

# **MUSHROOM FAMILY LEARNING CENTER HANDBOOK**

## **2025-2026**

### **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 an 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 five 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](mailto: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 is maintained by the parents of MFLC. It includes swings, climbing devices, slides, a sandbox, and a wooden replica of a trolley with seats. 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.

**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 to provide 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, while providing opportunities for social interaction among the children.

**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 movement teacher who will visit the school each month.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES 2025-2026**

### Classes that meet two days per week:

M/W OR T/TH 9-11am (must be 2 by Sept. 1)

### Classes that meet three days per week:

T/W/TH 9-11:30am OR 12:30-3pm (must be 3 by Oct. 15)

### Classes that meet four days per week:

M/T/W/TH 9-11:30am OR 12:30-3pm (must be 4 by Oct. 15)

M/T/W/TH 9-11:30am OR 12:30-3pm (must be 5 by Dec./Jan. = determined by Director based on enrollment)

## **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.

## **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
- o 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. Registration information is posted on our website prior to the start of registration. Registration opens in-house before opening to the public. All registration is completed online using Brightwheel. A non-refundable registration fee of \$50.00 for one child or \$75.00 per family is due at the time of registration. Registration documents are processed in the order in which they are received. **Registration fees are non-refundable.**

Once a class is full, we keep a waiting list. Contact the Director to add your child to the waiting list. The Director will contact you if a space becomes available. Waiting lists do not carry over to subsequent years.

### **CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS (IEPs)**

MFLC provides equal access to children with disabilities. 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.

**Parents/guardians are required to inform the school of their child's disabilities and IEP at the time of registration. A copy of a child's IEP will be requested at the time of registration.** Having information about a child's disability and IEP at registration allows our school to better understand the child's needs and to plan for support and services so that we can ensure a successful and positive preschool experience for all.

### **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. We require that all tuition payments and other school fees be paid online through Brightwheel. We also require autopay for all payments made through Brightwheel. Online payments help us quickly and accurately handle transactions, is convenient for you, and will make tax season easier for you, as you will be able to view important tax-related information in your account. Autopay will ensure that payments are always on time. You can set up your online payments and autopay using a credit card or your bank account.

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.

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.

Families will receive an invoice for an upcoming payment 5 days before the payment is due. Payments are due by the first of the month (5/1, 8/1, 9/1, 10/1, 11/1, 12/1, 1/1, 2/1, & 3/1 *\*This schedule may be modified by the Director and Treasurer if a student joins once the school year has begun.*)

## TUITION PAYMENTS 2025-2026

| PROGRAM       | EACH TUITION PAYMENT | TOTAL FOR YEAR |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 2 days a week | \$196                | \$1,764        |
| 3 days a week | \$256                | \$2,304        |
| 4 days a week | \$310                | \$2,790        |

**Tuition payments are non-refundable.**

## 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 1. The information is evaluated by the scholarship committee of the Board of Directors. The committee determines who is awarded scholarships and their amounts. Please contact the Director for more information.

## WITHDRAWAL

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 for the 2025-26 year begin on September 1. For subsequent years, the withdrawal fees begin on August 1. During the school year, withdrawal fees are due before a child's last day of school.** These extra payments are to cover administrative costs and to help keep the school solvent. Empty class spaces are difficult to fill late in the summer and once the school year begins.

### The withdrawal fees are as follows:

**2-day classes = \$250.00**

**3-day classes = \$350.00**

**4-day classes = \$450.00**

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.

## ADDITIONAL 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 and fundraising fee are non-refundable.**

The Materials Fee helps the school prepare for the coming year, knowing that we 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.

### **Fundraising Fee**

|                 |             |                                    |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Two-Day Class   | <b>\$50</b> | <b><i>Due October 17, 2025</i></b> |
| Three-Day Class | <b>\$70</b> | <b><i>Due October 17, 2025</i></b> |
| Four-Day Class  | <b>\$90</b> | <b><i>Due October 17, 2025</i></b> |

## **The Materials Fee (\$75) is due July 1.**

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 will be posted on our website and sent to families if the need arises.

## **REQUIRED PAPERWORK**

The Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form, Agreement Form, Shaken Baby/Abusive Head Trauma Policy Form, and Child Health Form must be completed and returned to school **by September 1**. The Child Health form must show results of a recent health examination, and a current updated record of immunizations. It is PA Law that the school has your child's health form and immunization records on file. **Your child cannot attend school until all the forms are turned in.** There may be other paperwork to complete as needed throughout the school year.

## **HEALTH FORM/IMMUNIZATION POLICY**

**All students are required to have an updated health form and a copy of their most recent vaccination records on file at MFLC.** The health form is valid for one year from the date of the child's exam listed on the form. It is PA state law that requires that a copy of the child's health form and vaccination records be on file at the school. Health forms must be completed by your child's physician and must be signed by a parent/guardian. Students are required to have the immunizations in the timeline of the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics. You can find the immunization schedule online and on our website. If a child in the program is exempt from certain immunizations due to medical reasons, these reasons must be documented in a letter by the child's physician and given to the Director. MFLC will not accept religious or moral reasons as an exemption from immunization.

## **SICK POLICY**

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. **Children who have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home.** Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious disease. Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Do not send your child to school for 24 hours after vomiting or having diarrhea.
- If the discharge from your child's nose and/or eyes is green, please note that means there is an infection, and please keep your child at home. When the discharge is clear and your child feels up to activity, they may come to school.
- If your child tests positive for COVID-19 or any other respiratory diseases, they can return to school once their symptoms are getting better overall, and when they have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours.
- If your child does not look right to you, is not acting normally, or has any respiratory or viral symptoms, please keep your child home.

**Please inform the Director as soon as possible of any contagious illness that your child has.** Examples of contagious illness include, but are not limited to, COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases, Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease, Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19), Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis), and Strep Throat.

**If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, please report this information to the Director immediately.** Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to, COVID-19, Whooping Cough, and Chicken Pox.

Communicable diseases must be reported to the Allegheny County Health Department.

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will 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.

Please report absences to your child's teacher.

## **ALLERGIES/MEDICATION LOG**

**The teacher and Director must be informed of any allergies or special needs your child may have before the start of school.** While we will attempt to make reasonable accommodations for 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, please contact the Director to complete a medication log. The medication log and medication must be given to your child's teacher by the first day of school. Medication must be in its original container with the prescription label on it and must not be expired.**

## **HANDWASHING**

**The children will wash their hands upon arrival at 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. **A classroom teacher may administer hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.**

## **MEDICAL EMERGENCY POLICY**

It is the responsibility of each child's caregiver to fill out all pertinent health and emergency contact information on the forms provided by MFLC and **keep them current.** Please let us know when any pertinent information has changed, such as your phone numbers, address, or your child's health status.

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 Hospital) when appropriate and remain with the child until the child's parent/guardian arrives.

## **POTTY TRAINING/DIAPER POLICY**

**Students entering the program for 5-year-olds are required to be potty trained and expected to be mostly independent with their toileting needs.**

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

## **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, Shaken Baby/Abusive Head Trauma Policy 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. Please contact 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.

## **DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES**

For the 2025-2026 school year, parents/guardians will drop off and pick up students outside of one of the following preassigned locations:

- **Door H (4s classes)**
- **Door I main entrance (3s classes)**
- **Door J side of building near playground (2s classes and 5s classes)**

**Parents will not enter the building with their child(ren).**

It is important that the children arrive at school on time 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 pickup 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.

While we love animals, **please do not bring your dog(s) to drop off or pick up your child from school.** Some children are afraid of dogs and are intimidated when there are dogs near the entrances to the building. We strive to make drop off and pick up times be as stress free as we can for the children. Thank you for your understanding.

## **LATE PICKUP POLICY**

**Families will be charged a late fee if they are late for pickup. Parents will be given a 5-minute grace period at the end of their child's class time, after which a late fee of \$5 per minute will be incurred. An invoice for the late fee will be sent through Brightwheel the same day.**

## **PARKING LOT REMINDERS**

Our parking lot is very busy, and we must be particularly careful to ensure the safety of the children.

- Do not park in the handicap spaces, unless you have a handicap parking pass that is visible in your car.
- Do not park directly in front of the entrances to the building.
- Leaving younger children in the car unattended is not safe or acceptable.
- Please hold your children's hands while in the parking lot.
- Please do not allow your children to walk in or on the Beth El Memorial Garden that is in front of the main entrance to the building (Door I). This garden belongs to Beth El Congregation.
- Do not drive around the Beth El Memorial Garden during drop off and pick up times.
- Please drive slowly through the parking lot and be cautious as you pull in or back out of a space.

## **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 activities 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.

## **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 each week during the school year. 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. Registration is required for both programs.

## **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.

## **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.

## **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 will also announce a closing or delay. Tuition fees are not refunded for snow days.

## **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 preparedness 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 location in the building.

Records of completed drills are completed and maintained by each teacher and are required by the Department of Human Services.

## **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.

## **BEHAVIOR AND SETTING LIMITS**

At Mushroom Family Learning Center, social and emotional learning play a large role in our curriculum, and we are constantly teaching and modeling conflict resolution with the children.

Our teachers teach safety, respect, and responsibility in the classroom as they work to ensure that all children have a positive classroom experience. We demonstrate positive behavior and encourage the children to verbalize their needs and emotions. We also talk about what to do when we are hurt or upset and model appropriate actions for the students.

When we see interpersonal conflicts arise between students, we always try to intervene before physical aggression is used. We focus on the behavior we have observed and use language that reflects that. We support the child's feelings and intentions, and we empower the children on both sides of a conflict to express their feelings and ask for what they need.

Sometimes we may remove a child from a situation, if needed. We then stay with the child until they can reenter the group.

## COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND STAFF

At Mushroom Family Learning Center, we believe in respectful and constructive communication between parents and staff.

At the beginning of each school year, teachers hold orientation sessions for the families enrolled in their classes. Parent 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. Parents of students with an IFSP or IEP will be invited to meet with their child's teacher and the Director prior to the start of the school year to discuss the services and goals for the child.

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 2025-2026 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. **We understand that families lead busy and active lives, but it is imperative that they carefully read ALL notes, emails, and Brightwheel messages that they receive.**

Greeting and parting times are designed to be child-centered and provide a smooth transition from home to school or school to home each day. 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 during the day to be in touch. Your child's teacher will provide you with their contact information.

Teachers will communicate electronically with parents each week. Parents may contact teachers by phone or email with any questions or concerns throughout the school year.

All our teachers have family responsibilities outside of their workday and cannot be expected to respond to communication immediately, especially during the school day, late in the evenings, and on the weekends. Please allow your child's teacher 24-48 hours to respond to your communication. Urgent communication should be directed to the Director during normal business hours.

When communicating with your child's teacher they may determine that an in-person meeting will be the best way to address concerns. Meetings will be scheduled during school hours.

Please be aware that if your child's teacher contacts you regarding a conflict between your child and another student, the identity of the other party involved is kept confidential.

## INCIDENT REPORTS

An Incident Report from the Department of Human Services is completed by a teacher or the Director for the following kinds of incidents:

- When bleeding has occurred on any part of the body.
- Injury to the head that impacts the child's ability to play.
- Injury to the face/eyes.
- Biting.
- A serious bodily injury or trauma requiring treatment at a hospital or medical facility.

Parents/guardians are notified of the Incident Report the same day that an incident occurs. A completed Incident Report is signed by a teacher or the Director and a parent/guardian. One copy is kept in the student's file, another copy is kept in an Incident Report file, and an electronic copy is sent to the parent/guardian.

## 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 in November and March. Please note that there is no class on those days.

Your child's teacher will provide you with more detailed information about conferences as it gets closer to the dates.

## **RESOLUTION OF CONCERNS/COMPLAINTS**

MFLC has an open-door policy. Any parent with a concern is encouraged to raise the concern with their child's teacher at an appropriate time. If the teacher and parents are unable to come to an agreement with respect to the situation, they can schedule a time to meet with the Director. Any problem not adequately addressed by the Director may then be taken to the Board President, who will either resolve the concern/complaint themselves or place it on the agenda and discuss it at a meeting of the Executive Board.

## **TERMINATION**

The school reserves the right to terminate enrollment for delinquency of payment of fees, lack of cooperation with school policies, the inability of the child or parent to adjust to the school program, or if the child cannot participate safely while in school. Decisions about such terminations will be made by the MFLC Director after a parent conference, which may include consultation with the appropriate staff.

*\*Family Handbook updated by Director, Gina Lipkin, and approved by the Board of Directors August 2025.*