



The Montessori
Children's House
of Wellesley

Parent Handbook

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PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Montessori Children's House of Wellesley (MCHW) is licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The program is administered by the Program Director, Jennifer Lee.

The primary purpose of MCHW is to offer families a high quality Montessori preschool experience that supports the social, emotional and intellectual growth of each child in accordance with the premises of Montessori education. To do this, the professional staff are Montessori certified and EEC certified.

MCHW is a family-centered program. Children are best served when parental input is incorporated, questions are answered, and concerns are understood and addressed. Therefore, our goal is to both (1) provide the best possible Montessori program for children and (2) serve as a resource for families during their children's early development.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

MCHW does not discriminate against any person on the basis of his or her race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, cultural heritage, political beliefs, or marital status, except with regard to the age of the children as dictated by the provisions of any license issued to MCHW by the Commonwealth.

OVERVIEW

MCHW currently offers a 5-day morning program. The 5-day morning program meets Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. Children in the program are ages two years, nine months through age six (inclusive of the kindergarten year).

MCHW's mission is to cultivate each child's natural desire to learn and feel valued. Following Montessori theory, we teach a mixed age group. The curriculum is child-centered. Children are offered "work" according to their interests and abilities. Children access materials independently and work through the curriculum at their own paces.

Classroom materials generally fall into the categories of practical life activities, sensorial exploration, language arts, and mathematics. Additional materials and lessons cover geography, music, world cultures, science, history, and character development. Traditional preschool materials and activities (including toys, building materials, art supplies, and games) are offered during certain times of the day. Outdoor recess is offered once each day. Additional outdoor experiences such as gardening or nature explorations are conducted regularly, weather permitting.

It is a fundamental premise of Montessori education that children ages 2.9-6 are developmentally ready to explore topics often considered "beyond" the preschool level by traditional educators. Consequently, we offer exposure to writing, phonics, reading, and math as soon as each child demonstrates an appropriate interest and ability—often as early as age three. It should be emphasized, however, that we never push a child to work with materials or concepts prematurely. By design, our professional staff engages in careful observation of each individual child and offers work materials only when the child is ready and interested. Our primary goal is to foster a joy of learning.

Care for the environment is a priority. We capitalize on each child's natural desire to be a useful community participant by carefully showing him or her how to do as many things for him/herself as is safe and age-appropriate. The classroom is carefully ordered so that the children know how to find (and return) all work materials. The goal is to foster each child's sense of control, organization and mastery of the environment.

Above all, our staff is strongly committed to nurturing each child's inner joy of learning. While we hope that children will take with them certain practical and academic skills, it is our most sincere hope that each child develops a joy of learning that extends throughout his or her lifetime.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We encourage parent involvement and input throughout the year. To keep you informed about what is happening, we communicate daily on our "Parent's Board." Each morning, the large group lessons planned for the day will be listed. A summary of the prior day's activities are also listed.

Please know that you are welcome to visit the school and observe your child, unannounced, at any time. We would prefer, however, that you schedule observation visits ahead of time. This allows us to prepare adult seating and plan the use of classroom space in order for you to observe your child in action while remaining "on the sidelines." If you would like to schedule an observation visit, please make arrangements with Jenn.

Parent/teacher conferences are offered in both the fall and spring. At that time, one or more members of the professional staff will review your child's progress and answer and questions or concerns. If necessary, additional meetings may be requested by parents or staff. Two written progress reports are provided each year—one in December and one in May.

In the event of a problem or concern you have regarding your child, we encourage you to contact Jenn so that we can work together to reach a solution. Please contact Jenn by phone to schedule an appointment or discuss concerns. We value input from parents and want you to feel free to share all ideas, questions and concerns. (We'd rather address your concern than have you worry!)

ADMISSIONS

The Montessori Children's House of Wellesley (MCHW) is a small school with limited openings each year. Priority is given to siblings of current and past students.

MCHW Open House

Each October, MCHW holds an Open House for interested families. Dates are posted on the MCHW web site. Due to our small size, we are unable to give individual tours of the school.

Sibling Admissions

Applications for siblings should be submitted no later than November 1 of the year preceding anticipated enrollment, but may be submitted at any time before that date.

If MCHW is unable to accommodate all sibling applications, admission decisions will be at the discretion of the Director who will take into account factors including gender balance and age distribution of the group. In such cases, admissions decisions will be made by December 1.

Please visit www.TheChildrensHouseofWellesley.com to download an Application Form.

New Family Admissions

Applications for students of families new to MCHW may be submitted as early as October 1 of the year preceding anticipated enrollment and should be submitted no later than January 1.

As space allows, MCHW will contact families to schedule short, private visits during school hours to allow parents to observe the classroom at work. (Parents are asked to leave children with other caretakers during this visit.)

In addition, we ask you to schedule a short visit with your child during after-school hours when a teacher can spend 10 – 15 minutes with you and your child exploring the classroom and materials.

Please visit www.TheChildrensHouseofWellesley.com to download an Application Form.

All admission decisions will be at the discretion of the Director who will take into account factors including gender balance and age distribution of the group. Admissions decisions will be made no later than March 15th.

MCHW does not discriminate with regard to a family's religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, disability, national origin or sexual orientation.

ENROLLMENT

When parents are offered a place for their child at MCHW, we ask that they sign an enrollment agreement and pay a \$125 enrollment fee in order to secure a place. The fee is not refunded if the child is withdrawn before the end of the school year or if the child never attends the program. Parents are responsible for the terms of their contract.

Before each child enters the program, the following forms must be on file:

- Child information form (face sheet)
- Pick-up consent
- Health form
- First Aid, Emergency Medical and Evacuation release forms
- Off-site Activities and Field Trip permission form
- Medication Administration forms (if applicable)
- MCHW Observation form
- MCHW Consent for Photographs form

All forms must be updated annually. We recommend that you keep a copy for your own files. If there are any forms that you have questions about, please contact Jenn.

On occasion (space permitting), we allow children to enroll mid-year as they reach the age of two years, nine months. In such cases, the tuition for the academic year in which they join will be prorated as follows:

<u>Beginning at any time in the month of...</u>	<u>% of Annual Tuition</u>
September	100 %
October	90 %
November	77 %
December	66 %
January	54 %
February	43 %
March	31 %
April	20 %
May	10 %

The prorated schedule and actual tuition figures will be included in the enrollment contract. The prorated schedule is applied according to the month in which the student first attends the class, regardless of the day of the month on which the student first attends the class.

RE-ENROLLMENT

Families of current students wishing to re-enroll for the upcoming year are asked to sign enrollment agreements no later than the November 1st of the current school year.

TUITION AND BILLING

The tuition is based on the school year and divided into five equal payments. There are no deductions for days missed due to illness, vacations, inclement weather, or any unforeseen closures. The tuition for the school year is payable in five equal installments which are due on the following dates: 7/15; 10/1; 12/1; 2/1; and 4/1. In the alternative, families may arrange for a monthly payment plan (at no additional cost). Current tuition costs are posted on the school's web site and updated periodically. A copy of the fee schedule is distributed to all families prior to application and enrollment.

After the Enrollment Agreement is signed and the \$125 enrollment fee is paid, your family will receive a tuition reminder approximately 3 weeks prior to each due date.

WITHDRAWAL

Parents may withdrawal their children from the program at any time for any reason. Tuition payments received prior to withdrawal, including the enrollment fee, are non-refundable. That family would not, however, be asked to submit payment for the remainder of the school year. When a child is withdrawn from MCHW, whether initiated by the parent(s) or by MCHW, all the children in the program will be prepared for the child's departure in a manner appropriate to the children's ages.

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

All information in a child's record is privileged and confidential. MCHW will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without written consent of the child's parents or guardians. MCHW will notify parents if the record is subpoenaed.

A parent may request access to his or her child's records at any time. Under no circumstances will it take more than 2 days for MCHW to produce such records.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The program operates from 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, Monday through Friday. The first several days of school each year, however, follow a modified "phase-in" schedule. Families will be given a list of these special hours in advance of the school year.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent for any reason, please notify the program by phone at 781-507-3277. If we are unable to answer the phone, please leave a message on our voice mail. Please note, we are unable to check or communicate by e-mail before 1pm each day. Therefore, absences should be reported by phone.

HOLIDAYS

A detailed school calendar with a complete list of holiday dates is distributed prior to the opening of school each September. MCHW follows a holiday schedule that is similar to that of most local public schools, but uses the Wellesley Public School calendar as its primary reference.

SNOW AND WEATHER EMERGENCY POLICY

MCHW follows the WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL CLOSINGS. If Wellesley Public Schools are closed or DELAYED, MCHW is closed.

MCHW reserves the right to cancel school if the Director deems weather conditions hazardous, regardless of whether the Wellesley Public Schools have been cancelled. In such cases, families will be notified by phone at least 30 minutes prior to the school's opening.

A DAY AT THE MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S HOUSE OF WELLESLEY

When children arrive in the morning, parents should park their cars in the Wellesley municipal parking lot directly adjacent to MCHW or in any available legal parking spot on the west side of Waban St. Parents must escort their children through the school's primary entry door to the greeting area. The doors to the greeting area will be open about 5 minutes before 9:00 am. Under no circumstances should you allow your child to enter the classrooms prior to 9:00 am, nor should you leave your child on the premises without the knowledge of a MCHW teacher.

At 9:00 am, the children say goodbye to their parents and are greeted by a teacher at the entrance to the classroom. We ask parents to say goodbyes in the greeting area, allowing children to manage the transition from this point on independently. While we encourage parents to visit the classrooms and observe their children at work, we ask that parents not enter the classrooms during this transitional time of day.

To avoid overcrowding, please refrain from having personal conversations in the waiting area after you have said goodbye to your child. Starbucks, Peete's Coffee & Tea, Rosie's Bakery and Brueggers Bagels are 1-2 blocks from our front door and serve far better coffee than we do!

As Children Arrive—STORY TIME “ON THE LINE.”

When a child has said goodbye to his/her parents, he/she joins the group on the line where a teacher will be reading a story. This will continue until all are present or 9:05, whichever comes first.

9:05 am – 9:30 am— CIRCLE

We begin our day with a morning greeting and circle time. During this period, we take roll, review the calendar and offer a lesson appropriate for the whole group. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Spanish is offered at this time. On the other mornings, a lead teacher will present a new activity, offer a “grace and courtesy” lesson, or conduct activities associated with special units such as geography, world holidays, plants, animals, physical science, art or music.

9:30am – 11:00 am—INDEPENDENT WORK TIME, SMALL GROUP LESSONS & SNACK

During this time block, children work independently or in small groups. Some may use traditional toys and art materials during this time—especially during the first weeks of the school year. Most children utilize the Montessori materials as they explore their individualized interests with the guidance and oversight of the teachers.

This is a very important time of day in which students are independently accessing materials that interest them. Teachers both guide and track student progress during this work period. Spontaneous independent or group lessons occur frequently during this time block.

SNACK

Each morning, a small group of students will prepare foods and stock the snack station under the supervision of a teacher. Children have access to snack foods from 10:00 am – 11:00 am. As children become hungry, they may help themselves. Water is always available throughout the morning.

We use child-safe dishes and hand towels as napkins. In addition to being environmentally friendly, these re-usable items offer practical life lessons. The children learn to launder and fold the towels, load the dishwasher, and wipe the tables.

The school provides all snack foods and drinking water (filtered). Allergies are happily accommodated on a case by case basis.

11:00—SECOND CIRCLE

A second circle of the day usually includes an additional lesson, story, yoga, or music & movement.

11:30 am—LUNCH

Food preparation and service is an important part of the Montessori curriculum during which grace & courtesy and practical life lessons are offered. Children set the tables with placemats, utensils, plates and cloth napkins. Children bring their own lunches from home, but are encouraged to drink filtered water provided by MCHW. This gives each child the opportunity to learn the fine motor skills involved with pouring from a pitcher and drinking from a glass. At MCHW, lunchtime is a learning time and thus involves a high level of teacher participation and guidance.

12:00 pm—RECESS

Weather permitting, we play outside. During the winter months, it is imperative that you provide appropriate clothing every day—winter coat, hat, mittens (no gloves, please!), boots and snow pants. If the temperature is too high or too low to safely play outside, we provide special indoor recess activities that may include arts and crafts projects, games, or access to traditional building toys. At no time do the children watch television or video presentations.

12:30 pm —DISMISSAL**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

The school is located at 10 Waban St. in Wellesley on the first floor of a Victorian home in the heart of the downtown Wellesley shopping area. There is ample parking in the municipal parking lot adjacent to the school. At drop-off time, please park in any available space and walk your child through the school's main entrance door facing Waban St. Proceed to the family area. If you arrive before 9:00

am, kindly wait with your child in this area until a teacher arrives for morning greetings. (The front door will not be open before 8:55 am.)

Children are dismissed through the same entrance, adjacent to the greeting area. Because Waban St. is a residential area, respect for our neighbors is paramount. You are welcome to park in the lot or in a legal space in the west side of Waban St. and retrieve your child personally. However, the parking lot is generally filled to capacity by 10:45 AM. To avoid street congestion, we offer delivery of your child to your car. To use this option, please follow these guidelines:

1. Waban St. is a ONE-WAY STREET, running north to south from Church St. to Weston Rd.
2. Please form a car line along the left side of Waban St., remaining in your car at all times.
3. The first car in line should pull up NO FURTHER than the driveway at 10 Waban St. All other cars should line up behind this car, remaining on the left side of the street. This will allow thru-traffic to pass.
4. Please remain in your cars. We will bring your child to your car. At that time, we ask the driver to buckle the child into his/her car seat.

If you arrive 15 minutes or more before dismissal time and wish to take your child early, please park in the lot or in a legally designated spot on the right side of Waban St. and enter the school or play area. If you arrive in the car line before the children have been dismissed, please turn off your engine and wait with your car in the queue. We will walk all children to the car line for dismissal.

We must have written authorization from you for any person (other than a parent or guardian) picking up your child. Your enrollment packet contains authorization forms for up to 5 adults (other than the parents or guardians). You may submit written authorizations for additional adults at any time during the school year. Upon receipt of written instructions, we will release a child to an authorized adult that is clearly recognized by the child. If the child is not able to recognize the adult, we will ask for photo identification. (Please explain this to any affected parties prior to pick-up!)

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS (Music, Art, Spanish and Yoga)

Each year, MCHW offers enrichment experiences for its students. We select the curriculum based, in part, on parent input during the previous year. Currently, we offer enrichment experiences in music & movement, art, Spanish and yoga which are integrated into the daily schedule. All enrichment experiences are considered part of the curriculum and do not require any additional fees.

LUNCH AND SNACK

A light snack is provided to all students during the morning session. MCHW provides nutritious snack foods. Examples include (but are not limited to) fruits, vegetables, yogurt, cheese, and whole grain crackers, cereals and breads. Special snacks for birthday celebrations are always welcome.

All children bring their own lunches. While children may bring their own drinks, we encourage children to drink the filtered water provided by MCHW. This water is poured and served by our students as part of the practical life curriculum. We ask that children pack their lunches in BROWN PAPER BAGS. Items that require refrigeration will be placed in the school's refrigerator upon arrival.

In accordance with EEC regulations, MCHW encourages families to pack nutritious, well-balanced meals that include (but are not limited to) lower fat proteins (such as turkey, chicken, cheese, yogurt, lentils or legumes) fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Due to the serious nature of some food allergies, we ask children not to share food brought from home with one another. Parents are asked to reinforce this message at home. If a child has a known serious allergy, we will notify the entire community and take all necessary precautions. Regardless of known allergies, we discourage parents from sending peanut products to school.

CLOTHING

Children should come to school dressed comfortably. Because we emphasize self-care, it is especially important to dress children in clothing that they can manage on their own. Here are some suggested guidelines:

- Consider choosing pants with an elastic band around the entire waist. (Zippers, buttons, snaps and hooks on waistlines are particularly challenging for 3-4 year olds.)
- Until your child has mastered tying his/her own shoes, *please choose velcro closures or slip-on shoes.*
- During cold months, please send mittens instead of gloves (unless your child is able to independently dress in gloves).

We try to go outside every day, so please dress your child for the weather. In the winter, please send a hat, mittens, boots and snow pants.

All children must have a complete change of clothes, including socks and undergarments, at school at all times. Please label all clothes and place the extra set in a clearly marked plastic baggie. We will collect these items on the first day of school.

While inside the school, children are asked to wear non-skid ballet slippers. These can be purchased locally at Capezzio's or online in black, pink or white. (We hear that Wal-Mart is also a good source of less expensive ballet slippers.) Please select a style that has an elastic band across the top of the foot.

BACKPACKS

Backpacks that can accommodate your child's lunch and occasional take-home projects are required. When selecting a backpack, please consider purchasing one made of soft material (e.g., nylon) with sufficient interior space and easy-pull zippers. (As a reference, see the LL Bean back pack options at llbean.com.) Hard plastic backpacks—especially those made in the shape of a favorite character—can be very difficult for a child to manage on his or her own.

FIELD TRIPS

Due to the young age of our children and the short duration of our school day, we take very few (if any) "field trips." Instead, we have special events right at our school. For instance, we may invite members from local museums to offer programs or demonstrations in our classrooms. Family parties and project celebrations are held at school or in our yard. We may plan a special "music concert" or perform a "play."

That said, however, we are open to suggestions for off-site trips. We encourage field trips that have true educational value and are age-appropriate for our children. In the event we take an off-site trip, all parents (and siblings) are strongly encouraged to attend.

REFERRAL SERVICES

Whenever any staff member is concerned about a child's development or behavior, the Program Director will contact the parents for an initial discussion. If a member of the staff feels that a professional evaluation is warranted, a written statement including the reasons for concern and referral recommendations will be provided to the parents.

If a child is determined to have a special need, MCHW will, with parental consent, identify in writing any accommodations necessary to meet the needs of the child including:

- Change or modification of regular school activities
- Addition of special equipment, materials, ramps or aids

In determining whether the accommodations required are reasonable or would cause an undue burden to the school, MCHW will consider the following factors:

- The nature and cost of the accommodation needed to provide care for the child in the program
- The ability to secure funding or services from other sources
- The overall financial resources of MCHW
- The effect on expenses and resources, or the impact otherwise of such actions on MCHW.

NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS

MCHW is licensed in accordance with the regulations set by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The following is the MCHW Social Service and Behavior Management Policy as required by EEC regulations.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The MCHW program focuses on promoting cooperation, mutual respect, and independent initiative among its students. The staff uses behavior management techniques such as setting reasonable and positive expectations, modeling positive behaviors, offering choices and providing children an opportunity to verbalize their feelings. Reinforcement of positive behaviors and redirection for children exhibiting behavioral difficulties are used. If this intervention does not work, a child will be invited to sit beside a teacher to assist with a lesson or asked to sit out in order to calm down for between three and five minutes. (We do not use the term "time out" to avoid negative connotations associated with a physical spot in the classroom.)

Staff will then discuss the behavior with the child at which time the child's feelings will also be acknowledged. Verbal discipline will focus on preventing recurrence in the future. Staff always communicate to the child that, while an action is inappropriate, the child is not bad. If the disruptive behavior continues, the parents will be informed and their cooperation requested.

MCHW follows the guidelines for disciplining a child as established by the EEC. These guidelines are as follows: "No child shall be subjected to abuse or neglect, cruel, unusual, severe or corporal punishment including: any type of hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body; punishment which subjects a child to verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation; denial of food or bathroom facilities, punishment for soiling, whether or not using the toilet, or punishment related to eating or not eating food."

TERMINATION AND SUSPENSION POLICY

MCHW reserves the right, in the following extreme situations, to suspend or terminate a child's enrollment:

- Repeated physical or verbal abuse towards staff or other children
- Willful destruction of MCHW property
- Endangering self or others
- Nonpayment of tuition as described in the enrollment agreement

Every effort will be made to find other, less extreme remedies before this option is employed. If a repeated problem is unsatisfactorily resolved through parent/teacher meetings or phone calls, MCHW will notify parents in writing of the problem. Parents will be asked to sign their acknowledgement of the situation. A copy of the document will be placed in the child's file.

SOCIAL SERVICE PLAN

Upon observation by the staff, the following steps may be taken to provide services to a child or family in need.

If a child appears to be abused or neglected, The MCHW Program Director will notify the Department of Social Services pursuant to M.G.L.C. 119, s. 51A, and the Department of Early Education and Care pursuant to 102 CMR 11.06:12b. We will also contact the EEC upon learning that a 51a report has been filed alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of MCHW or in a program related activity. Allegedly abusive or neglectful staff members will not work directly with children until an investigation by the Department of Social Services is complete.

The Program Director will assist parents in any way possible throughout the investigation process while providing for the protection of the child. In addition, MCHW will ensure that an allegedly abusive or neglectful staff member does not work directly with children until the Department of Social Services investigation is completed and for such further time as the EEC may require. If a parent or child appears to be in need of services but the child is in no way at risk, then the MCHW Program Director will make an appointment with the child's parents to discuss the situation and make necessary referrals.

EMERGENCY PLAN

EVACUATION PLAN

1. MCHW will practice fire drills at least once a month.
2. MCHW will alternate the exits used in order to familiarize children with all evacuation possibilities.
3. Upon evacuation, teachers and children will meet under the cherry tree in the south west corner of the play yard.
4. In the event that further distance from the school is necessary, teachers will escort the children to the driveway of 7 Waban St.
5. In the event that the entire neighborhood is evacuated, teachers will escort children to the local fire station located at the intersection of Weston Rd. and Central St. (Rte. 135) which is approximately 4 blocks away.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Every effort will be made to contact the parents immediately in the event of a medical emergency. If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be notified. In the event of serious injury, an ambulance will be called and the child will be accompanied by a teacher to the medical facility determined by the emergency personnel.

A catastrophic emergency would be broadly defined as any event that necessitates the evacuation from our site for any reason. Examples of such serious conditions are fire in the building or a nearby building, water damage, potentially hazardous odors, structural damage, or any other reason that the Wellesley Fire or Police Departments determine we should evacuate.

The following procedures are in place:

1. Although it is presumed that the ADT alarm system will activate in case of fire or smoke (which automatically alerts local fire and police personnel), staff will also call 911 after all children have been safely evacuated.
2. Children will exit the building under the supervision of a teacher through the closest emergency exit, following the evacuation guidelines outlined above.
3. After ensuring that all children are safely accounted for, the Program Director will consult with the Fire Department officials and/or emergency personnel about the situation and need for further action.
4. If parents need to be notified, MCHW will contact the parents. Copies of all parent phone numbers and emergency numbers are kept on file in an offsite location.

BUILDING SECURITY

IMPORTANT: The main entrance to The Montessori Children's House of Wellesley is located on Waban St. This door will be unlocked from 8:55 am until 9:15 am daily. *Any child or parent arriving after that time must knock on the inside door and wait for a teacher to answer.*

Please note that we will ask for picture identification for any unfamiliar person arriving to pick-up a child. Under no circumstances will we dismiss a child to a person who is not authorized in writing to receive that child.