

MUSHROOM FAMILY LEARNING CENTER FAMILY HANDBOOK 2023-2024

HISTORY

Mushroom Family Learning Center (MFLC) was established in 1973 as a non-profit corporation. Mushroom Family Learning Center was an accredited early childhood program through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) from 1992 through July 2008. We are currently licensed by both the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

In 1973 MFLC began with a blind ad in the Advertiser placed by Margaret Lee & Fred Doscher. Margaret Lee was a speech teacher for the hearing impaired, and Fred was a Presbyterian minister.

The ad read: On the threshold of a dream. If you have a child 2 – 3 ½ years old, would you be interested in a special morning play experience for them? This would be led by a husband-and-wife team, licensed, and qualified in language development, musical expression, family studies and child development. Children would have a unique experience in language development through play. If interested, please call, or write.

Forty people replied and sixteen people committed. The school started with garage sale items and with the Doscher's two-year-old's toys. Together these families joined in the dream of providing a trusting atmosphere, a predictable balance of choices for group and individual time, and a curriculum realistic to the developmental stage of each child.

When the Doscher family moved from the area, MFLC became a private, independent, non-profit corporation in which all our families and teachers share membership. The membership of MFLC prepares children two through six for a life-long love of learning.

Our membership is comprised of parents or guardians of each child enrolled in the school and the educational staff. According to our By-Laws, prior to the beginning of each school year, an annual meeting will be held to elect a new Board of Directors and to review school business. Because the Board is composed of parents, all parents have the right, and are encouraged, to vote to select who will represent them in decisions affecting our school. Monthly board meetings are open to all parents and staff. If you would like to attend, contact Emily Greb, Board President, at emilygreb321@gmail.com for the date, time, and location.

MISSION

Mushroom Family Learning Center strives to provide preschool aged children with opportunities for “individual growth within a shared environment” and to provide experiences which will help them develop a sense of connection with others and an awareness of the world around them.

PHILOSOPHY

It is the philosophy of Mushroom Family Learning Center that each child is a unique individual who deserves a warm, secure environment that promotes a sense of wonder and discovery in learning. We believe that what happens during each child's pre-school experience is important. By providing a trusting and inclusive atmosphere with mutual respect between teachers and children, each child is free to grow socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and creatively. Our small student teacher ratio (six to one) enables our teachers to nourish, stimulate, support, and recognize the uniqueness of each child. We find that when we nurture a child's self-esteem, the child can begin to develop confidence in their abilities. The teachers serve as guides to facilitate each child's discoveries, with emphasis on the child's self-direction and control, rather than teacher control.

CURRICULUM AND SCHEDULE INFORMATION

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

At MFLC, we have a child-centered curriculum that provides concrete experiences and encourages each child to initiate activities and make decisions in planning and implementing these activities. Within the classroom structure, every child is given multiple choices of activities to encourage participation and to enable each child to take advantage of their unique timetable. The child has an opportunity to repeat activities so that they can explore all aspects of an activity, as well as gain confidence in mastering a skill. Large and small structured group activities are utilized to enable the child to have hands-on experiences.

Our mission statement, “Individual growth in a shared environment” was created to directly support the varying developmental levels of all children. Our curriculum allows us to implement three styles of learning: auditory, visual, and tactile. MFLC’s curriculum aligns with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. This serves as a guideline for the teachers to plan how to begin the year and what goals they would like to achieve. Each teacher has prepared learning objectives along with content and materials used to achieve the specific learning objectives. These objectives are designed for the children to develop in learning areas such as creative arts, language, literacy, logic, and very basic fundamentals of mathematics.

Specific objectives are accomplished through themes. These themes make learning fun and provide a way to organize learning based on the developmental interests of the child. Shapes, colors, numbers, and letters are part of each day. Each teacher employs developmentally appropriate adaptations to these themes.

The indoor environment is set up to promote the child's growth in confidence and independence. We display the materials on trays within reach of the child in an inviting, uncluttered manner. The puzzles, age-appropriate toys, and art supplies are within reach on low shelves.

We provide varied equipment for gross motor activities. Children like to climb on, in and through climbing equipment, and go up and down stairs. We take advantage of our fenced outdoor playground to provide opportunities for the children to develop their gross motor and social skills.

The outdoor environment was designed and built by the parents of MFLC. It includes swings, climbing devices, slides, a sandbox, a wooden replica of a trolley with seats, and a playhouse. We go outside every day, weather permitting, since we feel this is an important experience for young children. In addition to the equipment, we may use chalk, paint, water, bubbles, balls, and a parachute.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Children feel more secure when they know what is going to happen next. Our day is predictable while still being flexible. Each class has a daily schedule that follows a routine consisting of a variety of experiences which include individual, small group, and large group activities; teacher-guided experiences and child-directed activities; indoor and outdoor active experiences; and quiet play. Morning classes meet from 9:00 to 11:30 AM. Afternoon classes meet from 12:30 to 3:00 PM. Two-year-old classes meet from 9:00 to 11:00 AM and 12:30 to 2:30 PM.

Free Play provides opportunities for social interaction among the children and allows them to independently choose learning activities according to their interests.

Gathering is a more structured setting where the teacher assembles all the children in a large group to review the planned activities for the day. This time may also include sharing time, listening to a story, practicing finger plays, or learning a new song. During this time, the teacher encourages the children to practice their listening skills as well as self-regulation.

Teacher-guided small group activities are used to break the class into small groups and permit the children to choose from various teacher guided activities. The teachers encourage the children to participate in the planned activities for the day and develop skills in listening, following instructions, thinking and problem solving, sharing, taking turns, using multiple materials to expand their creative expression and fine motor development, increasing attention span and focus.

Learning centers allow children to make choices, encourage active learning and hands on experiences, and provide for individual learning styles. They are available throughout the Teacher Guided Activity time for children to continue to explore areas of interest:

Art – Art projects provide opportunities to explore various art media and to develop fine and gross motor skills through tactile learning. In the art area, children learn:

To be creative by developing their own ideas; to use their imagination; to use materials and tools; to experiment; to discriminate using their senses; to try new things; to mix colors together to create new colors and color combinations; to understand concepts about shape, size, texture, and color. They learn patience, risk-taking, and positive peer reinforcement; and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Blocks – Constructive play allows children to develop a variety of skills through creating structures of their own design and imagination. In the block area, children learn:

To sort and classify blocks by shape and size; to practice counting; to be creative; to recreate what they already know; to understand concepts of foundation, balance, shape and size relationship, patterns, sequencing, and cause and effect. Children also learn to work together; and to use organizational and thinking skills to problem solve.

Dramatic play area – Using a wide variety of multicultural and age-appropriate materials, children are encouraged to use their imagination and communicate through creative episodes. In the dramatic play area, children learn:

To work and share cooperatively; to role play and work through emotions and fears; to practice conflict resolution; to lead and to be led by others; to use verbal skills in pretend play; and storytelling.

Math and manipulatives area - Math activities expose children to numerical concepts such as counting, grouping, comparison, time, measurement, addition, and subtraction. In the math and manipulatives area, children learn:

To think logically; to recognize numbers; to count objects; to become familiar with shapes, one to one correspondence, more or less than, and grouping into sets; to sort and classify objects. While manipulating materials, children increase vocabulary; hand-eye coordination; small muscle coordination; attention span; develop concepts about size, color, shape and pattern; develop problem solving skills, self-confidence and concentration skills.

Language arts and reading area – MFLC promotes an environment where children are encouraged to freely express themselves, look at books, engage in social interaction/communication using their own words, and develop a positive attitude about reading. In the language and reading area, children learn:

To recognize letters and letter sounds and identify them in words; to develop reading readiness skills; to practice writing skills; to listen to stories; to hear like sounds in rhyming words; to observe similarities and differences; to recall sequence of story and events; to interpret pictures and tell a story from them; to increase vocabulary and try out new words in storytelling; to discuss reactions and experiences related to stories; to listen to and converse with others; and to speak in complete sentences.

Sand and water area – Sand and water experiences give children sensory pleasure while developing math concepts, small motor skills, social skills, and language. In the sand and water area, children learn:

To compare size, shape, and volume; to measure and fill objects; to sort, strain and pour; to explore how something feels; and to discover properties of floating and sinking; to share, socialize, and converse with peers.

Science area – Through science, children can experiment, solve problems, make decisions, develop concepts about science and nature, develop sensory and math skills. In the science area, children learn:

To explore the five senses; to classify by discovering likenesses and differences; to measure by comparing length, sizes, volume, and weight; to perform simple hands-on experiments; to develop logical thinking skills and to work cooperatively.

Music is incorporated into the daily activities using instruments, voices, etc. to teach the children the concepts of rhythm, beat, and pitch. Children explore sound and enjoy singing, listening, and moving to music. We also have a music teacher who visits the school each month.

Outdoor play/creative movement is important for the development of large motor and social skills. Weather permitting, the children play outdoors every day. Swings, a playhouse, a trolley, climbing structures, slides, and balls are included in the outdoor equipment available for the children to use. During inclement weather, indoor activities, music, and games are used for creative movement and physical fitness. We also have a yoga/movement teacher who will visit the school each month.

DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS

We look at each child's individual growth as well as the growth of the different age groups themselves. The teachers facilitate this growth through "meaningful play, active exploration of the environment, and thoughtfully planned activities." The teacher/student ratio of one to six enables teachers to guide and offer support to each child, allowing the child to make choices and solve problems on his or her own. At the beginning of each year, the children are observed and assessed by the teacher to determine where each child is developmentally. When planning for their daily activities, teachers take into consideration the varying levels of the children in their class. The staff provides opportunities for fine motor development, gross motor development, and creative expression throughout the day.

At MFLC, we believe that each child develops uniquely and has different educational needs. The teachers are willing to adapt and vary the educational experiences and expectations for each child in our program. As such, the children have natural learning opportunities throughout their day, during planned and unplanned activities. Our teachers use a variety of materials, such as the visual schedule as well as verbal prompts, to accommodate both visual and auditory learners. Teachers adapt materials and methods for fine motor needs including hand-over-hand and using a variety of cutting thicknesses to bring out success in cutting.

Children with special needs are included in all aspects of our program. Those who have been evaluated and have a written Individual Education Plan (IEP) have the collaborative efforts of a multi-disciplinary team which provides for the education and services for the child. This team includes the professionals who evaluated the child, the parents, the lead teacher, and the Mushroom Director. These individuals interact with a child for several hours a week during typical activities and have opportunities to support and practice emerging skills. Within Allegheny County, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit's DART consultants work closely with our staff to build on the child's strengths and maximize their experiences. We partner with parents and consultants to ensure that the Mushroom experience is a positive one for every child.

GOALS FOR OUR MUSHROOM CHILDREN

Working in partnership with our parents, Mushroom Family Learning Center offers a program to promote the individual child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth, and well-being. Every child will have the opportunity to discover and understand the world through the experiences available at our school. The goals are:

To build self-esteem through play activities and socialization skills while allowing the child choices in activities based on interests by:

- emphasizing respect for each child as an individual
- providing a warm and caring climate built on trust and communication
- encouraging respect for family cultures, diversity and language, and value of individual differences

To create an environment which promotes positive relationships where children interact with one another and learn social problem-solving skills by:

- offering a combination of small and large group gatherings
- providing a balance of quiet and interactive options

To expand the natural curiosity and expression of children through experiences and equipment appropriate to the age and development of each child by:

- using the daily and weekly schedule to provide a variety of learning experiences
- providing indoor and outdoor activities to allow for large and small muscle development

To encourage children to communicate their feelings and needs by:

- providing opportunities for self-expression in conversation, imaginative play, and creativity (art, music, and movement)

To provide a supportive environment where parents are invited to be an integral part of their children's growth by:

- facilitating transitions from home to school, assisting children in separating confidently from parents and being comfortable in our school environment and with our teachers
- communicating with parents regarding the stages/continuum of development and the methods of observing and assessing progress
- formulating strategies for children based on the input of their parents. We encourage our parents to help us implement these goals for each child.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

REGISTRATION

Registration begins in January of each year for the next school year. Our registration materials are posted on our website prior to the start of registration. Registration opens in-house before opening to the public and it occurs on a first come first serve basis. A non-refundable registration fee of \$50.00 for one child or \$75.00 per family is due at the time of registration.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are made available through private contributions, United Way donations, and MFLC fundraisers and are awarded annually. Applications are reviewed as early as possible for the following school year and must be submitted no later than April 15. The information is evaluated by the scholarship committee of the Board of Directors. The committee determines who is awarded scholarships and their amounts. Please see the Director for more information.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES 2023-2024

Classes that meet two days per week:

2's AM M, W or T, TH 9:00 - 11:00

2's PM M, W 12:30 - 2:30

Classes that meet three days per week:

3's AM T, W, TH 9:00 - 11:30

3's PM T, W, TH 12:30 - 3:00

Classes that meet four days per week:

4's AM M, T, W, TH 9:00 - 11:30

4's PM M, T, W, TH 12:30 - 3:00

5's AM M, T, W, TH 9:00 - 11:30

5's PM M, T, W, TH 12:30 - 3:00

TUITION

Mushroom Family Learning Center is supported totally by student tuition, materials and fundraising fee, and donations. Tuition payments enable the school to match revenue with expenses. Salaries and operating expenses must be paid to provide the quality of education we wish to provide, and which families expect to receive. If a difficulty arises during the school year requiring a family to deviate from the established payment schedule, special arrangements may be made by contacting the Director. Each tuition contract is for one year. **If early withdrawal becomes necessary, written notice of withdrawal shall be given to the Director as soon as possible. Withdrawal fees are due before a child's last day of school**

The withdrawal fees are as follows:

2-day classes = \$250.00

3-day classes = \$350.00

4-day classes = \$450.00

These extra payments are to cover administrative costs and to help keep the school solvent (empty class spaces are difficult to fill once the school year begins).

Families who withdraw early but wish to re-enroll at MFLC in the same or a subsequent school year may re-enroll **only after all missed tuition for months not attended is paid in full**. If an enrolled family reserves spaces(s) for the fall through in-house or public registration but then withdraws from MFLC before the current school year ends, the family will forfeit their class placement(s) for the fall, will move to the bottom of the wait list, and may re-enroll a student or students only if space permits and only upon payment in full of all missed tuition for months not attended. The Director may approve an exception to this policy if the withdrawal occurred by mutual agreement of the family and the Director after a parent conference involving appropriate staff.

Tuition is based on an annual fee. Families may pay the full year’s tuition in one lump sum or choose to divide it into 9 equal payments. The 9 equal payments are available as a convenience. If a family has more than one child enrolled at MFLC in a given year, we offer a 10% discount on the second and subsequent children. The 10% is deducted from the class with the lower tuition.

Checks should be made payable and mailed to:

Mushroom Family Learning Center, 1900 Cochran Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15220.

TUITION SCHEDULE 2023-2024

PROGRAM	EACH TUITION PAYMENT	TOTAL FOR YEAR
2’s (2 days/wk)	\$187	\$1,683
3’s (3 days/wk)	\$244	\$2,196
4’s & 5’s (4 days/wk)	\$296	\$2,664

FEES

Mushroom Family Learning Center is a non-denominational and non-profit preschool and does not receive money from any outside organization. Because we are not affiliated with any outside organization, we pay a monthly rent. We work hard to keep our tuition affordable, but the tuition alone does not fully cover all operating expenses, salaries, and rent. To keep our tuition competitive with other preschools, we rely on the **materials fee** and **fundraising fee** to make up the difference of what tuition alone does not cover.

The Materials Fee helps the school prepare for the coming year, knowing that we are already have the money to cover the cost of the materials our teachers need to keep their classrooms running and their students happy.

At Mushroom, each family has a responsibility to fundraise a certain amount of money, based on the class(es) their child(ren) is enrolled in. You may pay this up front and not participate in fundraising for the year, or you can participate in a special fundraiser at the beginning of the school year, as an opportunity to "work off" this amount. Information about this fundraiser will be provided at the beginning of the school year.

Fundraising Fee

Two-Day Class	\$50	<i>Due October 13, 2023</i>
Three-Day Class	\$70	<i>Due October 13, 2023</i>
Four-Day Class	\$90	<i>Due October 13, 2023</i>

Fee Payment Dates:

Materials Fee (\$75) due by July 1.

Fundraising Fee due by October 13.

We participate in other fun fundraising events throughout the school year. Please check Brightwheel messages regularly for information on upcoming fundraising events that you can choose to participate in.

United Way- Does your employer participate in the Allegheny County United Way campaign? Please designate your donation to go to Mushroom. Our number is 885339. If your employer has a matching gift program, we will benefit even more.

Profits from fundraising events and United Way donations provide us with additional money and/or supplies each school year.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

A calendar is emailed to parents prior to the beginning of the school year. The calendar is also posted on our website. This calendar contains all the days when the school will be closed, what holidays are observed, and some planned activities and programs. Changes and updates, while rare, will be posted on our website and sent to families if the need arises.

STUDENT RECORDS

Mushroom Family Learning Center recognizes its responsibility regarding the collection, maintenance, dissemination, and disposal of student records and the protection of the privacy rights of students as provided in federal and state law.

Each student's record will be created at the time of registration for enrollment in a class at MFLC. All records will include registration materials, tuition agreement, Emergency Contact/Parental Consent form, and the child's medical history record. Assessments of the child's development will be entered into the permanent record as they are completed and reviewed with the parent/guardian. All student records will be maintained in a confidential manner, in a locked filing cabinet. Access to the student records is restricted to the Director and teachers who have a need to review the information. Information will be released to the parents upon request to the Director. Parents will be required to complete a release of information form to authorize MFLC to divulge any information to any person or agency.

All student records remain the property of Mushroom Family Learning Center, except as may otherwise be provided by law. Student records will be maintained for three years after the student has left MFLC; at that time, the student's records will be destroyed by shredding.

BEGINNING WEEKS AND SEPARATION

Before school begins your child's teacher will contact you to introduce themselves and establish the schedule for the opening weeks. You may contact the teacher to discuss concerns you may have regarding your child and any special needs your child may have. **Please let the Director and your child's teacher know about any serious, relevant allergies.**

We are aware of the separation anxiety felt by many children and their parents. Our policy is to be flexible enough to help meet both the needs of the child and the parent. We encourage you to discuss the separation with the child at home and prepare them for what is to come, explaining the details patiently. Consistency is another factor we emphasize. A parent's feeling of confidence that the child is in a safe environment, having fun and able to be on his/her own is one of the most helpful pieces of the child's successful separation.

BEHAVIOR AND SETTING LIMITS

At Mushroom Family we want the child to maintain a positive self-image. We try to get the children to verbalize their needs and emotions and we try to intervene before physical aggression is used. We focus on the behavior. Some of the words we use: "I cannot allow you to hurt _____"; "It is not safe to _____"; "Play dough needs to stay on the table." Sometimes we may remove a child from a situation. We then stay with the child until they can reenter the group.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Outside play is an important part of your child's school experience. We will go outdoors to play if it is 25 degrees Fahrenheit or above and if it is not raining. Please send your child to school in appropriate attire.

CLOTHING

It is strongly recommended that you dress your child comfortably for school. Your child should feel free to engage in any activity available without being concerned about damage to clothing. Shoes with rubber soles help prevent slipping. We recommend that you send in an extra change of clothes for your child to keep in their cubby. We also have extra clothes at hand in the event of an accident. Please return the borrowed clothing the following class day. The children play outside year-round, so your child needs to be equipped with the proper attire, which includes a warm jacket, a hat, mittens, and boots in the cold weather.

DIAPERING POLICY

If your child is not yet toilet trained, our MFLC staff will use only **family provided**, disposable diapers or pull-ups. Your child will be changed in our designated changing area. Please provide the necessary supplies, in a labeled, re-sealable plastic bag, to be kept in your child's cubby.

BIRTHDAYS

If you are planning a home party for your child, please do not hand out invitations at school. This can create hurt feelings and sad children. Please deliver invitations by other means.

LUNCH/ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Mushroom Family Learning Center will offer a supervised lunch program on Wednesdays. Children ages 3 and older bring their lunch and eat and socialize from 11:30 to 12:30. **We are a nut free facility.**

Mushroom Family Learning Center offers enrichment programs for our 4 and 5-year-olds that are designed to provide a variety of experiences to supplement regular classes.

Parents/guardians will be notified when Lunch Bunch and the enrichment programs will begin and will receive more detailed information at that time.

FIELD TRIPS

Field Trips at Mushroom Family Learning Center are planned to be shared family experiences. Teachers have a sign-up for each field trip. Teachers do not transport children on field trips. We require parents to drive and to attend our field trips. Each child must be secured by a car seat or booster seat. Everyone participating will meet at the site of the field trip at the scheduled time.

Please understand that while teachers are present to facilitate the field trip, the parents are responsible for the safety and behavior of the children. Should a caregiver or another person be accompanying your child on a trip in your absence, that person accepts responsibility for the safety and behavior of the child in their care. Teachers carry a first aid kit when we take field trips.

HEALTH

It is important that children be present at school to be part of a continuing experience; however, there will be times when your child is ill. Please inform us as soon as possible of any contagious illness. **Please do not send your child to school for 24 hours after vomiting or fever. If the discharge from your child's nose and/or eyes is green, please note that means there is an infection. PLEASE keep your child home.** When the discharge is clear and your child feels up to activity, they may come to school. If your child does not look quite right to you, or is not acting normally, please use this as a guideline to keep your child home. Let the teacher know if your child will be missing school on days when a field trip is planned or for an extended period.

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will try to notify you or a caregiver to pick the child up. While waiting, we will make the child as comfortable as possible, separating them from the other children as needed.

The teacher and Director need to be informed of any allergies or special needs your child may have before the start of school. While we will attempt to make every reasonable accommodation to any child with special needs, if your child requires medication during school hours, please plan to administer the dosage personally. **If your child has a serious allergy and will need medication in an emergency situation, please see the Director to complete a medication log.**

COVID-19

Please see our separate COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan.

PROOF OF FLU VACCINE/WAIVER

Licensing requires each child to have verification in their file of receiving the flu vaccine each school year. **When your child is immunized, please provide documentation from your physician.** You may scan and email the documentation to Director, Gina Lipkin, at directormflc@gmail.com.

If you choose for your child to **NOT** receive the flu vaccine, please send an email of your waiver to the Director. **This email should state that you DO NOT choose for your child to receive the flu vaccine for the 2023-2024 school year. Please include your child's full name in the message.**

Please note each child's file will need documentation of vaccination or waiver by Thursday, November 30, 2023.

HANDWASHING

The children will wash their hands upon arrival to the classroom each day. The children will also wash their hands at other transitional times throughout the day, such as before and after center time, and after outdoor play.

REQUIRED PAPERWORK

The Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form, Agreement Form, and Child Health Form need to be completed and returned to school **before** the first day of school. Please include the results of a recent health examination, and a current updated record of immunizations for our school records. It is **PENNSYLVANIA LAW** that the school has your child's immunization records on file. **These forms are due by September 1. Your child cannot attend school until the forms are turned in.** Please keep the Emergency Contact/Parental Consent current by letting us know when any pertinent information has changed, such as your phone number, cell phone number, work location, or health status. There may be other paperwork to complete as needed throughout the school year.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

At the beginning of each school year, teachers hold orientation sessions for the families enrolled in their classes. Orientation includes the introduction of the teaching staff, a review of the developmental goals for the class, the schedule for the day, and how the learning centers are available to the children. Teachers use weekly emails to communicate with parents. Parents may contact teachers by phone or email with any questions or concerns throughout the school year.

Brightwheel messages, emails, and e-newsletters are used to let parents know general information about the school as a whole and community happenings. During the 2023-2024 school year, the Director will communicate primarily using Brightwheel messages. Upcoming events, policy or regulatory changes, and other helpful information can also be found in Brightwheel messages and the e-newsletter. **Please check Brightwheel messages regularly.**

CONFERENCES

Two parent conferences are conducted per year for the families and teachers to discuss a child's interests, strengths, accomplishments, and any difficulties at school and/or home. The teachers use these conferences to review developmentally appropriate activities and experiences and to seek the parents' input about any adjustments needed to support the child's growth

and progression to the next level, either in preschool or kindergarten.

Check our school calendar for the conference days. Please note that there usually is no class on those days. Your child's teacher will send you more detailed information about conferences as it gets closer to the dates.

CONSULTATION

Greeting and parting times are designed to be child-centered and provide a smooth transition from home to school or from regular class to enrichment.

Teachers do touch base with parents at drop off and pick up to address special concerns or share information regarding the child's day; however, this is generally not a good time for private discussions with the teachers. You are invited to talk with any of the staff, and we hope you take the opportunity to do so. Check with your child's teacher for the appropriate times to be in touch. Your child's teacher will provide you with their contact information.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES

For the 2023-2024 school year, parents/guardians will drop-off and pick-up students outside of one of the following pre-assigned locations:

- **Door H (4's AM & PM classes)**
- **Door I main entrance (3's AM & PM classes)**
- **Door J side of building near playground (all 2's classes, 5's AM & PM classes)**

Parents/guardians will receive more detailed information about the drop-off/pick-up location and procedures for their child(ren) before school begins. Parents will not enter the building with their child(ren).

It is important that the children arrive on time to school each day. Also, children become understandably anxious when you are not there to pick them up at the designated time. Please be prompt. Fears and concerns about this feeling are difficult for your child to express to you. It is also important to end the day positively for all concerned. On-time pick-up goes a long way towards this goal. Also, your child's teachers have their own family commitments that might require they leave directly when class is over. **We must charge a fee if late pick up occurs repeatedly.**

If you have made different arrangements for your child's pick-up on a given day, please contact your child's teacher. We will not be able to let your child leave unless we have prior knowledge of these arrangements.

Do not park in the handicap spaces or directly in front of entrances to the building. **Leaving younger children in the car unattended is not safe or acceptable.** Please hold your children's hands until they are safely in the car. Our parking lot is very busy, and we must be particularly careful to ensure the safety of the children.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY POLICY

It is the responsibility of each child's caregiver to fill out all pertinent health information on the forms provided by MFLC and **keep them current.**

In case of a major emergency (including, but not limited to, an open wound with heavy bleeding, respiratory distress, or loss of consciousness), a teacher will stay with the child administering first aid or CPR while another teacher calls 911. After calling Emergency Medical Services, the teacher will call the parent/guardian. A teacher will accompany the child to the nearest hospital (St. Clair Memorial Hospital) when appropriate and remain with the child until the child's parent/guardian arrives.

FIRE DRILLS AND EMERGENCY PLAN

Fire Drill Guidelines and an Emergency Plan are kept in each of the Mushroom Family Learning Center's classes and in the office. An Emergency Plans letter is sent to enrolled families each year.

MFLC staff receive fire safety training and emergency training at the start of each school year.

MFLC has an automatic alarm and smoke detection system that is connected to the Scott Twp. Fire Department. The building is also connected to Blue Point, which provides emergency pull stations around the building that connect to the Scott Twp. Police Department. There are fire extinguishers in multiple places in the building.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers introduce the children to the requirement for safety in the classroom and on the playground. The children are told the rules for safety which include the scheduling of monthly fire drills. The teachers then show the children how a fire drill is conducted. Teachers demonstrate the proper way to line up and exit the building. They also explain the need to be quiet and where the children will wait until it is safe to return to their classrooms. Teachers count heads as the children line up to exit and again as the children line up to return to their classrooms. The children leave the building from the designated exit closest to their classrooms.

Records of completed drills are completed and maintained by each teacher.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Mushroom Family Learning Center, a non-profit, non-denominational preschool, affirms a policy of non-discrimination in employment, services, and programs. MFLC is committed to the principles of equal employment opportunity and equal access to services and programs and will take affirmative action to ensure the employees, applicants for employment, all families and children, and potential families are treated equitably regardless of race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age, or sex. MFLC is in full compliance with all relevant state, federal, local laws, and regulations governing non-discrimination.

POLICY ON CHILD ABUSE

Mushroom Family Learning Center recognizes its responsibility regarding the Child Protective Services Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Staff members are provided with a summary of definitions and responsibilities provided by the Allegheny County Children and Youth Services.

Employees of the preschool are mandated reporters and will report any suspicion of abuse to the Director, or in her absence, to the Board President. Under 55 Pa. Code #349, it is stated that an employee may make a direct report. The preschool policy, however, encourages staff to review the evidence of suspected abuse with the Director or the Board President before making a report to the state.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

As part of our duty to safeguard our children and families, Mushroom Family Learning Center has created a social media policy that applies to parents, members of staff, Board Members, and volunteers. Everyone is asked to review and sign the policy at the time of registration.

RESOLUTION OF CONCERNS/COMPLAINTS

MFLC has an open-door policy. Any parent with any concern is encouraged to raise the concern with the teacher or the Director. Any problem not adequately addressed may be taken to the Board President. If still not resolved, it may be put in writing and placed on the agenda and discussed at a meeting of the Executive Board. The members of the Executive Board are designated by the Board President and the Director.

TERMINATION

The school reserves the right to terminate enrollment for delinquency of payment of fees, lack of cooperation with school policies, or the inability of the child or parent to adjust to the school program. Decisions about such terminations will be made by the MFLC Director after a parent conference, which may include consultation with the appropriate staff.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The MFLC Board President and Director will follow local weather reports and will look at what surrounding school districts are doing regarding any inclement weather. Inclement weather-related delays/closures will be made based upon that information.

All families will receive a message through Brightwheel notifying them of a closing or delay. The website and school Facebook page will also announce a closing or delay. Tuition fees are not refunded for snow days.

**Family Handbook updated by Director, Gina Lipkin August 2023.*