



Respect • Nurture • Educate • Inspire

2023-2024

Parent Handbook

Name: _____

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Program Goals

Offer an authentic Montessori education utilizing Montessori trained lead teachers working within mixed aged group classrooms Provide and maintain a safe and secure environment for children

Respect • Respect each child as a unique individual • Respect each child's background and heritage

Nurture • Nurture children to become advocates of peace and good stewards of the earth • Nurture children to respect themselves, others, and their environment

Educate • Educate children through a wide range of materials and activities which are developmentally appropriate to a mixed age group classroom focusing on self-discipline and independence. • Educate, support and involve parents through parent education opportunities in Montessori philosophy, support of Montessori principles in the home, and child development topics such as nutrition, behavior, health and safety, etc.

Inspire • Inspire children to love to learn by utilizing the Montessori areas of practical life, language, math, music, art, science, culture, and sensorial • Inspire children to be positive contributors to their families, classroom, and their community

Children's House Montessori in the Community

Children's House Montessori School takes an active role in the Montessori Community through participation, support and attendance at the Montessori Teachers' Association of Delaware events, meetings, etc.

Children's House Montessori utilizes the local school district (Brandywine School District) for preliminary referrals and testing in the event students have special educational needs in conjunction with parents. If you are a resident of Pennsylvania we are also happy to work with your school district at your request. All students work with us to fill out Ages and Stages [questionnaires](#) during the school year and we are active in helping families with early intervention at all ages when needed. Developmental screenings are used to help educators measure and meet child development milestones.

Bush School (located in Hanby Elementary) is the first resource for educational referrals and testing within our established Brandywine School District. If an IEP is in place we work with the program to coordinate services between our program and that of the school district whenever it is possible with the approval of the family.

Children's House Montessori has a relationship with Concord High School with permission to utilize their space in case of emergency evacuation as part of our Emergency Plan. Concord High School is located right across Naaman's Road from Children's House.

Children's House Montessori is very active in our local community with relationships that support collections and fundraising for Ronald McDonald House, Food Bank of Delaware, Delaware Epilepsy Foundation, and Lymphoma Leukemia Society. Projects throughout the whole school year support the community at large.

How We Communicate With You

Each classroom provides regular written correspondence with families.

Toddler (15 months – 3 years)

- Daily notes with information reflecting eating, activities, sleeping and general social emotional information about your child or general happenings are sent to your requested email or cell number through our Brightwheel app.

All Children/Classrooms (Toddler and Pre Primary Classrooms)

- You can find weekly correspondence through emails and updates on Brightwheel or via email.
- There are 3 parent teacher conferences to discuss your child's teacher regarding child development and progress in November, February and May (see school calendar).
- Email your child's teacher anytime for specific information or updates.
- Teachers are available to return calls during planning times (beginning and end of the day) and generally during nap/quiet times mid-day.
- Individual meetings are available by appointment.
- See school calendar for other opportunities to meet with teachers and be active in the classroom.
- Weekly newsletters are sent by Brightwheel and or email.
- Notices of incidents or accidents are written forms that are sent home to be signed, and parents are informed by phone call or photo message during the day.

Parent Participation

***Co-op** – Co-Op is a Montessori concept designed to include the family in the school life of their child. We make it very accessible and possible for working parents to complete the 25 hours of Co-op required per family for the academic year. If you choose not to volunteer your time, we accept the monetary equivalent. 1 hour of Co-op is \$15.00, a total of 25 hours or \$375.00 can be billed in April/May of the school year. This year's parent coordinator is Rachel Stargatt. This parent input helps offset tuition fees as well as giving parents the opportunity to be more closely involved in your child's school.

* **Surveys** – surveys are electronically sent as needed throughout the school year to help set goals, make changes, inform executive board, staff and administration of family needs, concerns, and the school's strengths as well as areas to improve.

***Parent Representative:** Children's House maintains a parent representative to the Executive Board as a direct contact between Children's House's parents and the Executive Board. This position is generally a 2-year volunteer position.

* **Parent Association** (all families are members) meets during the year to discuss concerns, voice opinions, fundraise, and distribute parent association generated funds.

* **Board Retreat:** Every 2 years, if possible, the Children's House staff, administration, parents and Executive Board meet in a retreat setting to re-evaluate long term goals for the school.

School Calendar: check the online calendar for up to date information on upcoming parent education, school, and family events.

Communication with Our Students

Teachers are expected to communicate with children at their eye level, and whenever appropriate, sit on the floor with them during work time, and continually engage with them. Students of all ages are read to in small groups, as a class, and individually when appropriate.

Montessori classrooms embrace peace education and strive for students to communicate and solve differences with each other, facilitated by their teachers.

We provide materials that encourage independent play as well as group play incorporating sights, sounds, rhymes, songs for sounds, letters and literacy skills, develop mathematical and scientific concepts through play and their environment. Materials vary throughout the school year for a dynamic and evolving environment with age appropriate work for the range of ages and abilities in each class.

Children are provided with opportunities to walk, run, climb, stack, balance, scribble, draw, write, refine large and small motor skills, and daily (weather permitting) outdoor play time.

Teachers help students by giving names and context to everything in their environment, then respond to them with interest and encouragement to foster their independence and mastery of skills.

Drop-Off Policy (after 8AM)

- Our car line runs between 8:00am to 8:40am.
- We have staff come to your car to get your child and bring them inside.
- Car line is along our front curb, by our main entrance, the front door.
- If you arrive after 8:40am, please ring the doorbell and we'll have a staff member walk your child to this classroom.

Pick-Up Policy (12PM & 3PM)

- At regular *dismissal time (12pm & 3pm)*, students are dismissed via the main front door.
- As parents pull into the car line, we look for the family's car line number, then contact the child's classroom so that they can make their way out to you!

Pick-Up Policy (Afterschool Program 3:10-6PM)

- All Aftercare students (after 3pm) should be picked up at the front door. Please ring the doorbell when you arrive.

Pick-Up Policy (General)

- Students will only be released to adults identified in their Brightwheel profile (via Emergency Form). Parents are defaulted as contacts, but other adults can

be added. If a new adult is picking up for the first time, parents should communicate this to the school, and the new adult should have an ID available so that we can verify it for the child's record.

Sleeping mats will be sent home on Fridays or as needed
The driver should buckle the child safely into the car

RIGHTS AND EXCLUSIONS

In the event that the designated pick-up person comes to pick up a child and appears to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, etc. or acts in a way which CH staff deem to be potentially harmful to the child, Children's House staff will not release the child. They will contact another designated caregiver or emergency contact for that child. Once that person arrives we will release the child to them. If CHMS staff feel threatened or in danger at anytime, they will immediately call 911 and notify the proper authorities.

Hand Hygiene at CHMS

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community.

We'll follow these five steps every time:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. We'll hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean paper towel.

Hygiene with Children

- We have utilized our whole property to create more outdoor time besides traditional playground activities; *weather permitting*.
- Designated bathroom times with cleaning between groups
- Personal supplies for each child (drawing/writing/art materials)
- Work / toys in the rooms cleaned throughout the day
- Personal and secure spaced-out cubbies and bins within the classroom for individual belongings
- Lots of age-appropriate guidance for frequent hand washing

Illness Policy

All students are required by state licensing to have proof of a physical each calendar year.

- Physical forms must be signed and dated by a physician.
- Physical forms must include a list of immunizations as required for the child's age as recommended by the Dept. of Public Health. (See <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm>)
- If a child has not received required immunizations a written plan for completing the immunizations or a formal notarized letter stating the situation is needed for the child's file.

In the event of illness event at school, the child will be removed from the classroom and taken to the office (head of school, business, or staff room) and a parent or caregiver from the emergency contacts provided the parent will be called to pick up the child.

Let the school office know if your child has been diagnosed with any contagious illness so we can communicate this with our parent body.

Exclusions and Restrictions: (See also DELACARE regulations

<https://fvacg197xz747ur7h3vi44up-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Final-Center-Regulations-6-22-22.pdf>)

- Uncontrolled coughing, unusual lethargy, wheezing, difficulty breathing, persistent crying, abdominal pain, blood in the stool, open sores, unexplained sores, hives, or rash until the symptoms cease or a health care professional states in writing the child is not contagious.
- Fever above 100 degrees **until fever free without medication for 24 hours.**
- Vomiting (two or more episodes within 24 hours OR one episode WITH fever) until child has not vomited for 48 hours or a health care professional states in writing the child is not in danger of dehydration and not contagious.
- Uncontrolled diarrhea not contained – 2 or more episodes until it is controlled OR excluded for 48 hours if accompanied by a fever.
- Rash with fever or mouth sores until they are gone or a health care professional determines in writing the condition is non infectious

- Scabies, Impetigo, Head Lice, Purulent conjunctivitis, strep throat until 24 hours after treatment
- Chicken pox or shingles until lesions are crusted or dried (generally 6+ days)
- Measles (4 days), Hepatitis A virus (7 days), Pertussis (5 days), Rubella (7 days), Mumps (5 days) (after onset) or health care professional states in writing the child is not contagious.

We strongly encourage and participate in frequent handwashing. We use a cleaning solution of soap and water followed by a mild bleach and water solution (1 Tbsp. bleach per quart water) or other disinfectant/sanitizer solution. Staff use gloves for food prep and serving and whenever they are involved in toileting or diapering procedures.

Outdoor Weather Policy

Children will play outdoors daily when there is no active precipitation and when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk to children as identified by the National Weather Service. Children's House has access to NOAA weather radio announcements and will check and verify through the National Weather Service website about conditions in our zip code area if weather conditions warrant. Please dress children appropriately.

NOTE: Due to licensing regulations children must be provided with active outdoor play time daily. We cannot exclude children from this policy due to parental concern or requests without a written note from a health professional explaining the medical exclusion. Children

who cannot fully participate in the program should not be exposed to others and staffing ratios cannot be compromised for the care of an individual child.

Nutrition Policy

Children's House serves your child healthy snacks that are in accordance with the guidelines detailed below. We encourage you to take these into consideration when packing lunches for your child. ***Each classroom is equipped with a microwave so lunches can be reheated if needed and CHMS is happy to provide your children with either water or milk to supplement lunch.***

According to the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) and the Office of Childcare Licensing (OCCL) the following guidelines should be considered when packing your child's lunch (for children one year of age and older):

- All juice MUST BE 100% fruit or vegetable juice (Check the labels to verify) No more than one serving per day.
- If serving dairy milk, children 12-23 months should be served whole milk
- If serving dairy milk, children 24 months should be served fat-free or 1% milk
- Please be mindful of serving whole grain products
- Cereal should not contain more than 6 grams of sugar
- Snack calendars in every classroom with serving sizes and AM/PM snacks listed. CH assigns weekly snack families for each classroom and you will receive (3) hours of Co-Op credit for contributing your assigned snack.

Parents should plan on packing the following food groups in their child's lunch: protein, whole grains, vegetables, and fruit. Please note that

candy and other highly sugared foods are not appropriate and should not be included in lunches sent to school. If you have any questions about specific meal ideas please feel free to talk to your child's teacher.

Discipline Policy

Harsh or punitive discipline has no place in the school. The atmosphere of the classroom should be calm and conducive to individual work.

- Speak to children softly with friendly tones avoiding punitive and negative comments.
- Yelling, ridicule and sarcasm are not acceptable.
- No child will be denied food or drink as a form of punishment.
- Establish ground rules applicable to every member of the class. Ground rules are strengthened by adult example, discussion and isolated thinking time.
- Reinforce ground rules with gentle and consistent reminders.
- Redirect the child whenever possible
- Separate children who are having difficulty working together or separate a child from the rest of the class until he/she is able to return. This is generally done within the confines of the classroom.
- Use consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Encourage children to practice self-control, self-direction, and build positive self-esteem, social responsibility, and cooperation.
- Establish clearly defined standards for classroom behavior.
- Acknowledge positive contributions versus drawing attention to negative behaviors.

Disciplinary action

- Discuss with co worker (in your classroom) a strategy for alleviating the behavior.

- Behaviors resulting in disciplinary action or harm to another child should be documented in the “Incident Report” and shared with the parent and placed in the child’s file.
- Share and discuss the concerns and strategies used with a senior staff member, lead teacher, colleague, and/or Head of School.
- Document strategy, plans of action, and progress.
- Meet with the parents individually and with the Head of School to discuss the concerns and exchange ideas to meet the needs of the child.
- Issues involving continued concerns around safety of other children will result in the parent being called to pick up the child.
- When all of the above have been done without progress, parents will be asked to seek other professional support in handling the issue or permission for the school to seek professional advice in doing what is best for the child. As DE STARS participants the State of Delaware offers additional consulting services for behavioral needs through the DE Children’s Department Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services. These services include support for school, teacher, and parent being involved through a behavior action plan for an identified child.

Inclusion / Non Discrimination Policy

The Children’s House Montessori School provides opportunities for all children and staff to actively participate in all aspects of the program. Children with special needs or disabilities (medical as well as developmental) and children who are developing typically will be together in classrooms to support and enhance all children’s opportunities for learning.

Families are requested and encouraged to share with the school and staff any special needs of their children (medical, language barriers and developmental needs) as well as up to date formal reports and education plans (Ex.: IEP or IFSP, allergy action plans) so that staff may adequately and professionally meet their academic, medical, and developmental needs. Children can grow and develop to their maximum

potential when families and school staff work as a team. Without openness staff cannot meet the needs of children within the scope of their abilities. Staff members are aware of the shared, identified and/ or diagnosed special needs of individual children when they are directly involved with the children and trained to follow through on specific intervention plans. Family members are involved and included in the development and use of Family Service Plans or Individual Education Plans. All teachers have knowledge and training in inclusion best practices. Ours is an environment in which all children are valued and respected in order to support their optimal learning and development.

Any information shared with the school and essential staff is kept completely confidential and used solely for the purposes of the child's successful learning experience.

Special Needs:

*Families with a child with allergies are asked to fill out an Allergy Action Plan. This plan will be reviewed by admin and classroom staff and individual needs will be accommodated to the best of the school's ability.

*Families with a child who has an IEP/IFSP are asked to make sure a completed and up to date IEP/IFSP is turned in with enrollment paperwork and updated as needed. Staff will review your child's IEP and work closely with your family to ensure goals and needs are met to the best of the school's ability.

Children's House Montessori School includes many cultures, races, religions, and ethnic traditions reflected in the staff, student, and family population. We encourage and invite families and staff to share their backgrounds and traditions with the classrooms and respect the privacy of each individual. Children's House Montessori School is open to all students and staff regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, or disability.

Transition Policy

Into the Program – Potential Parents are given information about our program via an initial inquiry phone call followed by a virtual school tour. Once enrolled, parents are given many opportunities to share their individual information through required school forms (Emergency, Medical, Getting to Know You). Parents are also given opportunities to meet staff and learn about the school program through Zoom Back to School Meetings, Virtual New Parent Meeting, and Progress Reports (see school calendar).

Out of the Program - Children’s House Montessori School works cooperatively with the transition to another school, school district, or facility. Parents give written permission to their new school to release requested records. The new facility/school requests specific records from Children’s House in writing for the child’s admission including the parent permission to release these records. Children’s House administration/office staff will send copies of requested information to the new facility/school. Records requested generally include progress reports and medical records. A letter is included from the Children’s House office stating child’s history with the school (classes and levels attended), attendance for the past school year or time to date, disciplinary status, and participation of the family in the life of the school. Children’s House staff will fill out specific forms requested by the new school/facility upon request and are also open to phone conversation concerning the child’s academics and status with the school or within the classroom.

NOTE: Children’s House releases requested records only when the family is in good financial standing and their account is up to date.

Birthday Celebration Policy

The traditional Montessori birthday celebration isn't just fun, it gives a concrete way for young children to understand the months of the year and the earth's revolution around the sun each year. It also is a way for children to feel special and to connect with their place in the world and their classroom.

Birthdays are important, meaningful, and exciting!

To keep birthday celebrations equal and from disrupting our busy days and important classroom work, Children's House is establishing some new guidelines for our school.

Your child's teacher will let you know specifics about their classroom, like timing of morning snack and how parents can take part in a "walk around the sun" Montessori birthday celebration, and any classroom allergies.

CH Birthday Guidelines:

- Morning snack is the only time of day when birthday celebrations will occur.
- If you'd like to bring in a food treat, please bring your favorite snack! We try to provide a healthy snack each day, but we know celebrations usually mean a special treat! At this time all snack must be individually wrapped by the distributor and in original packaging.
 - Our teachers have shared some other fun ideas including:
 - Rice Krispy treats, fruit popsicles, yogurt/applesauce pouches, mini muffins or goldfish.
- Please refrain from bringing in any balloons, party favors, or other decorations.

Lunch Guidelines

Choking Hazards with foods: Please be mindful of larger nuts or seeds, large chunks of cheese or meat (particularly hot dogs or sausage with casing), peanut or nut butters, whole grapes, hard raw vegetables and fruits (like apples and carrots), ice cubes, raisins, popcorn, hard, gooey or sticky candy and gums (even Fruit Roll Ups). For the safety of your child please cut foods into bite sized, manageable pieces.

Co-Op Commitment

25 hours of Co-op is required per family for the 2023-2024 academic year. If you choose not to volunteer your time, you are responsible for the monetary equivalent which is \$15 per hour of remaining Co-Op.

[More information about Co-Op](#) can be found on our website or by contacting the Business Office or Co-Op Coordinator