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 or will be sent via our websites so that you can choose which to download. 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 find 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 thoroughly. As your interests and schedule permit, please respond to our varied offers to become involved in learning at the Children’s School. During the 2012-2013 school year, we especially encourage your involvement in the Family Social Organization and in our exploration of WATER for our Whole School Unit.

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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Note that the numbering throughout this handbook corresponds to the NAEYC accreditation standards reflected in that section.
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 in all domains. Teacher observations and documentation of individual development are used to adjust the program to better promote individual growth, as well as to conference with parents about ways we can work as a team to support each child (4.A.01).

LABORATORY SCHOOL

As part of the Psychology Department (10.A.01), 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 web site 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 (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.

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 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). 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. The Administrative Team collaborates to guide the documentation procedures and complete the required paperwork for annual reporting and renewal, as well as the associated DPW compliance checks. Our current accreditation is valid from 6/30/08 through 6/30/13, and we are currently completing the renewal process.
STAFF TEAMS (10.B.01)

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 – plus a Floating Educator who can substitute on any 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, 6.A.05, 06). 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 tuition. 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 (8.C, 6.B.02.). 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 (7.A.01-14, 10.B.01)

Regardless of position, each staff member’s job description includes the following priorities for action and interaction. “Speak and behave in a professional manner with staff, children, parents, university partners, visitors, service people, et cetera, at all times. Strive to be a team player, taking initiative to help with tasks, share space and materials, offer support and constructive critique, 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. 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 lab 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. 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 (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. (1.A., 1.B.).

• 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.
• 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 both 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 a complete description of Carnegie Mellon’s Commitment to Diversity, please see http://www.cmu.edu/diversity-guide/diversity-advisory-council/presidents-statement-on-diversity.html.

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 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). Each teaching team provides a daily classroom update via email or their class web site in order to promote family communication at home about the school day. 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 and obtain a visitor’s badge 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 main campus level.

The popular family events, including Open Houses, the Family Festival, and the Whole School 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 the Whole School 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 (10.F.04).

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.

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 page 14). According to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct:

“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 (4.E.07)**

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 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 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 filed in the locked Educational Administrators’ office in the Children’s School and released only to the individuals listed 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, 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 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.
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 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 semiprivate areas to play or work alone or with a peer (9.A.12). Staff members serve as coaches as 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 (3.D.12).
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 (2.A.10, 2.G.02a-c). 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 (9.A.12). 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 staff monitors 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.

Explorations Enhance Skills

Through 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, together with an awareness of health and safety practices, 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 children’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, in writing at least one day prior to the personal conference. 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. 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.01)

Most Children’s School assessment is informal, with direct observation by multiple 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 outdoors. With individuals, teachers often use puzzles or other manipulatives\(^1\) 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 our informal observations, the assessment will be repeated, conducted by another staff member, 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 sections of conference reports written by the child’s primary teacher in the fall and the spring (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 Ő 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, 05). 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., Ő with level 5 support would mean

\(^1\) 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.
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 experimenting each year with a different standardized screening instrument and process for determining whether to 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.D)**

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 each May in preparation for enhancements implemented for the next school year (10.B.07, 10.F.02).

Each fall, we offer a staff-parent 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, 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

**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 PM (F)

**ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN**

The entry process is carefully planned to make the children’s first days of school as reassuring as possible (10.B.14). The child’s first school experience is often a visit with a parent or caregiver to become familiar with the space, the teacher, and 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, including the transition to the Extended Day Program for participating children. 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 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 a set of “Parent-to-
Teacher” notes. Please call the school office if you need additional notes. Children will not be allowed to leave the school with unauthorized adults.

ROUTINES AND TRANSITIONS (3.D.01)

The Preschool Day

*Greeting:* Teachers greet children at their cars 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 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 it 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 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 children at their cars or buses 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. In case of inclement weather, appropriate gross motor activities are provided with supervision for the children indoors (5.A.06). 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 Kindergarten**

Bus service for Kindergarten students may be provided by the school district in which the child resides, depending on the district policies. The Pittsburgh Public School District policy requires that families provide car seats for use on school vans but not on mini-buses. 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 staff, 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). Staff members regularly sit with the children during snacks and meals to engage them in conversation (3.D.12). **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**, but he or she becomes familiar with all teachers within the teaching team, and with the “floater” teacher (a permanent substitute). This way there are several staff members who 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-sole shoes (no flip-flops, crocs, or clogs). **Sneakers are the preferred footwear and are required for activities in the CMU gym.** 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. 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 has areas of sun and shade, so providing clothes to layer for comfort is essential (5.A.07). 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, tapes and CDs that are clearly labeled to share with the other children. Your child should leave toys or other objects at home unless it has 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 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.

We schedule several evening events during the year, such as Open Houses and the Family Festival, for families to attend together. Our annual Whole School 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 Discussions 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**

**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 age appropriate quantities for your child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunch Box Suggestions for a Balanced, Nutritional Lunch</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ turkey sandwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celery sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raisins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk/water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunbutter on graham crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple slices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrot sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk/water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 do not bring food from home to share among children. Because of the high frequency of food allergies, we typically prepare special snacks at school (see below). Food prepared at school will be properly planned, prepared, and portioned in accordance with the ServSafe training that is provided by our university dietician. Families of children with dietary restrictions should consult with administrators to develop an individualized plan. Children with dietary restrictions may have food stored at school for them. These foods should be brought with clear labels indicating the child’s name, the date, and the type of food. Expired food will be discarded.

**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 (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 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 enjoy the treat and often also read a book to the class. 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)

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. Teachers 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) 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. 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. 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.01-04). 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), 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. Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit, as does the bathroom and outdoor shed (9.C.10). Each teacher has a small backpack with basic first aid and emergency information that is used for all field trips, as well as a large backpack 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 (2.K.04). Members of the Administrative Team 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. 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 (10.D.02), as well as diligently monitoring the status of our safety equipment and using an integrated pest management program (9.D.08).

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). All staff members follow standard precautions to minimize spread of infectious disease (5.C.02) and store hazardous materials in locked cabinets (9.D.09). 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. 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).
outdoor classroom always has 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, before eating and prior to serving food to children, 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 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 (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. 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 (10.D.09)

Staff members greet children at the beginning of the day, being watchful of their appearance as they enter and throughout the day. Children should report to school in good health and ready to participate in school activities.

Young children, however, may experience illness during school hours that interferes with their ability to participate in group activities. In the event of an illness that interferes with group activity, the child will be excluded from the group and cared for until a parent, legal guardian or caregiver arrives to transport the child home or to a medical professional.

Young children will also experience falls or sustain “bumps” during the course of a day, especially in the outdoor classroom or in gym class. Usually, these situations are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic Band-Aid or ice pack (i.e., not necessary but 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 (5.A.03). 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, the child’s file, and given to the family.

In the event of serious accident or illness, staff members will provide first aid care appropriate to the injury or illness treatment according to procedures specified in center pediatric first aid training (5.A.03), which may include the additional prompt action of contacting Carnegie Mellon Security and EMS personnel. Parents or legal guardians will be notified. If necessary, 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, typically during routine child conferences. 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.

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 (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).

• 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). 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.

• Physicals
Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org). A copy of your child’s physical should be received before your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring 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 (5.C.04). 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 (5.A.11). Medications should never be left in the child’s locker 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

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, which 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 the spread of harmful disease to other children
• Child looks or acts ill
• Fever (Oral Temperature above 100°F orally)
• Uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet
• Diapered children with stool frequency which 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) or 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
• 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
• 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:
  o Child’s physician provides a written statement indicating that the child’s condition is not contagious
  o 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

Please call the school at 412-268-2199 between 8:00 and 8:30 AM when your child will not be in school, Please notify the main office when 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 (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). At the Parent Orientation, you will receive instructions regarding how to access 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 2012/2013 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 “V” or Visitor 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 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. 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 into 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 “Late Dismissal” 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 morning three-year-old and the morning younger four-year-old groups as well as all afternoon preschool 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 for Preschool Only
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 older 4’s are dismissed M-Th from the awning area in the parking lot and from the rotunda on Friday.

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:

- 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.

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 tennis courts are emergency exits only. 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 to get a Visitor Pass 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.05, 3.B.06, 3.B.12).

Basic Behavior Expectations at the Children’s School (3.B.05, 3.B.06)

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: (3.B.05)
- **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: (1.F.01, 3.B.05)
- 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. (1.F.02)

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 (1.E.01, 3.B.12b).

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

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 hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain. (1.B.09)

• Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child is not permitted. (1.B.09)

• Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted. (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)

Reporting Child Abuse (10.D.03-04)
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 (10.D.03). 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.

In the case of a staff member who is accused of child abuse (10.D.04), 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

We announce our school closing/delay on both WTAE (1250 AM) and KDKA (1020 AM). We also inform the three local television stations of our delays/closings: WTAE, KDKA, WPXI. After calling the news stations, an Educational Administrator will send an email to our families. Families can also register for direct email notification from one of the station web sites.

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 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 will greet the morning preschool classes and kindergarten at 9:30 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

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 or The Cyert Center for Early Education. 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 do so at the time of parent-teacher conferences.

Deposit:
A five hundred dollar ($500) deposit is required to reserve a child's space in the Children's School preschool program. A $700 deposit is required to reserve a child’s space in the Children’s School kindergarten. 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. A $200 deposit is required for the extended programs. This deposit is refundable ONLY if the vacated space is filled by another student.

Tuition & Fees:
The full tuition and fees are due by the first day of school each semester, unless other arrangements, such as a monthly payment plan, have been made with the Administrative Team. 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 the $500 or $700 deposit.
• 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.
Attachments:

School Year Calendar & Calendar Year Highlights
Staff Teams
Pgh / CMU Map
Hand-washing Technique (5.A.09)

The following is the hand-washing procedure recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children: Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears and continue for at least 10 seconds. Rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails, jewelry, and back of hands and continue for 10 seconds. 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!