



Parent Handbook 2016 - 2017



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www.mainemountainchildrenshouse.org

School Incorporation

Maine Mountain Children's House (MMCH) is a non-profit corporation licensed by the State of Maine as a Child Care Center.

Program Philosophy

MMCH provides a Montessori Primary program for children ages 2 ½ to 6 years old, with a low teacher to child ratio. We believe that a low ratio is crucial for the child's health, safety and education. Our program is based on Dr. Maria Montessori's philosophy with an emphasis on following the child and respecting each child's individual needs in a carefully prepared environment. The teachers guide each child in their learning and development in a multi age classroom, where the children become active, independent, and self-directed learners. The younger students learn from the older students, and the older children teach the younger children. The program goals are to facilitate the natural development of the whole child. We provide an enriched, safe, and loving learning environment that is supported by safe and consistent limits, which allow the child to freely discover with joy.

Non-Discriminatory Statement

MMCH is a nonsectarian Montessori school that does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, creed, religion, national origin, cultural heritage, age, sex, marital status, or sexual orientation in the administration of either its admissions or employment policies or procedures.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The state of Maine mandates that all staff of Maine Mountain Children's House report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Health and Human Services. Failing to report suspected cases are punishable by law. In the event of suspected child abuse/neglect, staff must first notify the Director of MMCH who must contact DHHS Child Protective Intake immediately.

The Prepared Environment and Teachers

MMCH serves children in the primary ages of 2½-6 years. The classroom is a carefully prepared environment that is developmentally appropriate in fostering the child's whole development. The teachers in the school have experience in early childhood and Montessori education.

All teachers are required to continue their education annually to meet state requirements of a minimum of 30 hours of classroom training and observation. We recognize that teachers need to further develop and fine-tune their teaching strategies, which facilitate and support the child's growth and development. MMCH is closed for two days during the year to allow the teachers to complete part of their state requirements. The teachers will need to continue training during weekends and evenings to meet the minimum standards.

MMCH head teachers are educated in the Montessori philosophy and methodology significant to the age level they are teaching. They have the ability and dedication to put key concepts into practice in their classroom. The teachers need to have a strong partnership with the family, which includes daily conversations when possible. Teachers will hold two parent conferences a year outlining integral parts of the child's total development.

MMCH teachers need to know and learn how to use the diverse set of Montessori materials, activities, and experiences which are designed to foster physical, intellectual, creative, and social-emotional development. For staff who are certified and involved in the American Montessori Society or are actively seeking an American Montessori Society certification, training includes 200 hours in the classroom, 400 hours of practicum, and a minimum of 120 hours of classroom teaching above and beyond the requirements of an undergraduate or graduate degree.

MMCH offers internship and practicum opportunities to University of Maine Farmington students pursuing degrees in early childhood education. The students work under the direction of the Head teacher.

Arrivals

The arrival process is an important step towards independence for your child. At times, this may be challenging for children and parents alike. Please have patience during this transition and try to maintain a routine for dropping your child off in the morning. Here are a few more tips to help with a smooth arrival at school:

Make goodbyes consistent and brief. Though it can be challenging, it lets your child know what to expect each day. At times they may get upset, though it typically only lasts a moment at this age and they become focused on something new.

Allow your child to carry some of his or her belongings. This encourages them to take ownership over their things and to feel independent.

It is best to arrive by 8:30 each morning, whether we are inside or outside. It can be challenging to enter a classroom already bustling with activity, so by having the time to mingle with peers before-hand, your child may feel more comfortable.

If you happen to arrive late and the work period has started, please encourage your child to come into the classroom and greet their friends. In addition, remember that the children may be working, so please be mindful of their concentration and do your best not to disrupt the morning activities.

Our day at MMCH starts at 8:30am From September to December we begin our mornings outside, so please have your child dressed appropriately when they arrive. We prefer to start the year this way as it makes for a smoother transition when saying goodbye to family members. As the temperatures start to drop and the year progresses, we will start our mornings indoors and prepare the classroom together. We gather together for Morning Meeting and discuss which task each child would like to do in order to get our classroom ready for the day.

Departures

Departures are generally a busy time in our cubby room. We ask that you wait for your child outside of the classroom while they pack up their belongings and say goodbye to their teachers and friends. This will help alleviate distractions during this time.

When you greet your child at the end of the day, we feel it is important to get down to their level and say hello, for you both have had a busy day away from each other. Once you have said hello to your child, they may ask for more time to play with peers. If you choose to let them play longer, please give a clear time that you are willing to let them stay for. Once the time is up, we ask that you and your child walk hand-in-hand to the car to leave. Please, do not let your child go into the parking area without an adult! In addition, keep in mind that the parking lot will have people coming and going, so drive slowly and with care.

If you are going to be late to pick up your child, please let a teacher know so they can prepare your child appropriately. If you are going to be early, please also let a teacher know and allow your child to meet you in the cubby room. Please do not enter the classroom for this will be disruptive for the children who are still working.

We expect that you will be the ones to pick up your children each day. If someone else is going to be picking up, please make sure teachers are aware and contact information is provided. In addition, if this is a person we do not know, we will ask for identification, so be sure your alternate driver is prepared.

Pick-up Authorizations

Parents must provide the school with a list of people authorized to pick up their child. There is a place on the general permission slip to record these names. No child will be dismissed to anyone other than the parents or guardians of the child without written permission from the parents or guardian. These procedures are designed to protect your child and safeguard his/her health and welfare. To avoid frustration and inconvenience, please provide the school with an accurate and up to date list of authorized people. If the person is someone other than the child's parents/guardian the teacher will ask for identification.

Transportation

Transportation is the responsibility of the parents. Those desiring carpools will be provided with a class list that will include parents' names and addresses.

If someone other than a regular driver is to transport your child, a written note must be sent to school. A driver's license will be required to confirm identity. As carpools are formed the school must be notified. Maine State law is to provide a car seat for all children under the age of 8. No child will leave school without a safety seat.

Before/After School Care

Before and after school care is a big part of our program here at MMCH. We provide child care from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. for children who may need to come to school early due to work or other prior arrangements. During this time, children typically enjoy quiet play in the nap room before our day begins. In warmer months, some of this time may be spent outside, so please be sure that your child has appropriate clothing for inclement weather.

After school care begins at 3:00 p.m. and runs until 5:00 p.m. This is a time that preschool and school age children come together to work and play. We like to provide both indoor and outdoor play time where younger children can interact with older children. This time is typically unstructured and allows the children to use their imaginations and creativity.

Snow Days

If MSAD 58 is closed or delayed, MMCH will be as well. MSAD 58 closings or delays will be posted on the WCSH Ch. 6 website (www.wcsh6.com/closings); please use this site to know what we are doing at MMCH. This website is also where you can sign up for automatic text messages to be sent to your phone. If there is a delay for MSAD 58, MMCH will open as follows: 1hr delay - 8 a.m. is the earliest arrival time, 2hr delay - 9 a.m. is the earliest arrival time. If MSAD 58 has an early dismissal (11 a.m.) please plan to pick your child up by 1:00 p.m.

Clothing

Children and teachers wear slippers when they are inside during the school day. We ask that you provide slippers that stay on your children's feet and have leather or rubber bottoms. We recommend moccasin-style Acorn slippers or even Crocs. Please refrain from using slippers with characters on them for they can be cumbersome or even distracting.

Please provide two changes of clothing for your child to keep at school in their bathroom box. Life at MMCH can be messy due to paint, using water or playing outside. In addition, children may have accidents and need to change their pants and underwear. Be mindful of the seasons, and please change out clothing periodically to match the temperatures.

Toys & Personal Possessions Stay at Home

Generally speaking, we ask that children leave toys and personal possessions at home. Often times they can be distracting to your children, could get damaged or could be left here, so we find it best that they don't come to school at all.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. Your child may bring one small item to rest with during nap time. This item may be kept in their cubby or in the nap room until the rest period.

Also, your child is welcome to bring in items from home to share with the classroom, as long as they are educational and correlate with our monthly themes or lessons. If your child chooses to bring this type of item, they must understand that they are sharing it with the classroom and there are potential risks with that choice :). This item will go home with the child at the end of the day.

Rest Periods

There is a scheduled rest period for all-day children each day at MMCH. Please contact us if you would like your child to nap, as opposed to just having a rest period. Children who nap will go to the designated nap room and will be allowed to sleep from 1:00-2:30. The other children will have a quiet rest period from 1:00-1:30. During this time they are looking at books or laying quietly.

We ask that each child bring in their own mat, small blanket, and a small pillow. As noted above, your child may also bring a small stuffed animal to rest with. When rest time is over, the stuffed animal will be kept in the nap room or in your child's cubby. It is helpful for you to bring your child's rest materials home once a month to wash them and then return them the following school day.

Lunch and Snacks

Food is such an important part of our lives as human beings. We feel that it is crucial to teach children about healthy food habits while they are young. Because of this, we ask that you are thoughtful with the lunch choices you provide for your child. We are part of the national 5210 program (5 fruits and veggies, 2 hours of outside play time, 1 hour or less of screen time, and 0 sugary drinks each day), so we ask that you support this message. Lunches should contain parts of each food group and should contain very little sugar. We even encourage children to look for a "rainbow" in their lunches each day to ensure lots of vitamins and minerals in their food choices. If you feel comfortable, involve your child in the process of choosing and preparing their lunches each day. This will be a helpful process for them as they create their own lunches when they are older.

At MMCH, we ask families to share the responsibility of providing morning snacks for the children. Each family will have a "snack week" 2-3 times a year. A snack list will be given out at the beginning of the school year that includes a

schedule and healthy snack ideas. Generally, a reminder will be put on your child's cubby the week before it is their snack week. Ultimately, however, it is the family's responsibility to remember their snack week. Each family is required to provide snack Monday-Friday, regardless of the days that their child attends school. Snack may be dropped off at school the week before or can be provided on Monday morning. Snack will be prepared by the children and a teacher from 8:30 to 9:00 for the morning work period.

Due to the large number of children with peanut allergies, all foods with nuts in them need to go through the teachers first, prior to serving in the classroom. We will be sure to let families know if there are any of peanut allergies, or other allergies that exist within our classroom.

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are very important occasions in Montessori classrooms. We talk about the journey the child has taken as they've traveled around the sun, including what foods they have liked, what activities they enjoy, etc.

On your child's birthday, we like to invite family members to participate in the celebration. Your child may also bring in pictures of themselves as they are growing up as well as a special snack to enjoy at circle time during the celebration. Typically, we read the story, *On the Day You Were Born* by Debra Frasier, but your child is welcome to bring in a story from home if they so choose.

Often times, a family may choose to provide a gift for their child to present to the school. This may be a book, puzzle or some other classroom material. By allowing your child to give on their birthday, you are reminding them of the pleasures of sharing with others. If your child is having a birthday party, we ask that you distribute invitations outside of school. A parent contact list may be provided for this distribution if you would like one.

Classroom Observations

Observing the classroom is an excellent way to better understand our school and our educational philosophy. We ask that you wait until after the first 6 weeks of school to observe or volunteer in the classroom so the children have time to adjust to their environment. After that time period, please let us know if you would like to visit. Perhaps consider coming on a day that your child does not attend school, as children can typically struggle with an environment with both a parent and a teacher and this may skew the results of your observation. If you are interested in observing, please feel free to reach out to our director to set time and date.

Volunteering

MMCH ask that all families commit to at least 10 hours of volunteer time each school year. This allows us to feel supported by our families, strengthening the bond between home and school environments. The more time we take to get to know one another will only enhance your child's sense of community.

Volunteering can include helping in our classroom, being part of our fundraising committee and fundraising events, presenting at circle time on culture, hobbies, crafts, etc., chaperoning for field trips, substitute teaching, and playground duty. Please talk to a teacher about how you would like to use your volunteer time. This is not a huge amount of time to ask of you, but it is a huge help to our school. Many hands make light work!

School Field Trips

One way to enjoy the program as a volunteer is to assist the teachers with school field trips. You can volunteer as a driver or a chaperone if we will be walking to our destination. We will provide sign up sheets for field trips throughout the year. All drivers must provide proof of insurance and a copy of their driver's license.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

This is the greatest opportunity to discuss your child's day-to-day routines, growth and development progress, next session goals and any concerns that you may have about your child. We conduct two parent/teacher conferences during the school year, one in mid-October and the second in April.

Communication

Open communication is very important to the staff at MMCH. We encourage parents to check in with teachers on a regular basis to discuss their child's progress, pertinent issues or challenges. It is best if this is done during office hours: 3:15 - 5:00pm. Drop off and pick up times in the cubby room can be very busy and children need this time to concentrate on taking care of their belongings, so we ask that it not be during this time. If you would like to touch base with a teacher, please arrange an appointment with them so they can give you their full attention. Since we are working with young children, preschool is a critical time during their development. Frequent communication will help us stay on the same page in regards to regular activities and developmental milestones. In addition, email can be a helpful way to communicate. Both Emily and Bethany can be reached through mainemountainchildrenshouse@gmail.com. We check the email daily and this gives us time to communicate with you while we're not in the hustle and bustle of the classroom.

Finally, we may be reached by our school cell phone between the hours of 7:30am - 5:00pm. Generally, we are unable to answer the phone during classroom time for we are with your children. If you have a message you would like to relay, please either call or text us and we will get back to you as soon as we can, or during office hours (3:15 - 5:00pm). **If it is an emergency, please call! If we don't answer, please call back immediately.** Please note that though this is a cellphone, we prefer that you are communicating with us during school hours. Typically we will take the phone home with us in case of an emergency, but we prefer to not be contacted during our time at home with our families. Thank you for respecting our time away from school.

If you have a concern about a teacher or staff member, you may contact the Director of the school. If the Director of the school is the concern, then you may contact the President of our Board of Directors, Polly MacMichael. Polly can be reached by email at P@pollymac.com.

Registration and Tuition

Each family is responsible for paying the full amount of tuition at the beginning of each month (if this option was chosen on registration form). There will be a \$15 late fee for each payment made after the 10th of each month, so please be mindful of paying on time. If tuition has not been paid for more than a month, we may ask that you do not return to the program until that payment has been made. If you are having trouble making tuition payments, please make arrangements to speak with the Director of the school to discuss your options. Being asked to leave the program should be a last resort.

MMCH requires an application fee of \$100. The fee is divided between a \$50 registration fee (the processing of your child's enrollment), and \$50 toward classroom materials. This does not guarantee your child's placement in our classroom. Should MMCH not enroll your child, for whatever reason, the \$50 materials fee will be returned to you. If your child has begun the program and you choose to then withdraw them, the entire application fee is forfeited to MMCH.

If you choose to take a vacation during the school year, you are still obligated to pay for the time that has been reserved for your child. There is no make up for sick or missed days during the school year. If you would like to add an additional day during the week for your child to come to school, above and beyond their reserved days, then this is referred to as a "drop-in." A ½ drop-in day (8:30-11:30) is \$20 and a full drop-in (8:30-3:00) is \$30.

We will be following the school schedule of MSAD 58. Our vacations will be the same, conferences and workshops may vary. A school year schedule will be sent in August. Parents are still responsible to pay for a full month even if there is a scheduled vacation.

One Month's Deposit

A security deposit of one month's tuition is due at the time of your first tuition payment with MMCH. If you pay in monthly installments, this security deposit is applied to your last month's tuition payment at the end of the year at MMCH. (For example, if your child attends MMCH for 3 full days, you will pay a security deposit of \$420 at the time of the first tuition payment. This \$420 will be applied to the June tuition payment at the end of the 2016/2017 school year.) If you pay in two installments, a deposit of one month's tuition (prior to discounted rate) is required at the time of your first payment to MMCH. This security deposit will then be applied to the second tuition installment. If you pay in full at the beginning of the school year, you are exempt from paying a security deposit.

If you choose to withdraw any time after September 1st, 2016, this deposit will be forfeited to MMCH. For more information, please read the "withdrawal" portion of the handbook below.

Withdrawal

Parents may withdraw their child from the program at any time, however, a four-week written notice is required. Parents will still be responsible for the current month's tuition, but any prepaid tuition will be assessed and returned to the family. If a parent fails to give a four-week notice, they will be responsible for the following month's tuition as well. If withdrawal occurs prior to September 1st, 2016, the security deposit and all paid tuition will be returned to the family. If withdrawal occurs after September 1st, 2016, the security deposit will be forfeited to the school. If you pre-pay in full or in two installments, prepaid tuition for upcoming months will be returned less the security deposit amount of one month's tuition. The retention of security deposits helps to alleviate the financial burden put on the school, as overhead expenses do not change with the withdrawal of your child.

Notes

Confidentiality Statement and Policy

Maine Mountain Children's House staff understands that in their position as teachers they may have access to confidential information. The policy states that information is confidential. This confidential information, including, but not limited to, names of individuals who have applied for or received information concerning a client's personal history, medical information, any communications between clients and Maine Mountain Children's House staff and volunteers, and information regarding MMCH employees and the school itself or a program with the school. All MMCH staff, employees, substitutes, and volunteers must retain in confidence all such information by signing a confidentiality statement.

I, the undersigned, understand all Maine Mountain Children's House school policies and procedures. I agree to follow and abide all policies and procedures set forth by MMCH. I understand that failure to do so may result in my child being asked to leave all programs of MMCH.

Parent

Date

Director

Please detach and mail back to the school.
This will be kept with your child's records.