

The Children's Meetinghouse

Parent Handbook 2011 – 2012



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If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

If I had my child to raise over again,
I'd do less correcting, and more connecting,
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less, and know to care more.
I'd take more kites and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I'd run through more fields, and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging, and less tugging.
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd teach less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.

by Diane Looman

TCM SCHOOL CALENDAR 2011-2012

August 29*	Monday	Staff Day*
August 30 & August 31	Tues & Wed	First Days of School
September 5 *	Monday	Labor Day*
September 19	Monday	Annual Meeting 7:00 pm
October 10*	Monday	Columbus Day Observed*
October 15	Saturday	Fall Maintenance Day, 9:00–12:00
October 27*	Thursday	Fall Parent Conference Day*
November 5	Saturday 9 – 11 am	Open House/Prospective Families
November 10* & 11*	Thursday & Friday	Teacher's Conference/Staff Development Days*
November 23* PM	Wednesday 12:30	Thanksgiving Break Begins*
November 24* & 25*	Thursday & Friday	Thanksgiving Break*
December 19	Monday	Last Days of Fall Session
December 20* - January 2*		Holiday Break*
January 3 & 4	Tuesday & Wednesday	School resumes
January 16*	Monday	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*
February 4	Saturday 9 – 11 am	Open House/Prospective Families
February 20*	Monday	President's Day*
February 20 - 24	Feb. vacation week option – see below	
March 12 - 16	TCM spring break option – see below	
March 23*	Friday	Spring Parent Conference Day*
April 16*	Monday	Patriot's Day*
April 16 - 20	April vacation week option – see below	
April 11 - 17	Week of the Young Child (NAEYC)	
May 5	Saturday	Spring Maintenance Day, 9:00-12:00
May 9	Wednesday	Science Night 6:30 – 8 pm For Parents & Preschoolers
May 28*	Monday	Memorial Day*
June 3	Sunday	Family Fun Day & Potluck 4 – 6 pm
June 27 & 28	Wednesday & Thursday	Last days of school
June 29*	Friday	Staff Day*

(*School Closed)

A flexible option will be offered regarding the February and April “public school” vacation weeks and the TCM Spring Break in March. Parents may choose one week as a vacation week. This is in response to some families who have children in the public schools and want to coordinate their vacations rather than have the March vacation week which has been the TCM tradition.

A separate form will be sent out and parents will need to choose their option by November 1st.

Parents will be notified of any changes in the calendar. Throughout the year, newsletters will be distributed including the application dates for enrollment, the TCM Annual Family & Alumni Winter Carnival Party, any special dates for Fundraising Events, as well as other special dates to remember.

General Information

The Children's Meetinghouse (TCM), located at 1413 Lowell Road, is affiliated with and located on Middlesex School property. The Children's Meetinghouse was organized in 1984 to provide quality child care for the faculty and staff of Middlesex School as well as for families in the surrounding community. The Infant/Toddler program serves children ages 4 months to 2 years, 8 months and the Preschool program serves children 2 years, 9 months to 6 years.

TCM is a non-profit corporation funded through tuition and governed by a volunteer Parent Board of Directors. We are licensed by the Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. TCM uses the Standards and Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences as stated in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, to set its program goals and plan our curriculum. TCM is a member of the Early Childhood Regional Advisory Council and CAPA, the Concord Area Preschool Association.

We are voluntarily accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Washington, D.C. from 1997 to 2011. Due to Philosophical and financial considerations we are not currently participating in the NAEYC process. Recently, the state has been working on a variety of similar processes that early childhood programs will be adopting and are comparable to the national program.

TCM does not discriminate in providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, ancestry, or handicap. TCM accommodates children of all backgrounds and needs, including those with special challenges.

School Philosophy

The primary goal of the school is to provide excellent quality care to the families we serve. We strive to provide children with enriching learning experiences that promote a positive self-image as well as strong cognitive and social skills. Our programs provide extensive opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to fully explore their surroundings and to grow and develop to their maximum individual potential at their own rate. We strive to provide a warm, safe, and nurturing home-like environment that encourages independence and self-respect, as well as a sensitivity to and awareness of others.

The curriculum at TCM is child-initiated and developmentally appropriate. The staff develops skill-based and free play activities based on the children's interests and individual needs. Their emotional, social, cognitive, and physical needs are met through a planned and emergent curriculum implemented by trained teachers who promote respect, responsibility and resourcefulness. Fostering a sense of trust, positive self-esteem, and recognizing problem-solving opportunities through play, are all core components of the TCM curriculum. The indoor and outdoor environments are also carefully planned and enhanced on a daily basis as an important part of the curriculum.

Enrollment Procedure

Anyone interested in obtaining information about TCM and its programs should call the school and speak with either the Director or the Enrollment Chairperson. If further information is requested, parents are referred to the school's website at thechildrensmeetinghouse.org . Open Houses and/or school tours are provided by the Director or the Enrollment Chair for both the parent and child to visit the program. At these times visitors may meet the Director, observe the classrooms and staff, and obtain additional information such as staff information, a sample newsletter, parent participation information, a sample calendar and a tuition rate sheet.

Two open house dates are scheduled for prospective families to tour TCM on a Saturday morning in the fall and one in February as an orientation to the program. Parents meet the staff and other parents and information is exchanged about the needs and interests of their family and child(ren). As previously stated, children are welcome to attend regardless of their toilet training status.

In January of each year applications for the upcoming fall session are mailed to all families who have inquired about the school and to currently enrolled families. The applications are due in February and families are notified in March as to their acceptance into the program. The enrollment process takes into consideration the needs of Middlesex families, children currently enrolled in the program, children with siblings in the program and new families. Both the Infant/Toddler program and the Preschool program offer flexible enrollment schedules. The school maintains a waiting list throughout the year and fills openings that occur during the year with children who meet the needs of the entire program and the specific available opening.

Parent Participation

Each parent is asked to donate 10 hours of time to the school each year by serving on a parent committee overseen by the parent Board of Directors. In addition, there are two scheduled Maintenance Days held each year, one in the fall and another in the spring. We ask that parents attend one or two of these Maintenance Days a year. The Maintenance Days are listed in the calendar at the front of the handbook. Parent childcare volunteers under the supervision of the staff are assigned for childcare while other parents work inside and outside the building doing a variety of tasks including construction, gardening, repairs, painting, etc. Take home projects may be arranged for those parents who cannot attend either Maintenance Day. Some parents have chosen due to unforeseen family circumstances to make a donation to the playground/outdoor gardening fund when they could not attend either Maintenance Day or fulfill their 10 hours of volunteer time. All parent responsibilities as a member of the TCM community are outlined in the Parent Compact that is distributed annually to all families. Parents must sign and return the form that states that the parents have read the parent handbook and agree to the school's policies. The letter is kept in the child's file.

Parent Committees

Parent volunteer work is organized through parent committees. New and currently enrolled families will receive a committee questionnaire form with their enrollment package that is distributed in June. The form is due back by July 1st so that committee assignments can be determined using a combination of parent preferences and school needs.

The current list of three parent committees includes:

- Enrollment/Communications
- School Maintenance/ Landscaping
- Fundraising/ Special Family Events

Parent Board

The parent board is currently composed of group of volunteer parents that make up an Executive Board of 4 members (i.e. President, Vice President, Treasurer, Personnel Clerk). The other board members include Enrollment, Communications, Fundraising, Maintenance, Middlesex Representative and Alumni Representative. Anyone interested in participating on the parent board should contact the Director or the President of the Board. All parent board members serve for an entire year beginning in June. Board meetings are held once a month, on a mutually agreeable date and location. These meetings are open to all parents.

The parent board is currently composed of twelve members including:

President	Enrollment Chair
Vice President	Personnel Representative
Treasurer	Middlesex Representative
Clerk	Member at Large
Fundraising Chair	Maintenance Chair
Communications Chair	Alumni Representative

Classroom Policies and Procedures

Hours of Operation

The school hours of operation are as follows:

Early Drop off: 7:30 – 8:30

Morning Program: 8:30 – 12:30 with pick-up between 12:15 - 12:30

Full Day Program 8:30 – 3:30

Extended Day: 3:30 – 5:30

Daily Schedule/Infant-Toddler Program

The following schedules for TCM are flexible and often vary according to curriculum plans and weather.

Infant/Toddler Morning Session: 8:30 -12:30; Full Day Session 8:30 – 3:30; Ext. Day 3:30 – 5:30

Arrival - Wash hands (*Parents assist children in this transition*)

Free Play and Exploration:

Open activity time that may include experiences at the sensory table, easel, blocks, stories, manipulatives and other choices.

Clean-up time.

Snack, conversations, singing and stories may occur at the table.

Open ended art activity.

Diapering/toileting.

Outside play and/or walk (weather permitting) or other indoor activities that encourage both large motor and fine motor skills such as singing, dancing, musical instruments, crawling through tunnel, puzzles, painting, playdough, etc..

Lunchtime - Teachers eat lunch with the children and encourage self-help skills and socialization in a calm atmosphere.

Prepare to go home - pickup between 12:15 – 12:30

Rest time – Depending on their age, children will rest in cribs or on mats with appropriate bedding.

Diapering/ Toileting/Hand washing.

Free Play and Exploration: Open activity time that may include experiences at the sensory table, easel, blocks, stories, manipulatives and other choices

Clean-up time

Snack, conversations, singing and stories may occur at the table

Diapering/toileting/Hand washing are supervised at all times and occur on an as needed basis throughout each session, i.e. before snack, after diapering/toileting and after messy activities. Outside play and/or walk (weather permitting) or other indoor activities that encourage both large motor and fine motor skills such as singing, dancing, musical instruments, crawling through tunnel, puzzles, painting, playdough, etc.

Prepare to go home – pickup at 3:30

Extended Day 3:30 – 5:30 Stories and quiet activities may take place inside or outdoors

Daily Schedule/Preschool Program

Please try to have your child arrive by 9:15 so that they can participate in our meeting time. It will help them feel connected to their peers and teachers.

Preschool Program - Morning – 8:30 - 12:30; Full Day Session 8:30 – 3:30; Ext. Day 3:30 – 5:30

Arrival – Wash hands (*Parents assist children in this transition*)

Free Play: Open activity time that may include experiences at the sensory table, easel, blocks, writing table, manipulatives, science area and other choices.

Meeting time – Teachers and children come together to say “Hello” for discussions, storytelling, singing and fun.

Independent snack: Snack is offered during free play and exploration time.

Free Play and Exploration: Experiences are based on the specific interests of the children. A variety of experiences some of which are more structured and teacher directed, are planned in all learning areas of the classroom to contribute, support and answer the children’s questions about a particular topic of interest. The children are encouraged to experiment, manipulate, get messy and work together.

Clean up Time: The teachers and children will clean up the activity areas together.

Discussion and sharing time: Children will come together to share their thoughts about their day and reflect on their play experiences.

Toileting and hand washing are supervised at all times and occur on an as needed basis throughout each session, i.e. before snack, after toileting and after messy activities.

Outdoor Play and Exploration – A variety of outdoor play areas are available to support the children’s varied interests and challenge their physical abilities as well as exploring the natural environment.

Come inside, toileting and hand washing

Lunchtime – Teachers eat lunch with the children and encourage self-help skills and socialization in a calm atmosphere.

Pick up Time 12:15 – 12:30

Rest time – After lunch, children rest on mats, look at books; listen to music or story tapes with staff for at least 45 minutes.

Free Play and Exploration: Experiences are based on the specific interests of the children. A variety of experiences is planned in all learning areas of the classroom to contribute, support and answer the children’s questions about a particular topic of interest. They are encouraged to experiment, manipulate, get messy and work together.

Independent snack: Snack is offered during free play and exploration time.

Clean Up Time: The teachers and children will clean up the activity areas together.

Outdoor Play and Exploration and Pick up time may be outdoors if weather permitting.

Pick up time is at 3:30.

Extended Day - Children may continue to play indoors or outside using a variety of materials until parents arrive. Pick up time is at 5:30

Drop off/Pick up Policy

Exceptions to the above pick up/drop off policy are given to Middlesex faculty to accommodate their teaching schedules.

Please deliver and pick up your child on time. Promptness is crucial to a smooth running program. We strongly suggest that children be dropped off at school as close to the session opening time as possible. **When children are dropped off more than 60 minutes after the session begins they often feel confused, as the other children may have already been involved in several activities. If you arrive early please wait outside the classroom. Parents are welcome to use the outdoor playground while waiting the program to begin.** Please supervise your child closely on the playground before or after your session. All playground rules which apply during school sessions also apply when parents are using the playground before and after school sessions.

Late Pickup Fee

In addition to inconveniencing staff, your child may become anxious and upset when you are late. A late fee has been instituted to discourage late pick-ups and to compensate the staff if it occurs at the end of the day. The first time a new TCM parent is late; the staff will issue a warning letter to the parent. The next time a parent is late; a late fee will be issued. Parents will be charged a \$10.00 fee for every fifteen minutes they are late (or any part of). This fee is payable in cash or a check made out to "cash".

Drop-In

If the program has a vacant space in a session(s) and your child fits the age requirements, parents may request drop-in care for their currently enrolled child. Parents may sign up for drop-in care with reservations taken on a first-come-first served basis. Payment is to be made at the time of drop-off by personal check of \$58 for 8:30 – 12:30, \$90 for 8:30 – 3:30, and \$110 for 8:30 – 5:30. Early Drop off from 7:30 – 8:30 is an additional \$10.

Snow Days

School will be canceled when the Concord Public Schools are closed. Parents are asked to listen to the radio or television for information and/or call the office phone number 978.371.0678 for information regarding school closure. The Parent Board and Director may decide to cancel a session, open later, or close early due to weather conditions or predictions even when the public schools remain open. In this case, all families will be contacted by phone. Transportation safety is of utmost concern for all staff and families when making these difficult decisions.

Clothing & Backpacks

Clothing: Each child should come to school each day with a personally labeled tote bag/backpack filled with an extra change of clothes including shirt, pants, underwear,

and socks. Try to choose a bag that your child can easily open and close so as to foster independence and reduce frustration. We suggest that children wear play clothes to school as they are involved in “messy” activities during the day including finger-painting, water play, gluing, art projects, and sand play. At times they may require a change of clothing if they become wet, covered with mud or paint, etc. Although we suggest that the children wear school smocks for messy activities, we do not force them to do so. **At TCM we value messy experiential play where children explore, discover, and learn. Please do not “dress-up” your children in any clothing that may be ruined during indoor/outdoor play.**

We play outside daily, weather permitting, so please send your child prepared for outdoor sandy play. In cold weather all children should be sent to school with boots, hats, coats, snow pants and **mittens** (preferable). In the winter, there may be days, based on several factors such as temperature, wind chill, stamina of the group and teacher’s discretion, that we may choose to stay indoors.

Please consider choosing clothing, shoes, and outerwear that promote your child’s ease in dressing and undressing. Work boots, for example, are usually difficult and frustrating for children to put on and off. In warm weather and summer months please send your child with shoes that will be easy and safe for your child to run, jump, climb, kick balls and get wet in.

Separation

Separation can be a difficult time for both children and parents. The most important aspect in the separation process is to say “good-bye” directly to your child. This helps the child master the separation and to feel confident that you will come back. The “good-bye” process should be kept short and simple. If a child starts to cry, more often than not, (s) he will stop as soon as (s) he becomes involved in toys and other children. The staff is there to comfort the child and re-direct his/her attention.

If you have concerns about the process of separating from your child, please feel free to discuss them with the staff. We try to individualize and support parents during these transitions. We want everyone to feel comfortable with the process.

Hand Washing Policy

We request that parents help their children with washing their hands upon arrival to school for the morning. If arrival occurs on the playground then the staff will ask the children to wash their hands when they go inside. Children are asked to wash their hands after toileting, before snack time, **and before** and after using the water table. On occasion sanitizing wipes or gel may be used as an alternative to hand washing **on field trips**. At times we also need to use wet wipes for art projects. All parents are asked to donate a box of wipes periodically.

SNACKS AND LUNCH – TCM IS PEANUT BUTTER AND NUT FREE DUE TO CHILDREN WITH SEVERE ALLERGIES

We provide a morning and afternoon snack for each child consisting of juice and crackers and sometimes fruit or a recipe that is prepared at TCM. Snacks most often served are: cheerios, saltines, goldfish, graham crackers, apples, bananas, other seasonal fruit, cheese slices, animal crackers, pretzels, cheezits, club crackers, ritz crackers, jelly, bagels, cream cheese, raw vegetables and popsicles for birthday snacks. Please alert the staff of any diagnosed food allergies that your child may have. We encourage all parents with children who have food allergies or other types of allergies to complete an allergy action plan for their child. **Parents whose children have food allergies have the option of providing snacks for their child that will be kept at TCM and labeled with their child's name on it.**

For infants: If your child uses a bottle, please bring prepared, labels bottles to each session filled with the appropriate liquid. Bottles are refrigerated and warmed in a container with hot tap water.

For preschoolers: If you were to observe the preschoolers having snack during your child's sessions you would see 4-6 children sitting around the snack table. You would see them "read" the menu, serve themselves, chat with each other and clean up. The preschool children are allowed to choose when they come to snack and if they would like to eat snack. This encourages independence, language and cognitive skills. It is also respectful and supportive of their need to be in control of their own choices within reason. Teachers are always available to assist children who need help serving themselves.

All children are required to bring their own **lunch and beverage**. Please include an ice pack in your child's lunch bag/box as we do not have enough refrigerator space. **PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY PEANUT BUTTER OR OTHER FOOD PRODUCTS THAT MAY CONTAIN NUTS OF ANY KIND!**

Lunch box suggestions: All children are required to bring their own lunch including a drink such as a juice box, small water bottle or a thermos. Smaller size juice boxes seem to work best for younger children. TCM encourages parents to send nutritious lunches with their children and suggest a combination of some of the following food items: yogurt, crackers, raw vegetables, pasta/noodles, fruit, cheese, sandwiches, pizza, etc. Please chop or cut up food into bite size pieces ($\frac{1}{4}$ " size for infants and $\frac{1}{2}$ " size for toddlers) especially if they are known to be foods that cause choking in young children. Round or tube shaped foods such as grapes and hotdogs should also be cut lengthwise. We request that parents use a thermos if they would like their child's food to be warm. The staff needs to closely supervise all of the children during lunchtime so we will not be using a microwave to heat up food. Utensils, napkins and straws are available if needed. Lunchtime is an opportunity for encouraging language and social development and for educators to engage the children in conversation as well as support their self-help skills.

PLEASE DO NOT BRING/SEND PEANUT BUTTER OR OTHER PRODUCTS WITH NUTS ON FIELD TRIPS, PICNICS OR OTHER TCM EVENTS.

Tooth brushing

New regulations require educators to assist children in brushing their teeth whenever children remain in care for more than four hours and/or consume a meal in child care. The regulation is intended to help children learn about the importance of good oral health. At TCM, our discussion about bodies, in regards to keeping ourselves healthy and safe, are embedded in our day to day curriculum and we value this aspect in our program. For infants, gums are wiped with a clean damp cloth after feeding and toddlers are assisted with tooth brushing. Preschoolers can brush and use their individual disposable cup for rinsing. Parents may choose, however, not to participate in tooth brushing while present at the child care program. Parents need to complete an Oral Health Non-Participation Form which is renewed annually and kept in the child's file if parents choose not to participate. Disposable, recyclable, pre-pasted toothbrushes will be provided by TCM.

Diapers/Toilet Training

Parents of children in diapers are asked to bring in a large package of diapers and two boxes of wipes when your child begins the program. The staff will inform the parents when additional supplies are needed. These supplies are shared by the group. When your child begins the process of toilet training please share any specific information that would help us assist your child at school. Our staff has had many years of experience helping families in this process. Please consult the staff regarding any questions or specific concerns. We respect the individual needs of children in this developmental process.

Security Objects

We understand how important it is for some children to bring something from home to help them feel secure at school. It also gives them practice in learning how to share and in being responsible for something that belongs to them. Favorite items such as a blanket, stuffed animal, photograph, a SMALL toy or a favorite book are excellent choices.

We would appreciate it if you would not send in toys, etc. that are expensive or that have sentimental value. We will expect the children, with help and reminders from teachers, to be responsible for getting their items back to their backpacks safely. It would also help if you would label items that you send in with your child.

Please DO NOT SEND IN TOY WEAPONS OF ANY KIND including toy guns, knives, swords, etc. to school.

Birthdays/Infants/Toddlers/Preschoolers

For infants and toddlers, we feel that celebrating their birthday at home with their family is more developmentally appropriate. In the preschool, children will decorate a special birthday crown and at meeting time the large group can sing "Happy Birthday" if the child wants. We will respect the child's wishes. TCM will provide the snack of a frozen treat. This policy was developed several years ago to ensure the health and safety of all children in the program. **Due to a variety of food allergies we insist that parents do not bring in baked goods for any occasion. We thank you for your understanding.**

It has been a custom in our program that the birthday boy or girl brings a gift that they will donate to the school in honor of their birthday. Often the gift is a children's book but other small items are welcome such as a briotrain piece or stickers. Please check with the staff for suggestions. There is also a wish list in the parent volunteer book in the lobby. Gift-giving is optional but greatly appreciated. Depending on the developmental level of your child it may work best if the parent hands the gift item to the staff.

Holidays

Although we do not focus on holiday curriculum we appreciate and value the various ways families celebrate at home. Parents are always welcome to share a family tradition with their child's class, if appropriate. In the past some parents have chosen to read a special story and share a craft or special song related to a particular holiday with us.

It is our belief that it is difficult for young children to understand the abstract meanings behind most traditional holiday celebrations. It is also very difficult for teachers to know about and include all of the diverse holidays and traditions in our curriculum. We also choose not to support the commercialization of many holidays and believe strongly that this does not fit into our educational goals for the children in our program.

At TCM, therefore, we choose to mark occasions that are the most developmentally appropriate for young children. What are those occasions? The change of seasons, children's birthdays, our school's anniversary, a new sibling, worms, a sunny day after many rainy days, new friendships, sharing discoveries, printing a name, moving to a new house are all part of our daily curriculum that we believe has greater meaning and importance for young children.

Transportation Policy & Field Trips

Regular transportation is not provided by TCM. Although TCM does not provide transportation to or from school, a new regulation requires programs to obtain a "Transportation Plan Form" from each family currently enrolled. **This form, like all other forms, needs to be updated on an annual basis.**

Field trips for older preschoolers may be scheduled throughout the year through the Dee Bus Company or by the Middlesex School Mini school bus. A fee is charged for each child to cover the cost of admission and the bus. Some field trips are partially funded by fund-raising money. Field trips are designed to enhance and enhance and enrich the preschool child's school experience. School buses with seat belts are used for all field trips. Some children may be invited to change their day/session so as to participate in the field trip. Some field trips have been to Kimball's in Westford, Chelmsford Theater Series, The Concord Museum, The Ecotarium in Worcester and Davis Farmland in Sterling. Teachers will ask specific parents to chaperone on the field trips if needed and/or based on the needs of the group. Often we have special enrichment programs brought into the school such as the Audubon Ark program through Drumlin Farm. Funds for these enrichment programs are paid for through fundraisers.

In addition, field trips to Middlesex School campus may also be planned throughout the year. For these trips, children may be transported by the Middlesex School bus driver who can transport small groups of children on their mini school bus.

Health and Sickness

Health Forms

Upon acceptance and enrollment into the TCM, the parents/guardians will receive a **documentation package including medical forms which must be completed and submitted before the school year begins in September.** The medical forms require documentation of a physical within the past year and a current immunization record. The Department of Public Health requires all children, regardless of risk, must be screened for Lead at least once between the ages of nine and twelve months old and annually thereafter at ages two and three. For children who live in a high risk community, another test is due at age four. As of August 1998 all children entering preschool who have not had chicken pox must now receive the chicken pox/varivax vaccine.

If children have not received the required immunizations parents must submit a written verification stating that they object to such immunizations on the grounds that it conflicts with their religious beliefs. A physician's statement that such a procedure is contraindicated is also acceptable.

When your Child is Sick

Please notify the school when your child is sick. Any information regarding a change in your child's health, including confirmation of a communicable disease/infection must be shared with the staff in a timely manner. In order to warn other parents of their child's possible exposure to contagious diseases/infections and in the spirit of keeping our community healthy, TCM will provide awareness through distribution of written material regarding the symptoms and treatment of specific illnesses. We are mandated by the State of MA to comply with their guidelines that are distributed to all public and private schools in regards to any flu epidemic.

When to Keep a Child at Home

1. Keep your child home for 24 hours after (s) he has had a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea. If the H1N1 flu is suspected a 7 day waiting period may be necessary. (This policy was distributed to schools in May, 2009)
2. Keep your child home when (s) he has a severe cough or heavy nasal or chest congestion.
3. Keep your child home when (s) he displays an unusual rash or eye inflammation.

4. Keep your child home anytime a doctor has declared the child has a communicable infectious disease. When the doctor diagnoses the child is no longer contagious (s) he may return to school. A doctor's note may be requested at that time.
5. If antibiotics are prescribed for a contagious disease such as a strep infection, impetigo or conjunctivitis your child must be on the medication for at least 24 hours and **preferably 48 hours** before returning to school.
6. In the event of an epidemic such as strep throat, for example, TCM reserves the right to request that your child receive a strep test and not return until the results are confirmed to be negative which may take up to 48 hours. The "Rapid Strep Test" only tests for Group A Strep. The lab then performs a culture which may need 48 hours before getting the results. Symptoms may include fever, stomach aches, vomiting, joint pain, swollen glands and headache. Often, children do not complain of a sore throat and are asymptomatic. Observing your child closely for behavioral changes is most important. Group A Strep can also cause infections that occur separately from strep throat such as impetigo (a relatively common skin infection), scarlet fever (evidenced by a rash), and a rare but severe invasive disease called necrotizing fasciitis. Untreated strep infections have also been linked to Rheumatic Fever and damaged heart valves.

TCM's goal is to keep all children, families and staff as healthy as possible. In order to do this we need everyone's cooperation as a caring community. We will be strict in enforcing the above sickness policy. If your child is sick (s) he must be kept home for everyone's protection. When your Child becomes Sick at School

When Your Child Becomes Sick at School

If a child arrives at school, displaying symptoms as mentioned above the staff may request that s/he return home. If a child becomes sick at school the parents will be notified immediately. Since we are unable to provide individual care for a sick child and do not want to risk exposure to other children, we ask for your cooperation in picking up your child as soon as possible. If parents are unavailable, then the 3 persons listed as emergency contacts on file at the school (and part of the required documentation upon enrollment) will be called in the order as listed to come and pick up the child. Please let the staff know if you will not be available in case of an emergency. Parents may want to also notify their emergency contacts if they will not be available on any particular days.

Administering Medicine at School

Prescription or non-prescription medicine will be administered only with a written order from the child's physician. When a non-prescription medicine is to be given, a physician's order on a prescription pad is required and should include the child's name, required administration time(s) and dosage. When a prescription drug is to be given, the pharmacist's label on the medicine bottle will suffice. In addition, before any medication can be given a parent must sign the Medication Consent Form. These precautions are for the protection of your child and without total compliance the medication will not be given. These are state regulations.

In some cases, ongoing medicine or medicine required in emergencies (such as an EpiPen) may be left at the school with the child's name and instructions clearly marked on the label. For non-prescription medications the pediatrician must complete the form that is on file along with the parent's signature. Staff will try to contact parents before the medicine (such as Tylenol for fever) is administered even though prior written blanket permission was given. This form needs to be updated on an annual basis.

Safety

School Doors Policy

It is a school policy that **only adults open the doors** at TCM, including the main entrance door and the doors entering into the classrooms. This policy has been successful in eliminating accidents related to children opening doors and prevents children from leaving the building without an adult. **Parents/sitters need to adhere to this policy by not allowing their children to open the doors entering and exiting the school. This policy also applies to all playground gates.**

Parking Lot Safety Policies

Children need to be accompanied in the parking lot and on the playground during drop off and pick up times. Please have your child hold your hand when walking through the parking lot. Cars should never be left with motors running. Children/siblings should not be left in cars unattended during transition times. The TCM Parent Board has consulted with our insurance company and this is their recommended policy.

Parking is allowed in the parking lot next to the building. The closest space to the building is not a handicapped space but is for parents in the late stages of pregnancy or for newborns, etc. Please do not use the two handicapped parking spaces located closest to the ramp entrance unless you have a special need or circumstance. Please ask the staff for help in times of special health circumstances as they may be able to help with your drop off or pick up schedule. Parking is not allowed on Lowell Road at any time. Be aware that there is an entrance and an exit to the parking lot - please obey the correct flow of traffic into and out of the parking lot, otherwise it can pose a dangerous threat to pedestrians and other cars. **All car engines must be turned off** when parked in the parking lot. **All parents/drivers must hold each child's hand when bringing them to and from the building to ensure their safety. We encourage parents to use appropriate child safety car seats and belts. Children should never sit in the front seat. The current law is posted in the lobby.**

Parents using the parking area should obey the one-way entrance and exit signs and use extreme caution when entering and exiting the parking lot.

Change in Authorization Forms

When someone other than a parent or pre-approved person will be picking up a child, a parent must complete a pink "Change in Authorization to pick up Child" form and give it to the staff prior to the pick-up. Last minute phone calls are acceptable in emergency situations. If a child is ill during school the parents will be notified first. If parents are unavailable, then the persons listed on the "emergency contact" cards kept on file at the school (and part of the required documentation upon enrollment) will be called to come and pick up the child. These forms are in your enrollment packet and are also available at school. If someone new is picking up or if a teacher does not recognize the individual then a driver's license will be required for identification purposes.

Parent and Staff Communication

General Information

An open, cooperative partnership between parents and staff is vital to providing your child with a quality preschool program. Staff and parents should keep in touch with each other to ensure consistent care between home and school. No detail is insignificant if it helps the staff to understand your child better. **Keep us posted on home happenings, new employment changes/activities, schedule changes, new cell phone numbers, and other helpful hints about your daily routine.**

The large whiteboards in the lobby are important in parent-staff communication and curriculum documentation. Special requests and committee jobs may also be posted. Please check them everyday! Toddler information is posted inside the classroom on the white board next to their door.

We encourage parents to read and use the parent bulletin board in the lobby that contains notices of meetings and educational information and a lending book shelf.

Parents are also encouraged to call any staff member to discuss issues that require a more private or in-depth discussion. Each staff member has "office time" and they are also available at other times upon request and especially if the matter is urgent.

Mailboxes & Newsletters

Each family has a mailbox located in the entrance lobby. Please be sure to check your mailbox regularly for newsletters, other communication regarding classroom activities and curriculum documentation, announcements, family events, fundraisers, community workshops, etc. If you have sitters make sure they know about checking the mailbox. All forms of communication are sources of vital information regarding your child and the school. The newsletter is just one way to highlight some of the experiences, learning and fun your child has been involved in. It also includes reminders of special events and a letter from the director.

To help with ongoing communication with families, the staff will try to communicate with you in person on a daily basis. We hope to share a short anecdote about your child. Please seek out any teacher to ask questions or share information.

Parents are encouraged to communicate verbally with teachers during drop-off time as the children tend to arrive at various times, allowing a few moments of individual attention from a staff member. At mid day pick-up time, communication is more difficult due to teacher's schedules, lunch/rest time transitions, parking limitations, etc.

Progress Reports/Portfolios

The staff collects a variety of samples of the children's work and schedules a conference with parents twice a year for toddlers and preschoolers. Your child's portfolio chronicles his/her development while at TCM. These portfolios are based on observation and documentation of the child's progress in a range of activities over time. All educators look at the growth and development of each child in the domains of Cognitive, Social/Emotional, Language, Fine and Gross Motor and Life Skills. All information is shared with the parents and discussed during the scheduled parent conferences that occur in October and March. Parents are encouraged throughout the year to share anecdotes and observations about their children that we can also include in their portfolio.

Progress reports for infants less than 15 months and children with disabilities are written every three months. It is a DEEC regulation that all progress reports/portfolios must be kept in each child's file and all information will be given back to the parents when the child leaves TCM. A transfer of records form will be completed and signed by parents and staff at that time.

The dates of the fall and spring conference days are listed in the calendar which is at the beginning of the handbook which is distributed in June or whenever a family begins the program. We encourage both parents to attend the parent conferences. Several months notice is ample time for parents to make alternative childcare arrangements on these dates. Teachers have valuable information to share with you about your child's progress and their learning style. The teachers work in a team so the specific teacher conducting the conference is sharing the views of all the teachers.

Conference Requests

Parents may request a conference with a staff member at any time during the year if any issue or concern may arise. Please do not hesitate to call if you wish to talk to a particular teacher.

Observing the Classroom

Parents and other family members are also welcome to come and observe a class session to see the children at play. In order to prevent the confusion of numerous visitors on any given day, we ask that you call the school in advance to arrange a visit if possible.

Remember The Children's Meetinghouse is your school. The staff encourages parent input. Please share project ideas, articles, and books on child care and classroom

materials. Parent participation and support make TCM a special place for children and staff alike.

Specialist Referral Policy

If a staff member has any concerns about any area of a child's development such as their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive or language development, all of the staff will meet to discuss the needs of the child and share observations. If the staff continues to have concerns about the child's development the appropriate next step is to refer the child to a specialist. This referral allows TCM to gather more information and knowledge regarding the child's particular needs in order for the child to become more successful in a preschool setting. Before a referral is made, the staff will discuss their concerns with the parents and the parents must give **written** permission to TCM to contact the appropriate agency or individual to observe and assess the child. A list of referral resources will be given to the parents. The role of TCM is to be a support system as well as a resource and referral agency for TCM families so that these children will benefit from problem identification and intervention at the earliest age possible. As a school, we strongly believe in early detection and intervention.

If the child is less than three years of age TCM contacts the Minute Man Arc/ Early Intervention Team with their concerns. For children older than three years of age, TCM contacts the public school/special student services in the town in which the child resides. The public schools have an early childhood assessment team that screens and evaluates preschoolers before they enter kindergarten. This team evaluates the preschooler and gives feedback to the parents and preschool staff. Often the recommendation is to wait several months in cases where a minor developmental delay is present. In other cases the child may benefit from help on a one to one basis such as speech and language therapy that may be provided by the public school. Sometimes the therapy takes place at the preschool where a trained therapist can work in a play situation with a small group to help elicit appropriate language among the child's peer group. As part of the evaluation process, the specialists also assist the preschool staff in meeting the needs and goals established to help the child develop in a classroom setting.

We work closely with area public schools, speech and language therapists, early childhood specialists, pediatricians, etc. Judith Hanselman, MEd. LMHC, is our early childhood consultant who is also a family therapist. Often we ask parents to give **written** permission for Judy to observe a child in the preschool setting and give feedback to the staff. The staff in turn shares the feedback with the parents. This approach improves our staff development by allowing the team of teachers to better understand the needs of the child and provide an environment within the preschool to meet these needs. This service is paid for by The Children's Meetinghouse. **The goal in offering the above approach to families is to try to avoid the suspension and termination of a child due to challenging behavior. In summary, parent meetings are offered to discuss options for referrals or other supportive services as well as developing plans for behavioral intervention at home and in the program.**

As early childhood professionals we acknowledge that TCM may not be the best setting for all children to develop successfully. Oftentimes a child needs a much smaller group

size with less stimulation and they may benefit from a lower child to teacher ratio. Often more intense direct services or interventions can be offered in a smaller more specialized group setting. Our staff is always available to discuss any of these concerns with parents

Deposit and Tuition Payment Policy

Deposit - Upon acceptance to The Children's Meetinghouse, Inc., one tenth of your child's annual tuition is due plus a \$200.00 deposit. This first one-tenth tuition payment will be applied to June of the following calendar year. The \$200 deposit is separate from tuition and will be retained until your child leaves TCM, at which time it will be refunded to you.

On or before June 15th, an additional two-tenths of your child's annual tuition is due. This will be applied to April and May of the following calendar year.

Your child's enrollment is guaranteed only when three-tenths of his or her annual tuition is paid by June 15th and no later than July 1st. Please make every effort to pay your tuition in a timely manner.

For billing questions, please contact Lisa Palmer, the business manager, at (978) 266-1303 or by e-mail at LMPBook@comcast.net.

Payment of Tuition - In your child's packet in June you will receive a tuition invoice, which states your child's program, session and annual tuition rate. Please retain this invoice for your records. It includes the tax exempt number for income tax or pretax employer forms.

You may pay your tuition annually, bi-annually (two payments: September-December and January-March) or monthly.

The Children's Meetinghouse requests that you state how you will pay your child's tuition by completing the payment plan form in your packet in June.

Monthly payments are due on the first day of every month. If your child's tuition is received after the fifth of the month, a \$50.00 late fee will be assessed.

Annual payments are payable on or before September 1st. Bi-annual payments are payable on or before September 1st and January 1st. The same late fee policy applies to annual and bi-annual payments; if the payment is received after the fifth of the month a \$50.00 late fee will be assessed.

You will not receive monthly statements. Before the end of the school year, you will receive an invoice that will reflect any balance due to The Children's Meetinghouse, Inc.

By accepting a place for your child at The Children’s Meetinghouse, Inc., you agree to pay the entire year’s tuition. A monthly payment plan is offered for convenience only and should not be understood to imply that your financial responsibility extends to less than the full year’s tuition. Due to the high cost of processing fees and since we are a non-profit corporation, payments by credit cards are no longer accepted. Some families have chosen to set up a direct payment from their bank accounts through their on-line banking system. This option does not cost the school any processing fees and works well for parents as they can set up their payments to occur monthly from Sept. to March and set up payments to arrive on time thus avoiding any late fees. There is a locked tuition box in the lobby if parents bring their checks to TCM. The annual tuition schedule is as follows:

<i>Infant /Toddler Program</i>	<i>Annual Rate 8:30 – 12:30</i>	<i>Annual Rate 8:30 – 3:30</i>
M/W/F	\$ 8110.00	\$ 12160.00
Tu/TH	\$ 5405.00	\$ 8110.00
M - F	\$ 13500.00	\$ 20270.00
<i>Preschool Program</i>	<i>Annual Rate 8:30 – 12:30</i>	<i>Annual Rate 8:30 – 3:30</i>
M/W/F	\$ 7130.00	\$ 10700.00
Tu/TH	\$ 4760.00	\$ 7130.00
M – F	\$ 11890.00	\$ 17830.00

Early Drop Off (7:30 – 8:30) and Extended Day options (3:30 – 5:30) are also available at \$10.00 per hour.

Withdrawal/Schedule Change

Withdrawal - We understand that for a variety of reasons, you may decide to withdraw your child from The Children’s Meetinghouse, Inc., prior to the end of the school year. In case of early withdrawal, you will forfeit all previously-paid tuition held by the school up to an amount equal to three-tenths of the annual tuition. If the school is holding any prepayments greater than three-tenths of the annual tuition, they will be refunded. Withdrawals will be effective only on the first day of the month. If a child withdraws in the middle of a month, that withdrawal will be effective at the beginning of the following month. Accordingly, there will be no refund of tuition for any portion of the month in which a child withdrew. The Children’s Meetinghouse, Inc. requests that any family contemplating withdrawal give notice to the school as soon as possible.

Withdrawal for Medical Reasons - If illness or other medical condition precludes your child from continuing to attend The Children’s Meetinghouse, Inc., your obligation to pay tuition will cease upon the school’s receipt of written notice that you are withdrawing your child due to medical reasons. This notice must be accompanied by a doctor’s note stating that school attendance is medically inadvisable. Upon receipt of written notice, The Children’s Meetinghouse, Inc., will refund any tuition deposits and/or prepaid tuition.

Changes in Hours or Sessions - The Children’s Meetinghouse, Inc. will endeavor to accommodate requests for schedule changes. The school wishes to remind families

that day-by-day drop-in arrangements are available for short-term needs. The school requests that families make every effort to limit schedule changes to the extent practicable.

Reduction in Hours - A family may request in writing to reduce the hours and/or sessions their child attends. Any change will take effect at the beginning of the month following receipt of the written request. Consistent with the policy regarding early withdrawals, The Children's Meetinghouse, Inc., will retain your original three-tenths prepayment. Your three-tenths prepayment may not be credited towards another family member's annual tuition balance or towards your own ongoing tuition obligations.

Increase in Hours - A family may request in writing to increase their hours or sessions. Such requests are dependent upon space being available. Any change will take effect at the beginning of the month following receipt of the written request. Any family increasing their hours or sessions must increase their prepaid tuition so that it equals three-tenths of the annual rate of tuition associated with their new increased hours. The school will issue an invoice for the increased tuition deposit.

OTHER THAN AS SET FORTH ABOVE, NO REFUND OR REDUCTION IN TUITION IS POSSIBLE FOR A CHILD WHO ARRIVES LATE; LEAVES EARLY OR ATTENDS ONLY PART OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. THE TCM PARENT BOARD WILL REVIEW ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THE ABOVE POLICIES.

Termination Policy

The Children's Meetinghouse reserves the right to terminate a child/family from the center due to lack of tuition payment or refusal of parents to comply with the policies established by TCM. These policies may include but are not limited to: refusal to adhere to health and safety guidelines, failure to adhere to the parent compact agreement, refusal to submit the appropriate enrollment and medical documentation as required by the Dept. of Early Education and Care. In addition, inappropriate or abusive behavior (intimidating gestures, invading personal space) or language (swearing, denigrating or caustic remarks) directed toward a staff member is unacceptable. When and if appropriate, a two week notice will be given to notify the parents in writing of the decision to terminate the child's enrollment in the school. The deposit and the last month's tuition will not be refunded to the parents under these conditions.

TCM will prepare the child for leaving the program in a manner in which the child can understand.

Interactions Among Educators and Children (see 7.05 for more specific language)

The following is our interactions policy that is adopted from the regulations provided by the Dept. of Early Education and Care.

The licensee shall direct child guidance to the goal of maximizing the growth and development of the children and for protecting the group and individuals within it. The licensee shall use behavior management in a consistent, reasonable and appropriate way based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of a child.

- a) The licensee shall use behavior management techniques such as setting reasonable and positive expectations, offering choices and providing children an opportunity to verbalize their feelings, which encourage children to develop self-control through understanding.
- b) The licensee shall prohibit:
 - 1. spanking or other corporal punishment of children;
 - 2. subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment;
 - 3. depriving children of meals or snacks;
 - 4. force feeding children;
 - 5. disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; or forcing a child to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting;
 - 6. confining a child to a swing, crib or any other piece of equipment for an extended period of time; and
 - 7. excessive time out
- c) Where appropriate and feasible, children shall participate in the establishment of such rules, policies, and procedures.

At The Children's Meetinghouse:

Use of corporal punishment or cruel or severe punishment will result in immediate dismissal of the staff member. The staff will encourage and reward positive behavior and ignore or not reward inappropriate behavior whenever possible. If a behavior is harmful to the child or to other children in the classroom, the child will be asked to "please stop" told that the specific behavior is "not okay" and the staff person "needs" the child to do an alternate behavior. If a potentially harmful behavior continues, the staff member may remove the child to another area of the classroom to play. "Time out" is a very brief separation from the other children and is used only when a child continues inappropriate behavior and is not being safe, is frustrated by the situation and is unable to control his/her behavior. Time out may not exceed one minute for each year of the child's age and must take place within an educators view. Guidance at The Children's Meetinghouse is always approached with a solid understanding of the child's development, and with respect for the individual child's self-esteem and self confidence.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT - PARENT RIGHTS AND EEC; INFORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates to the Dept. of Early Education and Care the legal responsibility of promulgating rules and regulations to be met by all providers of early care and education services in the Commonwealth, whether home, school or center-based. TCM supports and encourages a partnership with and the involvement of parents in the early education and care of their children.

These rights are as follows:

Parent Visits

You have a right to make unannounced visits to your child's room while your child is present.

Parent Input

The program must have a procedure for allowing your input in the development of center policy and procedure. The program must allow you to make suggestions, but it is up to the program to decide whether or not they will be implemented.

Conferences

You have a right to request an individual conference with the program's staff. The licensee has the responsibility to make the staff available.

Meeting prior to admittance

The licensee shall assure that the administrator or his designee meets with you prior to admitting your child to the center.

At the meeting, the licensee must provide you with: the center's written statements of purpose; types of services provided; referral policy; behavior management policy; termination and suspension policy; a list of suggested nutritious foods that you could send for lunches; the policy for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect; the transportation plan; a copy of the health care policy; procedure for administration of medication; procedures for providing emergency health care and the illness exclusion policy; and a copy of the fee schedule. This information is contained in the "Parent Handbook." Toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.

You should also be given the opportunity to visit the center's classrooms either at the time of the meeting or prior to the enrollment of your child.

Progress Reports

At least every six (6) months, you should either meet with the center's staff to discuss your child's progress, or receive a written progress report of your child's activities and participation in the center. This report must become part of your child's center record. If your child is an infant or is a child with disabilities, you should receive a written progress report every three (3) months. Center staff must bring any special problems or significant developments, particularly if they regard infants, to your attention as soon as they arise.

YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS:

Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. The center's staff may 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 parent(s). The center shall notify the parent(s) if a child's record is subpoenaed.

Access to the Records

You should be able to have access to your child's records. The center must provide access within two business days, unless they have your permission to take longer. You must be allowed to view your child's entire record, even if it is located in more than one location. The center must have procedures regarding access, duplication, and dissemination of children's records. They must maintain a written log that identifies anyone who has had access or has received any information out of the record. This log is available only to you and the people responsible for maintaining the center's records.

Amending the Record

You have the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant materials to the child's record. Such request shall be made in accordance with the procedures described below:

1. If you are of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify, or correct objectionable material in the child's record, you have the right to have a conference with the licensee to make your objections known;
2. The licensee shall, within one (1) week after the conference, give you a decision in writing stating the reason or reasons for the decision. If the decision is in your favor the licensee shall immediately take steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

Charge for Copies

The licensee shall not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of information contained in the child's record.

Transfer of Records

Upon your written request, when your child is no longer in care, the licensee can give you your child's records or transfer them to any other person you identify.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROGRAM

Providing information to the Dept. of Early Education and Care

The Licensee must make available to the EEC any information required to be kept and maintained under these regulations and any other information reasonable related to the requirements of these regulations. This includes information in your child's records. Authorized employees of the EEC may not remove identifying case material from the center's premises and are required to maintain confidentiality of individual records.

Availability of regulations

The center must have a copy of 606 CMR 7.00, Standards for the Licensure or Approval of Family Child Care; Small Group and School Age and Large Group and School Age Child Care Programs on the premises, available to any person upon request. If you have questions about any of the regulations or any of the other school policies ask the director. **Parents may contact EEC for the program's licensing history.** The regional office of EEC is in Worcester at 10 Austin St., Worcester, MA 01609. 508-798-5180.

Parents may contact EEC for information regarding the program's compliance history.

Health Care Policy

Section 7.11 requires a written health care policy statement provided to each staff member and posted near telephones and including the following information. Complete copies will be given to the parents upon enrollment or when any changes are made. Section 7.11(19)(b) requires a Health Care Consultant to be designated by the licensee who is a Massachusetts licensed physician, registered nurse, nurse practitioner or a physician's assistant with pediatric or family health training. The consultant shall assist in the development of the program's health care policy, shall review and approve the plan initially and at least upon renewal of the regular license, and shall be available for consultation as needed. The consultant shall approve any changes in the policy and approve the first aid training for staff.

Health Care Consultant: Judith Ramirez R.N. 978.692.8087(h)
P.O. Box 226, Westford, MA 978.399.2325(w)

Emergency Telephone Numbers: Fire, Police, Rescue: 911

Non-Emergency: Fire: 978.318.3488

Police: 978.318.3400

Poison Center: 1.800.222.1222

Designated Adult (7.22(2) (b) (3)): Laura McNally 978.369.4688
(If needed as a neighbor/contact at MX School)

Hospital (s) utilized for emergencies:

Emerson Hospital, Route 2, Concord, MA 978.369.1400

Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Ave., Boston, MA 617.735.6000

(The Children's Meetinghouse, 1413 Lowell Road. Across from Middlesex School)

1. Emergency Procedures:

A certified staff member will administer first aid – the Director, Lead Teacher or other designated educator will call for an ambulance if needed. A staff member will accompany child to hospital and will bring the child's file. If the child's parent(s) cannot be notified, the emergency contact(s) will be called. All injury report forms will be completed as outlined in the regulations. On field trips, a

separate bag of first aid supplies will be taken along with emergency information on each child.

2. Emergency Procedures if Parents cannot be contacted:

The emergency contacts listed on the Child's Enrollment Form and the child's pediatrician will be contacted.

3. Procedures for Using and Maintaining First Aid Supplies:

Location of first aid kits:

- **Infant/Toddler Kitchen Area – cabinet over the sink**
- **Preschool – on top of refrigerator; one for field trips also in Lobby closet**
- **Playground – hanging up inside shed facing the riding path**
- **Stroller – underneath one of the carriages for IT walks to MX School**

Location of first aid manual:

- **Preschool – on top of refrigerator with kit.**

First Aid is administered by the Director, Lead Teachers or Teachers depending on the circumstances and availability of staff.

First Aid kits are maintained by the Director or other designated staff members.

Contents of the First Aid Kits: bandage compress, Band-Aids, gauze roller bandage, gauze pads, adhesive tape, disposable non-latex gloves, eye patches, tweezers, scissors, thermometers, instant ice packs, cotton balls, eye wash, eye cup, nail clippers, and CPR mouth guard.

4. Emergency Preparedness Including the Evacuation of the Center:

Exit signs and separate evacuation plans are posted for each classroom area. When considering evacuation or sheltering in place, educators must be able to communicate basic emergency information to emergency personnel, bring telephones if needed off the premises and follow the directions of the local emergency management authorities.

In the infant/toddler program, an approved evacuation crib a crib may be utilized in moving infants. Because there are usually two or three infants in the group and three teachers, any non-walkers should be carried.

The teachers who are with the children in the classrooms will lead the children out of the building. The director, Lead Teacher or other Designated Teacher will check for stragglers while the other teachers take the attendance book(s), emergency contact information and cordless telephone(s) outside to the playground with the children. Some staff will also have cell phones. In the Infant/Toddler room the attendance book will be monitored throughout the day. In

the preschool the attendance book will be monitored and the totals will be posted on the refrigerator every 15 minutes or less if needed especially during arrival times so that all staff can check more quickly for the total number of children. Staff can refer to the list throughout the day as needed.

Practice evacuation drills are held with all groups of children with the staff on a monthly basis on different days and at different times of the day so as to include all children and staff with their varying schedules. (See log for documentation.) The Concord Fire Dept. may also arrange fire drills throughout the year.

5. Plan for the Care of Mildly ill Children in the Center:

Until the parent or emergency contacts can be notified and picks up the child, the individual needs of the child will be met in regards to food, drink, rest, play materials, comfort, supervision and appropriate indoor and outdoor activity, as indicated by the health condition of the child.

6. Plan for Dispensing Medicine (prescription and Non-Prescription) and the Plan for the Recording of Medication):

All staff who administers medication of any kind must be trained in medication administration **annually**. No educator will administer the first dose of any medication to a child, except under extraordinary circumstances and with parental consent. Parents must complete the permissions form with their signature as well as the licensed health care practitioner for administration of medication. Written record will be maintained of the administrations of any medicine including prescription, non-prescription and topical medications. The Medications Log will be used and placed in the child's file. All non-prescription medication administered will also be recorded on a note given to parents after each time given. All medications will be stored properly in a locked bag/box in or on the refrigerator or in the first aid box. All unused medication shall be returned to the parent when no longer needed or dispose of. For non-prescription or prescription medication the health care practitioner may give a standing order that will be valid for no more than a year from the date it was signed. For non-prescription medications that parents also authorize and that the center accepts (such as Tylenol for fever), an attempt will be made to contact the parent before the medication is administered, unless the child needs medication urgently or when contacting the parent will unreasonably delay appropriate care.

7. Procedures for Identifying and Protecting Children with Allergies or Asthma:

Upon enrollment to the center, children with allergies/asthma or other chronic medical condition will be identified. All staff will be informed and the children's names will be posted in a manner that protects the privacy of each child. Types of allergies that can be life-threatening (such as food, insects/bee stings, environmental, drug or latex) and the possible reactions will be available in the classroom as well as in the child's file. Emergency medications such as Epipens must be immediately available for use and will be brought with children for outdoor play or walks, as required. The program will develop an Individual Health

Care Plan (IHCP) in collaboration with the parent or guardian, program educators and the child's licensed health care practitioner who must authorize it. The IHCP will include the description of the condition which has been diagnosed by the health care practitioner, the description of the symptoms of the condition, medical treatment that may be necessary while the child is in care, a description of the potential side effects of the treatment and an outline of potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered. There must be one person trained in the implementation of the child's IHCP whenever the child is at the program. In addition to a licensed health care practitioner, training to implement an IHCP may be given to the child's parent or the program's health care consultant with the licensed health care practitioner's written consent. The IHCP is valid for one year, unless withdrawn sooner and must be renewed annually, or when the child's condition changes, for administration of medication and/or treatment to continue.

8. Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to the Dept. of Child and Family Services and the Telephone Numbers:

The telephone number is 508.424.0100. Every educator is a mandated reporter under M.G.L.c 119, 51A and must make a report to the Dept. of Children and Families (DCF) whenever they have reasonable cause to believe a child in the program is suffering from serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon the child, including but not limited to sexual abuse, or from neglect, including but not limited to malnutrition, no matter where the abuse or neglect may have occurred and by whom it was inflicted. The Director/Licensee shall immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the DCF. The Director shall notify the Dept. of Early Education and Care alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of the program or during a program related activity or upon learning that a report has been filed naming an educator or person regularly on the child care premises an alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect of any child. The licensee shall cooperate in all investigations with EEC. The licensee shall develop and maintain written procedures for addressing any suspected incident of child abuse or neglect. A staff member will not work directly with children until the DCF investigation is completed and for such further time as the EEC requires.

9. Injury Prevention Plan 7.11(5)

Educators will monitor the environment on a daily basis by reporting to the Director on the need for removal and/or repair of hazards. A central illness/injury log for PS and one for IT are kept in red notebooks and the educators will maintain a record of any unusual or serious incidents including but not limited to behavioral incidents, injuries, property destruction or emergencies. The Director will monitor the safety record of the center on a monthly basis.

Educators will check children's clothing to ensure that it is free from strings, laces or jewelry that could become entangled or wedged in playground equipment and present a strangulation hazard. Educators will protect children against cold, heat and sun injury.

Parents will be informed in writing of each incidence of an injury requiring administration of first aid within 24 hours and an illness/injury report form will be completed and added to the child's file. On field trips teachers will bring a first aid kit and the set of field trip emergency cards. If an illness/injury requires "911" emergency care, parents will be notified immediately. If medical treatment is required, EEC will be sent the illness/injury report form within three business days. If overnight hospitalization is required, EEC will immediately be contacted by telephone. EEC will review any reports submitted and conduct a further review if needed. This will be followed by a report sent to the center documenting the review and identifying any non-compliance. Asthma attacks, seizures and bee stings do not need to be reported to EEC. All toxic substances such as cleaning supplies are either in a locked closet or a cabinet out of the reach of children. Items that are hazardous are kept in drawers or cabinets with safety latches. Medicines are put in a locked bag/box either in the refrigerator or in the first aid box which is out of the reach of children. In the IT Program, topical medications will be in the drawer of the diapering table or in the first aid box.

10. Plan for Managing Infectious Disease 7.11(9)

The center follows the policies and procedures in conformance with regulations recommendations set by the Division of Communicable Disease Control, Department of Public Health regarding the care of children with infectious disease, the criteria regarding signs and symptoms of illness which determines whether a child will be included or excluded from the center. The center distributes notices to parents when any communicable disease has been introduced into the center when their child was in attendance. For any specific questions regarding the health and safety of one child and/or the center as a whole, the Health Care Consultant will be contacted for assistance. The Parent Handbook also outlines when parents should keep their child home for the management of communicable/infectious diseases. Written documentation from the child's physician may be requested by the center regarding the child's return to the program.

11. Plan for Infection Control 7.11(10)

Staff and children wash their hands with liquid soap and running water using friction. Disposable towels will be used to turn off faucets and hands are dried with disposable towels. Staff and children wash their hands on arrival to the center, including after playing at the playgrounds, before eating or handling food, after toileting or diapering, after coming into contact with bodily fluids and discharges, after handling visiting or caged animals or their equipment. In addition, hand washing by staff must occur before and after administration of medication and after performing cleaning tasks, handling trash or using cleaning products. Hand washing is also encouraged after messy activities such as painting or before using the water/sensory table. Facilities used for hand washing after diapering or toileting in bathroom areas are separate from facilities and areas for food preparation and food service.

All surfaces such as tables, chairs and sassy seats are sprayed with a cleaner/disinfectant which is a commercially prepared solution to which water is added and it has been registered by the EPA as a sanitizing solution or Fantastic Disinfectant Cleaner depending on the time needed for the disinfectant to dry on the surfaces. Diapering surfaces are **cleaned and** disinfected after each use. Disposable gloves are to be used for the clean up of bodily fluids and of blood spills. The effected area will be disinfected and used gloves will be thrown away in a lined, covered container or double bagged. Staff will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after cleaning up a bloodied area. Bloody or soiled clothing will be sealed in a plastic bag, labeled with the child's name and returned to the parent at pick up time. All cleaning supplies and disinfectants will be stored in a secure place and out of the reach of children. All staff will be trained in infection control washing/disinfecting bathroom sinks and toilets, floors, mops, tables, diaper pails, baskets, toys mouthed by infants and toddlers, bibs, cloth towels/washcloths, dress-up clothes, crib sheets and/or resting mats or resting mat sheets.

12. Safe Sleep Policy 7.11(13)

Infants, unless otherwise ordered by a health care professional, are placed on their backs to sleep on a firm surface manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. (This indicator is required of all programs with infants.) Pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed toys or other padded materials are not allowed in cribs for infants younger than twelve months. If a light blanket is used, the infant is placed at the foot of the crib with a thin blanket tucked around the crib mattress, reaching only as far as the infant's chest. The infant's head remains uncovered during sleep. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when can easily turn themselves from the back position.

For toddlers and preschoolers, the program provides mats, sheets and blankets. Bedding is washed on-site after each use. The length of sleep, rest or quiet activity is appropriate to the needs of the children who are in care for longer than four hours. Spacing of two feet between cots or three feet between children's faces is ensured. Appropriate space and lighting is available to children for quiet activities who do not sleep.

TCM EVACUATION PLAN – POTENTIAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO A FIRE, NATURAL DISASTER, MISSING CHILDREN, OR ANOTHER SITUATION NECESSITATING EVACUATION OF THE BUILDING

If an evacuation of the center is necessary, the teachers of each group will take their children, attendance books and emergency cards out to the nearest or safest exit. All groups will meet outside at the assigned space at the playground.

Infants/non-walkers/disabled children would be carried outside. The Director or other designated teacher in charge will check the classrooms and bathrooms for any stragglers, take a phone, attendance book, emergency contact information and join the group outside. The staff will use other cell phones as needed. A phone call to MX School will be made as soon as possible to inform them of the emergency. A request for transportation for the children will be made if necessary. The MX School has several vans available for our use if needed.

If the entire area requires evacuation, we will follow the MX School's evacuation plan, which may include staying at MX School or have bus transportation to the Concord-Carlisle High School or other designated area as directed by the Town of Concord. Parents will be notified of the situation by the staff of The Children's Meetinghouse and requested to pick up their child as soon as possible.

In the case of a missing child, the police will be contacted as well as MX School to assist in the search, followed by contacting the parent/guardian.

IN THE CASE OF A POWER OUTAGE

The center will stay open if possible for the duration of the day, but will remain closed until the power is restored. The decision to close would be based on the outside temperature according to EEC regulation. Room temperature in the rooms occupied by children shall be maintained at not less than 65 degrees F and 0 degrees F outside. Other deciding factors would include telephone service and water availability. Our fire detection alarms are hard wired to the Concord Fire Department.

In the event it is necessary to close, parents will be notified of the situation by a TCM staff member and requested to pick up their child as soon as possible.

IN THE CASE OF LOSS OF HEAT

The decision to close the center will be based on the outside temperature and the extent of the heat loss.

If the heat is off in the entire building and is anticipated to remain off, we will close according to EEC regulation. Room temperature in the rooms occupied by the children shall be maintained at not less than 65 degrees F and at 0 degrees F 30 outside.

In the event it is necessary to close, parents will be notified of the situation by a TCM staff member and requested to pick up their child as soon as possible.

IN THE CASE OF A LOSS OF WATER

If the water is off in the entire building and will remain off for more than two hours, we will close the center.

In the event it is necessary to close, parents will be notified of the situation by a TCM staff member and requested to pick up their child as soon as possible.

CHILDREN'S PROTECTION ACT OF 2000 – NOTICE TO PARENTS

Consumer Information Bulletin for Schools, Daycare Centers, and Schoolage Child Care Programs

Why am I receiving this notice and what should I do when I receive it?

Pesticide applications have always taken place in schools, daycare centers and school age child care programs. Up until recently, there has been no requirement that you be informed whenever an application is to be made. A recent amendment to The Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act requires parents, staff, and children to receive this Department of Food and Agriculture approved statement, along with a written notification, whenever pesticide applications are being made on the property of your school, daycare center or school age child care program. It does not mean that more pesticides are being applied than previously. In fact the goal of the new Act is to reduce pesticide use by requiring that pest management plans be developed. However, some people may be sensitive to low levels of chemicals and should avoid or reduce potential exposure to pesticides. Sensitive individuals might include elderly persons, pregnant women, young children and those with particular medical conditions (for example: Those with compromised immune systems, liver dysfunction, certain allergies or sensitivities). This notification will allow you to modify your activities to avoid exposure if it is thought to be necessary.

Who applies pesticides in my school, daycare center or school age child care program?

Schools, daycare centers and school age child care programs will differ in their approaches to pest management. Some may use commercial pest management professionals. Others may use their own facilities managers, ground personnel or custodians. Regardless of the approach used, the person who applies the pesticides must have a current and valid Massachusetts Pesticide Bureau pesticide Applicator license. Check the notification form for the applicator's license number.

How will I know when pesticides are being applied in my school, daycare center or school age child care program?

When a pesticide is to be applied on outdoors, the school administration, day care center operator, or school age child care program operator must ensure that employees, pupils or supervised children and their guardians receive standard written notification at least two working days before pesticides are to be applied to the property. The standard written notification form, which accompanies this notice, includes the following information:

- approximate dates when the application shall commence and conclude;
- specific location of the application;
- product name, type and EPA Registration number of the pesticide

- a Massachusetts Pesticide Bureau Chemical Specific Fact Sheet;
- a description of the purpose of the application and
- this document which is a Department of Food and Agriculture Bureau approved statement describing ways to minimize exposure and precautions to be taken.

What is Emergent Curriculum?

At The Children's Meetinghouse, we value emergent curriculum. Emergent curriculum stems from the interests of children and relies on the teacher's knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice. Emergent curriculum is embedded in a reciprocal relationship between teachers and children, both having valid goals and ideas. It requires energy, flexibility, observation, listening skills and commitment. (Gordon & Browne, 1993)

The starting point for planning this type of curriculum is the children. Teachers, and sometimes parents, investigate by observing the play and social interactions of the children in their care and then sharing it with each other. It helps teachers to plan and develop curriculum that is truly child-centered: one that involves the children's ideas, needs, abilities and interests to the fullest. It is the teacher's job to listen, observe, record, support and respond to the play and learning process.

Another important aspect of emergent curriculum is the relationship between home and school. Parents sharing their knowledge of their individual children and teachers sharing their knowledge of their child at school can only benefit the child's future learning experiences.

Documentation of the children's learning experiences and development is crucial to emergent curriculum. Photographs of children working and their comments are posted and shared through the use of books made by the children. Documentation boards are also used to display projects the children have been working on.

Teachers watch and listen to the children, drawing out their interests, which can range from social or emotional issues (e.g. fears and worrying) to more concrete, content-oriented topics (e.g. dinosaurs and architecture, seeds). The teachers then meet regularly for team planning time to share their perceptions, plan units and develop lesson plans.

Emergent curriculum allows teachers and children to become partners in the learning process. How exciting and appropriate!

Example of Emergent Curriculum

The following anecdote is an example of how we use emergent curriculum at TCM.

The Pre-kindergartners came up with a problem... “What can we do about these plants hanging in our faces?” The teacher knew that a question like this could be explored by the children and would touch on a variety of Pre-K goals and concepts at the same time.

The children first wanted to know what those “hanging things” were. The teacher took out the laptop and showed them a picture of a spider plant and read to them the description of a spider plant. They found out that those “hanging things” were the babies of the spider plant. They also learned that they could cut them from the plant and make new plants from the babies. The teacher asked them if they would like to do that and they all said, “Yes!”

The teacher already knew about spider plants but instead of TELLING the children what to do, she was a partner in their learning process. Letting them take the lead but gently guiding them through the process.

Part of the teacher’s learning plan for this project included some of the goals and concepts mentioned in the Massachusetts Frameworks for Pre-Kindergarten. An activity is often chosen because it focuses on many concepts and goals at once as the Spider Plant Project did.

The end result for children in this process is of course that they learn the concepts that they need to be successful in kindergarten but also that they become confident, enthusiastic, independent learners who LOVE the learning process.

Spider Plant Project

The Pre-K children had noticed the spider plant “babies” hanging over the writing table. They were actually annoyed by them because they were hanging in their faces while they were working at the writing table.

There were just enough “babies” for the TUTH group of four to pot. They learned from the teacher how to grow new plants from the “babies”.

They painted the pots and then planted each baby and watered them carefully. When the pots were dry they took them home and promised to take good care of them.

Project Concepts.....

- Problem solving.....How do we get the plants to stop hanging in our faces?
- Science.....Knowledge about how to care for a living thing (plant).
- Art.....Thinking of a design and then painting the pot.
- Social.....Sharing materials
- Language..... ..Talking and sharing ideas.

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HOW DO CHILDREN LEARN?

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY.** Play is what children do best and enjoy the most. For children, play is their work. Play fosters total development and should be integrated into everything children do.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY DOING.** Children learn through active involvement with concrete objects. They need many firsthand experiences with real things, such as science experiments, construction, art projects, dramatic play, and field trips.

I HEAR AND I FORGET

I SEE AND I REMEMBER

I DO AND I UNDERSTAND

Chinese Proverb

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH THEIR SENSES.** Children learn by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Think of each of the senses as a pathway to the brain; the more senses or pathways involved, the more likely learning will occur. Sensory learning also emphasizes the need for a variety of media and materials to stimulate children's senses.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH LANGUAGE.** Children need to talk about their experiences and to verbalize what they are thinking. Teachers can foster language by describing what they are doing, labeling objects, clarifying children's thoughts, and asking and answering their questions.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY MOVING.** Children seem to be in constant motion. They have a limited attention span and cannot learn by sitting quietly pushing a pencil. Direct their energy with whole body experiences where they can move and use their hands, feet, heads, and bodies to learn.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY BEING MOTIVATED.** Motivation is a key ingredient to learning. Interesting materials and a stimulating environment will spark children's curiosity and inspire them to learn. Pleasing parents, teachers, praise, and other personal reasons further motivate children to learn.
- **CHILDREN LEARN ON THEIR OWN LEVEL.** Assess each child's background and skills so you can build on their past experiences. If activities are too easy, children will be bored. But if they are too difficult, children will be frustrated. Break down difficult activities into small steps so each child can succeed and move from simple to more complex activities.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PRAISE AND REINFORCEMENT.**

“Nothing succeeds like success.” Positive experiences and praise encourage children to learn more while building their confidence. Give constant reinforcement with smiles, pats and verbal encouragement.

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH IMITATION.** Children learn by observing others and then imitating what they see and hear. Children also imitate values and attitudes they see in parents, teachers and peers.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH REPETITION.** Children build knowledge through repetition and through accumulated experience. The amount of time that is spent on activities is another factor in learning.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY EXPERIMENTING.** Children need the freedom to experiment, explore, try things or, and to make choices. Since they learn through trial and error, accept their mistakes and offer feedback and support.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH EXPOSURE.** Children are like sponges, learning more in the preschool years than any other period. They need to be stimulated with a variety of materials, activities, and subject matter.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH INTERACTING WITH FRIENDS.** It is amazing how much children learn through talking, watching, and playing with their friends, siblings, and others. Peer teaching is a meaningful way of learning that should not be overlooked.
- **CHILDREN LEARN IN A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT.** Children need to feel loved, safe, and secure in order to learn. An atmosphere of warmth and acceptance is much more conducive than one that is competitive or threatening.
- **CHILDREN LEARN WHEN THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS ARE MET.** Children who are hungry, sleepy, or under stress will have a difficult time learning. Make sure children receive good nutrition, proper rest, and emotional support.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH WHOLENESS.** Learning is not isolated, but should be connected and integrated in all areas of the curriculum. Learning should also focus on the whole child by meeting their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.

When the above guidelines are followed, children will become independent learners who are excited about school and are enthusiastic about learning. They will have a strong foundation, confidence in their abilities, and lifelong skills that will help them continue to learn.

Jean R. Feldman, Ph.D. (1991) A Survival Guide for the Preschool Teacher. West Nyack, New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education. (Pages 11-12).

Play Today

You say you love your children,
And are concerned they learn today?
So am I – that’s why I’m providing
A variety of kinds of play.

You’re asking me the value
Of blocks and other such play?
Your children are solving problems,
They will use that skill everyday.

You’re asking what’s the value
Of having your children play?
Your daughter’s creating a tower:
She may be a builder someday.

You’re saying you don’t your son
To play in that “sissy” way?
He’s learning to cuddle a doll:
He may be a father someday.

You’re questioning the interest centers:
They look like useless play?
Your children are making choices:
They’ll be on their own someday.

You’re worried your children aren’t learning:
And later they’ll have to pay?
They’re learning a pattern of learning:
For they’ll be learners always.