



MID-CITY EARLY LEARNING CENTER

PARENT HANDBOOK

2022 REVISED EDITION

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Mission Statement and Philosophy

Mission Statement

Mid-City Early Learning Center is dedicated to instilling in our children strength of intellect and character in a Christian environment that is positive, respectful, and familial. We encourage our children to do their best, be compassionate, and appreciate and preserve the beauty of life.

Mid-City Early Learning Center is an outreach of Canal Street Church: A Mosaic Community and is committed to carrying out their vision.

As a church we envision...
More Jesus-followers...
In more neighborhoods...
In a more just and caring world...
All for the greater glory of God.

We are a “*Community of Believers*.” Our staff prioritizes their relationship with Christ and others and is evidenced through clear demonstrations of humility, competency, and enthusiasm as they care for children. Our community of teachers and staff are dedicated to the spiritual, social, emotional, and academic development of the whole child.

We value “*Authentic Worship*.” The city of New Orleans values authentic artistic expression, and we believe that children can begin to learn to express themselves and glorify God in unique ways, even at a very young age. Mid-City Early Learning Center is a vibrant environment that cultivates a love for creativity, music, and rich communication with God and one another.

We value “*Biblical Integrity*.” Our comprehensive curriculum is integrated with daily Bible teaching with the goal of laying a foundational knowledge of familiar Bible Scripture verses. We are confident that a child’s consistent exposure to the Word of God can reveal to them the character of God and his Gospel plan for the world.

We value “*Meaningful Relationships*.” Our relationships with each other and our parents are of utmost importance to the staff at Mid-City Early Learning Center. We commit to open and intentional flow of communication between parents and staff ensuring confidence that your child is learning and growing. We value parent input and firmly believe parents are *the* most crucial element in the development of their child during the foundational years.

We value “*Community Engagement*.” We are committed to celebrate and reflect the community and the world around us by exposing children to diverse languages, cultures, friendships and world views. We desire that young children begin to see themselves as small, but integral parts of a larger community in which every individual can contribute in distinct and significant ways today and in the future.

Philosophy

Mid-City Early Learning Center community consists of teachers and administrators, children, parents/guardians, grandparents, church members and friends. We serve children of all socio-economic groups, races, and religions because we want our children to see and recognize the beauty inherent in a richly varied and diverse world.

At Mid-City ELC we educate children in an atmosphere that is close-knit and nurturing, without undue pressures or competitiveness. It is this atmosphere which allows us to develop the full potential of every child.

We encourage children to choose from the array of planned, developmentally appropriate activities we offer. Our program is designed to help each child grow and develop at his/her own pace. We place special emphasis on learning through play.

Our program includes activities for emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth. Both active and quiet types of activities are available to the children. Rest and nap time are a part of the afternoon schedule. Nutritious meals and snacks are served to the children daily. Our goal is to provide high quality early childhood care in a learning environment in an accessible location at a reasonable price.

Diversity Statement

Mid-City Early Learning Center, in support of its mission, commits to the cultivation of a diverse community, honoring the unique differences of all. We embrace and celebrate diversity as essential to learning and to making positive contributions to the world.

An Equal Opportunity Learning Center

Mid-City ELC admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to children at our center. Mid-City ELC does not discriminate based on race, color, creed, sex, national and ethnic origin or disability, ancestry, being breastfed, or sexual orientation of his/her parents in violation of state or federal law.

Review and Revision of Handbook and Policies

Mid-City Early Learning Center's handbook and policies are periodically reviewed and are subject to change. Any additions or alterations made to the center's handbook and/or policies are effective immediately unless otherwise specified and apply to all currently enrolled families.

The update to the Review and Revision of Handbook and Policies to Mid-City Early Learning Center's Handbook were made in June 2022

Disclosure of Information

Mid-City Early Learning Center is a Type I Facility – License Number 50606 operating under the Licensing Division of LA Department of Education. Licensing inspections, regulations, and information regarding early learning centers are available on the Department of Education's website <https://www.louisianabelieves.com>

Enrollment

Admission

The admissions process begins when applicants submit a Wait List application. When classroom space becomes available, you will be contacted via email and/or telephone call. You will have until the close of business on the third business day to respond. If you choose to accept a spot, you will receive an Enrollment Packet containing the Parent Handbook, the Registration Form, the Payment Agreement & ACH Form, Emergency Card, Non-vehicular Excursion (Yearly), Scan Card Form, Immunization Records (Updated with each immunization received), Topical Ointment Permission Form (Diapered Children Only), and "All About Me" Questionnaire. All enrollment forms must be filled out completely and returned to the Administrative Office before the first day your child attends the center.

Initial Fees

Non-refundable payment of \$150.00 registration fee.

\$25.00 refundable scan card fee (2 cards per family) additional scan cards may be purchased for \$15.00. Monies will be refunded for any non-damaged cards returned upon your child/ren's last day in care. (Effective September 1, 2019)

Supply fee \$250.00 due annually in August. Children beginning care in the months of January to July will be prorated as follows: January \$140.00, February \$125.00, March \$110.00, April \$95.00, May \$80.00, June \$65.00, and July \$35.00.

- Your child is not registered, and their classroom spot secured until all registration forms are turned in and the initial fees paid.
- Spots being held for a later start date must pay the monthly tuition. As MCELC is a business we must maintain our centers income to fund our programs and meet the salary requirements for all employees.
- Children starting at any point during the week will be charged for the entire week, this will not be prorated and/or be negotiable.
- Fees are "per child" and can be paid via cash, check, or money order.

- Tuition increases are effective October 1st and will remain in effect the remainder of the academic school year. The rates are not set individually and do not change with your child's age. We anticipate that tuition rates will increase annually based on market analysis and inflation, with new rates taking effect October 1st. The center will make every effort to inform parents of changes in tuition well in advance of any expected increases. Tuition is based on class assignment which is determined in August.

Monthly Tuition

To remain financially responsible to one another, please review the following policies and procedures. We are committed to conducting business with you in a manner the exemplifies integrity and respect.

- Tuition is due on the *first day of each month* and can be paid by ACH Debit, check or money order and made payable to **"Canal Street Church ELC"**
- Invoices will be sent monthly by the 15th of each month for the following month. Once paid, a monthly statement will reflect your up-to-date status.
- We bank with Gulf Coast Bank and have secured the ability to receive payment via ACH Debit or automatic withdrawal. This is our preferred method of receiving payment. An ACH Debit enrollment form will be included in your Enrollment Registration Packet. All funds through ACH will be withdrawn by the third business day of each month.
- If the first day of the month falls on a weekend, tuition is due and/or will be drafted the business day following.
- A late fee of \$5.00 per day, per child will be assessed for all delinquent accounts.
- Returned Checks will be assessed a \$25.00 fee.
- All children should be picked up at the center's closing time of 5:30 p.m. every day. If you are unable to arrive by closing to pick up your child, **you must notify the center to inform the staff. We cannot accommodate schedules that require childcare past our state mandated closing time. You will be invoiced the following month.**
 - Late fees – 5:30 p.m. to 5:35 p.m. \$8.00
 - 5:35 p.m. to 5:40 p.m. \$16.00
 - 5:40 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. \$ 25.00
 - Any time after 5:45 p.m. \$ additional \$10.00 every 5 minutes

- In the event of continued NSF checks, three times within a twelve-month period, payment to the ELC must be in cash or money order only.
- If you receive tuition assistance and are reimbursed funds paid or paid via third party, funds must be paid in full by the first day of the current month.
- No past due amounts will be allowed to exceed one month's tuition. If your account is not paid by the end of the month, it may result in termination of your childcare services and your account will be turned over to a collection agency.
- Tuition payments are not refundable, nor will the center pro-rate tuition for days in which your child will be absent. The center does not offer credit for illness, funerals, vacation or any other missed days. The center does not offer credit for holidays, closures for staff development or staff meetings. The center does not offer credit for inclement weather days, or for mandated closures by the State of Louisiana, the City of New Orleans, Louisiana Licensing Department of Education, Department of Health and Hospitals, or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The center reserves the right to modify its no refund policy in case of natural disaster, pandemic flu, or other acts of God, in which the MCELC must cease operation for a significant amount of time. All closures/refunds will be at the sole discretion of MCELC and on a case-by-case basis.
- Upon initial enrollment, with an agreement between the Director and parents/guardians, the monthly fee may be prorated on a weekly basis only. If the start date is any day other than the first day of the week, the entire week will be charged.
- The center requires a Withdrawal Form from the Administrative office be completed 30 days prior to vacating your child/ren's spot. The center will pro-rate the last month's tuition if the 30-day notice falls in the upcoming month, however other fees will not be pro-rated upon withdrawal. If you decide to withdraw earlier than the date indicated on your 30-day notice form, you will still be responsible for the remainder of your balance. Without a written 30-day notice you will be responsible for the entire month's tuition until official notice is given.
- A signed copy of the above financial agreement between you and MCELC must be kept on record and submitted upon enrollment.

Letter of Intent/Activity Fee/Updated Forms

If you intend to enroll your child for the upcoming school year, the center will require you to submit a letter of intent, and the upcoming school year's activity fee will be invoiced in July for August payment. Once a year the center charges a non-refundable activity fee to help cover the cost of providing your child/ren's classroom with new special learning tools.

- The center will send out the letter of intent during the spring. The letter of intent needs to be returned to the administrative office within two weeks of receipt.
- Without a timely letter of intent, the center is unable to assure parents of a place for their child at the center after July 31st.
- A non-response or negative response to the letter of intent does not constitute a written 30-day notice of withdrawal. All families are still required to submit a written 30-day notice of Withdrawal Form to the administrative office.
- Updated Enrollment Forms are due by a date set by the center every spring, prior to the start of the new school year.
- **Any children with incomplete updated forms by the first day of the new school year will not be able to attend until all forms are completed.**

Attendance Policy

Tuition is based on the entire time a child is enrolled at the Mid-City Early Learning Center. **We are unable to offer credit or adjust tuition payments for days, weeks, or months that your child/ren may be out of school.** The only way to secure your child/ren's place in our program during absences is with full monthly tuition payments. If you opt to withdraw your child from our program for the period of your child/ren's absence, and are planning to return after that period, it will be necessary to get on our Wait List. Families are placed on the Wait List in order of their Wait List application date. If you opt to remove your child/ren temporarily and place them on the Wait List, your application will be placed after those who are already on the Wait List prior. In other words, if you opt to temporarily withdraw your child/ren from MCELC, there is no guarantee when another opening will be available. Please note the length of our Wait List can be long.

Dismissal Policy

We reserve the right to discontinue care for children in our center for any reason. These may include, but are by no means limited to:

- Failure to complete required forms
- Non-payment of tuition or fees
- Non-compliance with center policies and procedures
- Consistent absenteeism
- Unwillingness to work with the center staff on issues related to your child
- When a child consistently threatens their own or others' safety
- When a child's needs demand a greater level of care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.

Hours of Operation

Mid-City Early Learning Center is open Monday through Friday
7:30 A.M. – 5:30 P.M.

Parking and Security

Please be aware of parking restrictions along Canal Street. You may use the church driveway for short drop-off and pick-up times. We have two reserved spots in front of the building designated for drop-off and pick-up. Please be mindful of others when dropping off and picking up, as multiple persons use this location, do not be on cell phones in these areas and pull forward as much as possible so others may park behind you. Please do not block the neighbor's driveway entry. Double-parking on Canal Street or impeding sidewalks from the driveway is a safety threat and may result in a traffic citation. If you must park in a place other than these two areas, please do your best not to block driveways or service alleys and keep the sidewalks clear.

If you have an extended conversation or after-class visit scheduled, please try to schedule them during non-peak parking periods or park your vehicle somewhere other than designated MCELC spots. This helps ensure a smoother flow of traffic.

After accepting your child/ren for enrollment, families will be given two scan cards (refundable \$25.00 fee with return of non-damaged cards). The scan cards access the front door, the center's hallway doors and the gymnasium door. Only authorized people should have these cards. For security purposes, please do not allow unknown people to follow you into the building.

Checking In

When dropping off children, please remember to sign your full name in the Sign-In/Out Book at the administrative office for each child. **You must indicate the time of drop off, as well as an emergency contact if you will be unavailable that day.** You also have an option for signing in and out, if for some reason your child will miss part of that day but will return to care later in the day. Drop offs may not occur until 7:30 A.M.

Parents/guardians must accompany their child/ren to their respective classroom doorway and ensure that a staff member is aware that you are dropping off your child. The teachers and/or child assist in putting all personal belongings away and washing their hands before participating in classroom activities. Please make every effort to arrive to class no later than 8:30 A.M. as this is when breakfast is served and a consistent and timely start to the day makes for a great day. If you arrive any time after 8:45 A.M., **you must provide your child/ren with breakfast at home.** LA Department of Health and Hospitals dictates food cannot be kept for late arrivals. Either in the morning or afternoon, please check your child's class Dojo for important communications.

Any food hot or cold provided by the parent needs to be stored in appropriate containers i.e., thermos or ice packed lunch boxes that can be left in the child/ren's cubbies.

Helpful tips for making morning transitions easier:

- Set aside time in your morning routine to make morning drop-off relaxed rather than rushed.
- Always remember to say goodbye to your child/ren and remind them that you love them and will return to pick them up in the afternoon.
- Notify your child/ren's teacher of any scratches, bumps, rashes, etc., as these needs to be noted on the Daily Observation Form.

Late Arrivals

MCELC will not accept any child/ren after 9:00 A.M. Special circumstances will only be allowed with permission from the Director in advance.

Visitors and Volunteers

All Visitors and volunteers must sign in at the administrative office and be escorted through the MCELC hallways or classrooms by a staff member until the completion of their time in the center.

Checking Out and Picking Up

The center closes at 5:30 P.M. Please remember to sign your child out on the Sign In/Out Book at the administrative office for each child in their respective classes. All children must be picked up by the center's closing time, refer to additional charges in the **Monthly Tuition Section on Page 4 for additional charges for all late fees. Refer to the clock next to the Sign-In & Out Book at the administrative Office for the official time.**

Authorized Pick-Up

Children will only be dismissed to the authorized adults listed in the child/ren's profile records. This list must be kept current and should include at least one person who is not the child's parent/guardians, and only include names of persons you want to have access to your child/ren. No exception will be made unless the Director and/or administrative office staff member is notified in advance by the parent. Parents may further authorize additional individuals via email to the center in unplanned situations and follow it with a written authorization. MCELC requires all individuals to show photo identification before releasing a child/ren to them.

If a parent/guardian is not allowed by the court to pick up a child, a court order must be in the child/ren's profile records. If the court order is voided, a new form must be submitted to the administrative office to negate the original order or child/ren will not be dismissed per original documents.

Please keep in mind that as you take your child by the hand and say good-bye to the classroom staff members, you become legally responsible for your child/ren. For safety reasons, we cannot allow children to run in the hallways, or to play outside on playground equipment, unless staff members are present.

MCELC's first obligation is to the safety and welfare of children. All staff members are instructed not to release a child/ren to an adult they believe may be intoxicated with alcohol and/or other substances. Staff members will detain any person picking up a child to whom they believe may be too impaired to safely transport and/or care for that child. Administrative staff members will then locate one of the emergency contacts provided from the parent/guardians and contact them to pick up your child/ren from the center. If an angry or hostile situation occurs, we reserve the right to contact the NOPD to ensure the safety of the child/ren and/or staff members. We also reserve the right to contact Child Protective Services if necessary.

Signs of Intoxication may include one or more of the following:

- Difficulty with fine motor skills
- Balance and coordination difficulties
- Loud Speech
- Boasting
- Stumbling
- Crude behavior
- Speaking incoherently
- Slow verbal response
- Bloodshot eyes
- Flushed face
- Alcohol smell on breath

Emergency Contact

MCELC requires each child to have at least one emergency contact on file in the event the child/ren's parent/guardians are unavailable to pick up their child/ren in a reasonable amount of time. Emergency contacts should be someone other than the parents, someone who lives in the area and can generally pick up the child/ren within one hour or less.

Health and Safety

We are very conscious of maintaining a healthy environment at the center. We will take every precaution with our staff, physical environment and classroom arrangement. Prevention is the key to eliminating dangers, so we constantly monitor all areas of the program for any potential hazards. We encourage you to inform the administrative office of any issues that you see so we may rectify the situation as soon as possible.

To ensure the health of children and staff members, regular hand washing occurs at a minimum during the following times: upon arrival at the center, after outdoor and/or play in the gymnasium, before preparing and serving food, after toileting or diaper changes, before and after eating meals and snacks, and every time hands encounter body fluids (urine, stool, saliva, blood and nasal discharge). The following hand-washing procedures are utilized by all staff members and taught to children:

- Hands shall be washed and scrubbed at least 10 seconds with soap and warm running water.
- Hands are dried with a paper towel.
- Towels are disposed of in a covered trash can.

Medical Statement of Good Health and Immunizations

The State Health Department requires that the center have a Louisiana Universal Certificate of Immunizations for each child enrolled at MCELC. At the time of initial enrollment, and every new school year (August) thereafter, your pediatrician or family physician will be required to complete a Medical Statement Form which verifies the health of the child/ren prior to the beginning of the new school year and submit a signed Louisiana Universal Certificate of Immunizations. Children without a current Universal certificate and recent medical examination will not be allowed to attend the center. Parents are responsible for reporting any changes to the medical record which occur during the school year. Immunization Records will be continually monitored, the administrative office is required to have up to date records and your cooperation is imperative.

Hygiene

The most effective method of germ control is good hand washing practices. It is the most important thing we can do to keep our children healthy. We encourage all staff, parent/guardians, and children to follow good hand washing procedures.

Accident Insurance

MCELC provides accident insurance for children in the event they become injured at the center. All accidents and/or injuries must be reported immediately to the administrative office.

Illness and Emergency Information

Children who are ill should not be sent to the center. When illness does arise, please consult the following policies which are in the best interest of individual children and the classroom. Parents will be contacted at the first sign of illness.

Children who are ill do not function at their optimum level requiring constant attention of one adult. For this reason, we cannot accept ill children at MCELC, including children who have displayed any of the following symptoms in the previous 24-hour period.

- If a child has a temperature elevation (100.4° or greater), the child is not allowed in the center that day or within 24 hours of having the elevated temperature (without having medication administered). Only exception is note from child's physician and/or health department.
- If a child has a sudden onset of vomiting, irritability or excessive sleepiness, the child must be evaluated and cleared by the child's physician.
- If a child has an uncontrolled cough or complains of a sore throat, a parent will be notified, and the child must remain at home until the cough has improved and sore throat resolved.
- If a child has two or more loose stools or over and above what is normal for that child, the child must stay home until the condition is resolved.
- If a child has diarrhea (when a liquid bowel movement cannot be contained in a diaper or underwear, the child must stay home until the condition is resolved or controlled (contained in diaper or toilet).
- In the case of contagious diseases, e.g., Covid-19, chicken pox, hepatitis, measles, strep throat, a Doctor's Note is required for return to the center.
- A child experiencing chills and/or exhibiting extreme or unusual fatigue will be sent home until resolved.
- If a child has any presence of an undiagnosed generalized rash (any discoloration of skin or spotting that has not been previously noted except for diaper rash), will be sent home until resolved or cleared by the child's physician as non-contagious.

- A child with Lice or Nits will be sent home until resolved.
- A child with open or oozing sores will be sent home until resolved.
- A child with Pink Eye or any oozing discharge from the eyes, swelling and/or pink will be sent home until resolved with a physician's note or proof of antibiotic drops administered for twenty-four (24) hours.
- A child receiving Immunizations of any type, require the child to be out of the center for twenty-four (24) hours before returning to avoid any adverse reactions while in care. An updated Immunization record needs to be given to the administrative office upon return.
- A child diagnosed with Meningococcal Disease (*Neisseria meningitis*) must stay home until they are well and have proof from a physician for non-carriage.
- A child diagnosed with Hib Disease (*Hemophilus influenza*) must stay home until they are well and have proof of non-carriage.
- A child diagnosed with Chicken Pox (Skin lesions (blisters) must all be scabbed over).
- A child diagnosed with Hepatitis A may not return until one week after the illness began and the fever is resolved.
- A child with AIDS (or HIV infection) must remain out of care until the child's health, neurologic development, behavior, and immune status is deemed appropriate (on a case-by-case basis) by qualified persons, including the child's physician chosen by the parent/guardian and the center Director.

Should a child become ill and unable to remain in the classroom or become injured, the parent or guardian will be contacted. Arrangements must be made to have the child/ren picked up from the center **within thirty minutes. IF YOU KNOW YOU WILL BE UNREACHABLE ON ANY GIVEN DAY, YOU MUST PROVIDE THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE WITH AN EMERGENCY CONTACT ON YOUR DAILY SIGN-IN AND OUT SHEET.**

If the center is unable to reach the parents or guardians, we will take the following steps:

1. **Contact those persons indicated on the Emergency Section of the daily Sign-In sheet**

OR

2. **Contact persons indicated on the Emergency Information section of the child's student profile that was returned as part of the child's Enrollment Packet**

OR

3. Call the physician indicated in the child's file and follow instructions given. If the physician refuses to make a recommendation or is impossible to contact, the center will take action deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

The administrative office trusts the information supplied to us is accurate and current. Parents must notify the administrative office with any change in physician, hospital, or those to call in the event parents/guardians are unreachable.

Exclusion Policy

If a child shows signs of illness or becomes ill during the day, we will refer to our exclusion policy to determine if the child meets the criteria for exclusion or is well enough to continue staying at the center. If the child needs to be sent home, family members or designee will be contacted, and the child will be made comfortable until picked up. Upon arrival the family member or designee will need to sign a copy of the Incident/Injury/Accident/Illness/Behavior Report describing the possible illness and requirements for readmitting their child to the center.

Medication Administration Exclusion

MCELC staff members will not administer medication of any kind to children in care. Topical ointments such as sunscreen, and insect repellent are considered medications and may not be applied by staff. Please apply these common medications on your child/ren before they arrive at the center. Staff members are permitted to apply diaper rash cream to children with an accompanying written permission form. (This is the only exception to this rule). If your child requires any other medication, it should be administered prior to or after leaving the center. Parents are welcome to come to the center to administer to their own child during the day as long as the parent has previous experience with the medication being administered and is willing to stay with the child long enough to ensure to absence of adverse reactions. MCELC is not liable for any adverse reactions that may occur when medication has been administered.

Potty Training Guidelines

For staff to begin potty training, your child must be ready. Once a child is ready, the parents must begin the potty-training process at home first, at that point the staff will begin to assist in potty-training the child. The staff will bring the children who are ready to potty to the bathroom several times a day and any time the child asks to go. Each child who is ready will be encouraged to sit on the toilet for two to three minutes. If the child becomes frustrated, he/she will be taken off the toilet and their hands will be washed. Potty time should be a positive experience and children will not be scolded or criticized if they do not want to use the toilet or if they have an accident. The ability to control bladder and bowel function is as individual as the child. If you think your child is ready and he/she will not go to the toilet you should consult with your child's pediatrician or family doctor for further guidance.

For our staff to work effectively with you and your family during this transition from diapers to underwear, we need to communicate and discuss the process at every step. For example, as your child moves from diapers to pull-ups, or pull-ups to underwear, please discuss these changes with your child's teachers to ensure consistency at home and at the center.

Please remember to bring extra clothes, underwear, socks, bedding, and shoes during the potty-training process. All clothing worn during the potty-training period should be easy to pull down, beltless attire and thick underwear are optimal. Children may not attend the center without a diaper, pull-up, or underwear always on. If a child soils his/her clothes, they will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home. To prevent contamination, center policy prohibits staff from rinsing out soiled clothing. If the child does have an accident, he/she will be cleaned off and all surfaces will be disinfected. If your child does not have enough clothing on hand in case of an accident you will be called to pick up your child. Once a child is potty trained, do not send them to the center wearing diapers or pull-ups as this can set them back on their progress.

Parent Communication and Conferences

Each classroom lead teacher is the administrator for their Class DOJO, which is a website app that provides parents/guardians with a look into their child/ren's day. Your child's teacher will supply you with the information needed for accessing this site. Only parents/guardians, teaching staff and administrative staff members will have access to this site. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your child's teacher.

A daily log is sent home each day for the classes containing infants, babies, and one-year olds. This form may contain specific information about napping, eating, and diapering. Notices will be included on this form for supplies your child may need i.e., diapers, wipes, etc. or any other special needs.

Parent-teacher conferences will be conducted twice per year. Parents will be informed ahead of time of the date and time. Teachers maintain an open-door policy and value feedback, and open communication including questions and concerns you may have to form a partnership with parents/guardians.

Classroom Placement

Moving to a new classroom is a big transition for children and their families and teachers alike. Questions and a sense of apprehension are normal feelings when moving a child to a new environment. Our goal is to make class movement a positive experience for all. We are confident that, once your child/ren are through the transition period that everyone will be thankful and love their new classroom as much as their previous one.

Transitions to new classrooms are based on the individual child and based on the following:

- Development of the child – Before a child is moved, we take into consideration teacher observations, assessments based upon developmental guidelines and conversations with the parents/guardians via daily interactions and milestones discussed at parent-teacher conferences.
- Space in Classrooms – Space and ratio of child to teacher must be adhered to via licensing.
- Notice – MCELC will attempt to give your family as much notice as possible before your child will be moved. Ideally, we will let you know via verbal notification and/or email 2-4 weeks prior to the movement. Please note, we have taken into consideration all of the above-mentioned factors to make the best decision for each individual child and the center as a whole.
- Communication – We encourage parent/guardian feed-back. This can be a sensitive time and we want to make it a positive change for all.
- The final decision to move children into another class is up to the administration of the MCELC. It is our hope that the above information gives you confidence in the way decisions are made, knowing that we want to celebrate your child/ren growing and learning with us!

Electronic Devices

All activities involving electronic devices, including videos, handheld devices, etc., shall not be available to children under the age of two and will never be allowed without the guidance of a staff member. All video games and/or videos will be age-appropriate and used in corporation with educational purposes only and used/viewed for no longer than 30 minutes. Children in our center have no access to television programming.

MCELC adheres to the following policies mandated by Louisiana Licensing:

- Programs, movies, and video games with violent or adult content, including but not limited to soap operas, television news, and sports programs aimed at audiences other than children, shall not be permitted in the presence of children.
- All television, video, DVD, or other programming shall be suitable for the youngest child present.
- “PG” programming or its television equivalent shall not be shown to children under age five.
- Any programming with a rating more restrictive than “PG” is prohibited.
- All video games shall be suitable for the youngest child with access to the games.
- “T” and “M” rated games are prohibited.

Alcohol/Tobacco/Illegal Substance Policy

MCELC prohibits the use of alcohol and the use of and/or possession of unauthorized and/or potentially toxic substances, firearms, pellet, or BB guns (loaded or unloaded) in the center, the playground area, the gymnasium, or any center sponsored space or event.

MCELC prohibits the use of tobacco in any form in the center, the playground, the gymnasium, or any center sponsored space or event.

Photography Policy

All parent/guardians are asked to sign a written consent form stating whether permission is granted to the center to take photographs of their child/ren. This includes/excludes the use of pictures for classroom DOJO only, or the additional possibility of adding photographs to our social media websites such as Facebook and the MCELC Website.

Throughout the year, videos and photographs are often taken of the children by center staff. Unless the administrative office is notified otherwise, photographs and videos may be used by MCELC for publication.

Guidance/Redirection

It is our belief that each child should have ample opportunity to learn class routines and expectations for their behavior. Our goal is to build positive self-esteem and confidence in children and provide a positive and nurturing environment for the children. Our classroom staff communicate clearly to the children the specific expectations they desire to see displayed in the child's classroom. We believe that on-going communication between classroom staff and home is of vital importance in the ongoing education of the children. Parents will be kept informed of their child's behaviors. Consistency and encouragement between center staff and home are often the most important keys to learning appropriate behavior.

Teaching staff will use positive reinforcement and model appropriate behavior and manners, showing respectful behavior toward all children and staff members they encounter throughout their day. Behaviors which keep the child and others safe are of great importance. Children are encouraged to express their feelings through words and to make appropriate behavior choices.

Our staff will:

- Use a soft and reassuring voice.
- Establish clearly stated classroom rules.
- Redirect the children to an alternate activity when conflicts arise.
- Use natural consequences to help children become responsible for their behavior.
- Encourage the children to work through their problems and help them to identify solutions and to use words to solve them.
- Always treat all children with respect and kindness.
- Plan activities in advance.

Our staff will never:

- Allow a child or group of children to discipline another child, nor shall any child ever be placed out of sight of the group.
- Use physical punishment or associate food, rest, or toileting with punishment.
- Ridicule or laugh at children.
- Be out of sight of a staff member when removed from the group for disciplinary reasons.

Redirection strategies are often used to avoid inappropriate behavior. Redirection means providing an explanation of an appropriate behavior while removing the child from a situation and engaging the child in a quiet activity (such as puzzle or book) reinforcing a more acceptable behavior.

Discipline strategies may include a short separation from the group or loss of a privilege. Time outs are limited to one minute per age of the child and are only utilized for children two years of age and older. The teaching staff will always discuss the child's inappropriate behavior before the child is returned to the group setting.

Children who continue with inappropriate behaviors may have a staff request a formal parent conference with the teaching staff and/or Director when necessary. In severe behavior cases a referral request for parent intervention or counseling may be suggested. **In extreme cases a parent may be contacted to come and address their child's behavior at the center.**

In rare cases of extremely aggressive or inappropriate behavior, a child may be sent home to avoid possible harm to the child or others. Repeated occurrences of aggressive or inappropriate behavior may be grounds for the dissolution of the contract with MCELC and will result in involuntary dismissal of the child.

In accordance with Louisiana Department of Education's Bulletin 137 Minimum Standards, children shall not be subject to any of the following:

- Physical or corporal punishment which includes but is not limited to yelling, slapping, spanking, yanking, shaking, pinching, exposure to extreme temperatures or other measures producing physical pain, putting anything in the mouth of a child, requiring a child to exercise, or placing a child in an uncomfortable position.
- Verbal abuse, which includes but is not limited to using offensive or profane language, telling a child to "shut up," or making derogatory remarks about children or family members of children in the presence of children.
- The threat of a prohibited action even if there is no intent to follow through with the threat.
- Being disciplined by another child.
- Being bullied by another child.
- Being deprived of food or beverages.
- Being restrained by devices such as highchairs or feeding tables for disciplinary purposes
- Having active play time withheld for disciplinary purposes, except timeout may be used during active play time from an infraction incurred during the playtime.

Biting Policy

Children biting other children is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors within a group childcare setting. Biting can occur without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses from the biter, the victim, the parents/guardians, and the caregivers involved.

For many children, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Children at this age are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not.

Prevention:

- Set up a challenging yet safe environment that is age appropriate.

- Set clear rules that are consistently enforced.
- If an individual child is “biting”, a staff member will try to stay within arm’s reach of the child.
- Briefly separate the child from the group during times when no one can shadow the child.
- Give the biter something more appropriate to do or offer something that can be bitten.

If a bite occurs:

- Attend immediately to the injured child. Move the child who did the biting to another area where someone can watch him/her.
- Wash the area gently with soap and water. If a bite breaks the skin, the area will be covered with a Band-Aid. The center will recommend that a parent/guardian follow-up with their child’s pediatrician.
- Parents/guardians are contacted when their child bites. Parents/guardians are contacted when their child is bitten. Parents/guardians may be asked to pick up the child/ren, depending upon the severity of the bite.
- The Incident/Injury/Accident/Illness/Behavior Report will be completed for the child who bit and one for the child who was bitten and both children’s parents/guardians will be notified. This form will be maintained in the administrative office upon completion by staff member and signed by parent/guardian at pick up time.
- Once the injured child is settled down, comforted, and all first aid measures are complete, it is time to attend to the child that did the biting. (If two staff members are working together this can be done simultaneously).
- Tell the child, “No biting! Biting hurts! Teeth are for eating food, not for hurting our friends!”
- Give time and attention to the child who did the biting as they probably feel very needy as well after their loss of control.
- If a child continues to bite, a conference will be held with parents/guardians and staff members.

- If, after having a conference, the biting continues and the staff feel the child's behavior is not safe for the classroom environment, parents/guardians will again be contacted. This may be grounds for the dissolution of the contract to provide care for the child and could result in involuntary dismissal of the child.

Accident and Incident Policy

In addition to biting reports, all accidents and incidents will also have written reports filled out by staff members, reviewed by administrative staff, and signed off by parents/guardians. Incident/Injury/Accident/Illness/Behavior reports will always be filled out by staff members if your child is injured in our care. Incident/Injury/Accident/Illness/Behavior reports will be filled out if your child injures another child in a manner other than biting.

If the accident or incident is minor the report will be prepared and available for review when you pick up your child. You will be notified of any injury from the neck and above right away and the Incident/Injury/Accident/Illness/Behavior report will be available for you to sign at pick up.

The center will notify parents/guardians as soon as possible in the event of any serious or significant accident or incident involving your child/ren. If the Director or Associate Director determine that a child needs medical attention due to an accident occurring at the center, a staff member will let you know this information during the initial contact via phone call and by written Incident/Injury/Accident/Illness/Behavior report. An accident or injury caused by a staff member, will result in a Critical Incident Report being sent to LDOE Licensing and followed up with a report to DCFS.

Touching Policy

Physical touch is an important part of the care and nurturing of young children. Children feel loved, accepted, and supported through the sensations of touch by nurturing adults and peers. However physical touch should be respectful of children's body cues and only occur with their permission. Staff members are sensitive to children's responses and requests for physical interaction, and model appropriate nurturing touches. With the exception for cleaning, children will always have the right to refuse touch.

- Nurturing touch is necessary for every child's emotional growth. Affectionate nurturing touch includes hugging, holding on a lap, rocking, carrying, rubbing, or patting backs.
- Personal care touch includes cleaning, dressing, and naptime routines, and is done in a gentle and respectful manner. It will also include face and hand washing, assisting with toileting, examining rashes and unusual marks, nose blowing, and assisting with clothing changes. Genital areas are touched gently for the purposes of cleansing only. First aid is administered as gently as possible and always accompanied by the verbal explanation of what is happening and appropriate comfort.

- Physical interaction is used only to protect the safety of children and staff or to provide the least restrictive guidance necessary in each situation. Children are taught, through modeling and verbal guidance, to use words rather than physical actions to settle their differences with others.

Referrals for Evaluation or Additional Support Related to Behavior

All children continue to learn and grow, in some cases a child may need intentional planning on the part of the parents/guardians, staff members and administration to meet specific and appropriate developmental goals. It is the desire of MCELC to work together with families that may require the use of outside assessment and/or evaluation and support services that best meet their child's needs. Our hope is that all parties work together in a timely, good-faith effort. If a child's needs or agreed upon goals are not met, it may become necessary for a family to find a more appropriate child-care setting for their child. Decisions of this nature will be made with sensitivity with input from the classroom staff members, the Director and possibly the MCELC Advisory Board and always with the best interests of the child.

If a child has consistent difficulty with a particular behavior (such as hitting, biting, or any special need which requires a lower staff/child ratio), we will work together with parents to resolve the issue. This means that we will have an open, direct two-way communication in which we discuss the issues related to the behavior as it occurs at the center as well as at home.

After reasonable accommodations have been tried and the child is still unable to be successful in the classroom, the Director may require parents to meet for a conference to discuss problem solving strategies. During this meeting, we will provide you with written documentation of the concerns and we will work with you to establish written goals for resolving those concerns.

We reserve the right to ask you to have your child evaluated by a developmental specialist and establish a behavior management plan. This plan may be a prerequisite for your child to remain enrolled at MCELC. Should classroom concerns not be resolved by either reasonable accommodations along with the behavior plan, we reserve the right to ask the family to secure another program for their child/ren.

We have a responsibility to provide a safe and high-quality early learning environment for all the children in our care and expect that all parents/guardians will work closely with our staff members to resolve problems of this kind. The decisions we make are based on the best interest of each child in our care.

Child Safety Policy

The administrative staff along with all classroom staff members have a vital interest in the safety and well-being of all the children in care at the MCELC. Procedures are in place for all staff members to respond to events covered by the policy listed below. It is recommended that the first point of contact for a parent regarding any issue that may fall under child safety is the classroom lead teacher. MCELC will strictly follow state law as it relates to confidentiality and to mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

As mandated reporters, all administrative office personnel and classroom staff members shall report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child in accordance with LA RS 14:403 to the Louisiana Child Protection Statewide Hotline (855) 4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437). The local protection phone number is 504-680-9000. MCELC will follow this policy and report any suspected abuse to the proper authorities. We do not require staff members to report suspected abuse or neglect to the administrative office prior to reporting concerns to the Child Protection Statewide Hotline.

Complaints

We encourage all parents/guardians and staff members to keep an open line of communication with their child/ren's classroom teachers regarding any issues, questions, or concerns that arise. By keeping an open dialog with teaching staff, our goal would be to resolve issues in a quick and effective manner. If parents/guardians feel that their questions or concerns are not resolved with the classroom staff members, you are welcome to schedule an appointment with the Director. If the Director cannot satisfactorily solve the problem, parents/guardians may send an email to the MCELC Board of Directors stating their concerns. Our hope is that together we all work as a team, keeping all lines of communication open and to resolve all issues in the early stages.

If parents/guardians have significant unresolved licensing related complaints, they may call or email the following:

State of Louisiana
LDOE Division of Licensing
Bureau of Licensing and Quality Assurance
lde@la.gov
P.O. Box 4249
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
225-342-9905

Confidentiality and Security of Files

Mid-City Early Learning Center will maintain confidentiality and security of our files.

- All children's files will be always locked in the administrative office and/or Director's office. Only administrative personnel and the Director shall have access to the files.
- The records are the property of the center, and the Director, as the custodian shall secure records against loss, tampering with or unauthorized use. The files will not be released to anyone without written parental/guardian permission to do so or as required by authorized state and federal agencies.
- MCELC will maintain confidentiality of all children's records. Employees of the center will not disclose or knowingly permit disclosure of any information concerning a child or his/her family, directly or indirectly, to any unauthorized person.
- MCELC will obtain written informed consent from the parent/guardian prior to releasing any information or photographs from which the child might be identified, except as required by authorized state and federal agencies.

Emergency Closings and Evacuations

Mid-City Early Learning Center has a comprehensive Emergency Procedures Guide that includes shelter-in-place, lock down, and evacuation procedures.

Center Campus Emergency:

The center will evacuate to Christian Brothers located at 4601 Cleveland Avenue in the event of an emergency evacuation during the school day. The center will evacuate with all staff, all children and supplies including the centers evacuation pack that includes all children's emergency information. Parents/guardians will be notified of the center's location through the CallMultiplier System (our Emergency Notification System).

In the event of a city-wide emergency that requires center closing and/or evacuation, the center will communicate evacuation, center closing, center re-opening information to parents/guardians through all available means, including telephone (voicemail and/or text message) via CallMultiplier system, email, and the center's website. In the event of the center closing or evacuation, parents/guardians should make every effort to check the center's website as well as their voicemail, text messages, and email for center updates. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure the center has up to date contact information.

In the event of a center or citywide evacuation during the school day, MCELC will contact parents/guardians. In the event the parents/guardians cannot be reached, MCELC will use the information listed on family's emergency forms to contact all relatives/friends authorized to pick-up children. MCELC will require all individuals to show photo identification before releasing child/ren to them. MCELC will evacuate with the program's evacuation pack which includes all children's information and will use all available means listed above to inform families of the MCELC location and contact information.

Extreme Weather Conditions Closures

There may be occasions when the center will need to close or be closed due to extreme weather forecast predictions. As of September 2019, parents/guardians will be notified via voicemail and or text message through the CallMultiplier system. All weather-related information will be posted on the MCELC website. If the event occurs while the center is open, the staff members will remain with the children until it is safe for you to pick them up.

Emergency Preparedness <http://www.louisianabelieves.com>

MCELC, as mandated by Louisiana State Licensing, conducts monthly fire drills. Tornado drills are conducted in March, April, May, and June.

A disaster plan is in place in the event of the following:

- Evacuation of the Center
- Fire
- Flood
- Shelter in Place
- Center Lockdown

The disaster plan is reviewed with all center staff twice per calendar year. The Director reviews the plan annually and updates as changes occur.

General Curriculum and Program Considerations

In preparing the center's curriculum, center staff take into consideration the following professional standards.

- Standards required for the licensing of day nurseries/day care centers published by the State of Louisiana Department of Education.

- Our teaching staff members are committed to the on-going development of children in and out of the classrooms. Each lead teacher in the individual classrooms write their own lesson plans, specific to their age group, Lessons are based on two-week thematic units that include references to the corresponding Goal and Objective from the Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers.
- As MCELC is a ministry of Canal Street Church, preschoolers will be introduced to stories from the Bible as part of their curriculum.
- To provide children with a quality program, the teaching staff will provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials that are selected to emphasize concrete experiential learning and to achieve the following goals:
 1. Promote confidence and self-esteem.
 2. Refine social skills.
 3. Stimulate children to think, reason, question, and experiment.
 4. Further language development.
 5. Practice physical skills such as running, jumping, and balancing.
 6. Increase small muscle competence using beads, blocks, puzzles, and other small manipulatives.
 7. Foster exploration of sensory materials and creative expression.
 8. Help children learn patience and restraint.
 9. Encourage and demonstrate sound health, safety, and nutritional practices.
- Every day the teaching staff members implement lesson plans that address the needs and interests of the children enrolled at the MCELC.

Child and Staff Ratios

MCELC Mandated Classroom Ratios are as follows:

- Infants: 5:1
- One Year Old's: 7:1
- Two- and Three-Year Old's: 10:1 & 13:1

In many cases, square footage of MCELC classroom space takes precedence to state ratios, dictating fewer students be enrolled for that space. As our center grows, the ages of enrolled children will continue to transition. Current ratios for classrooms will be updated and posted in each classroom and will always comply with state ratios.

Additional Program Considerations

- **Physical Environment:** The indoor and outdoor environments foster growth and development through opportunities to explore and learn. The indoor and outdoor areas are kept clean, safe, attractive, and as spacious as possible within the confines of the physical building.
- **Health and Safety:** The health and safety of children and adults is protected and enhanced. Each adult in the center should be free of physical and psychological conditions that might have a detrimental effect on the children's health.
- **Staff Qualifications and Development:** Each member of the staff shall be a competent and reliable person of good moral character, who is mentally, physically, and emotionally able to assume his or her responsibilities. Each member shall be equipped with continuing education and training, (a minimum of 12 clock hours per calendar year), health and safety training, (a minimum of 3 clock hours per year), skills, and experience to provide for proper training and development of children.
- All personnel shall conduct themselves in a manner that is professionally appropriate.
- In accordance with the Louisiana Early Learning Licensing Regulations, all employees must be determined eligible for childcare services based on the results of each person's CCCBCS (Child Care Civil Background Check System).

Components for the background check are as follows:

1. A request for a fingerprint-based search of the Louisiana criminal history information record.
2. A request for a fingerprint-based search of the federal criminal history information record.
3. A request to DCFS to search the Louisiana state central registry of child abuse and neglect.
4. A search of the Louisiana sex offender and child predator registry.

5. A search of the national sex offender registry, as required by 45 CFR 98.43 (b)(2); and
6. A request for a search of the name-based state criminal history information record, state sex offender registry, and state registry of child abuse and neglect in each state where the person resided in the past five years, as required by 45 CFR 98.43.43(b)(3).

In the situation where an employee is deemed provisionally eligible by the State of Louisiana, pending paperwork, the following will be enacted:

- Provisional Employment for all Staff Members at MCELC
 1. A center may provisionally employ as a staff member, a person for whom it has requested a CCCBC-based determination of eligibility for childcare purposes, and for whom the department has received a satisfactory fingerprint-based Louisiana or federal criminal history information record, pending the department's receipt of the other CCCBC results and determination of the person's eligibility for childcare purposes.
 2. A provisionally employed staff member may be counted in the child to staff ratios but must be monitored at all times in accordance with the following.
 - a. A monitor of a provisionally employed staff member must be an adult staff member for whom the center has a CCCBC-based determination of the eligibility for child-care purposes, (or prior to October 1, 2018, a satisfactory CBC), who is designated by the center to monitor a specific provisionally employed staff member.
 - b. The center must designate a monitor for each provisionally employed staff member at the center.
 - c. The monitor shall be always physically present at the center when the provisionally employed staff member is present at the center.
 - d. Monitors must remain within close enough physical proximity of their designated provisionally employed staff members to be able to intervene at any time if intervention is needed.

- e. A monitor shall perform at least one visual observation of each provisionally employed staff member every 30 minutes.
 - f. The center may designate one monitor for up to a maximum of five provisionally employed staff members at any given time.
 - g. At least one monitor must be always physically present in any room during naptimes if a provisionally employed staff member is present.
3. The center shall have log or other written documentation of the monitoring of provisionally employed staff members that identify each provisionally employed staff member, the designated monitor for each, and the times of the visual observations.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with 45 CFR 98.43, R.S. 15:587, and R.S. 407.42.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, LR 44:253 (February 2018), effective March 1, 2018.

- Staff development shall be conducted in a systematic, ongoing path that includes evaluations shared with the staff member in a conference with the Director and documented in confidential files.

Daily Schedules

Schedules are designed to be flexible so the individual child's needs can be met as well as those of the whole group. All schedules include the following elements:

- Balance between active and quiet play.
- More than one option for group activity (small, large, or individual).
- Balance of large and small muscle activities.
- Balance of child-initiated and staff-initiated activities.
- All groups play outdoors or in the gymnasium daily, dependent upon the weather.

Daily Schedule Sample

Following is a daily schedule like the one that will be followed in our classrooms for infants and above. Your child/ren's schedule may vary from the one below and can be found posted in your child/ren's classroom and the foyer area. The establishment of routine is important in creating a secure and predictable environment for young children. If a major change to your child/ren's schedule is going to occur, the classroom staff members will inform you ahead of time, via DOJO, newsletter, email and/or text message or daily note home. State regulations require infants to be on their own individual feeding, napping and play schedule. Our infant teaching staff welcome input from parents/guardians regarding their child's best schedule. Please refer to each classroom's individual schedules.

Example:

- 7:30 – 8:00 A.M. – Drop off/Handwashing/Health Check/Free Play
- 8:15 A.M. – Breakfast
- 9:00 A.M. – Diaper Changes
- 9:30 A.M. – Storytime/Art
- 10:00 A.M. – Centers/Circle Time
- 10:30 A.M. – Outside Play (weather permitting)
- 11:00 A.M. – Handwashing/Lunch
- 11:45 A.M. – Music/Nap
- 2:00 P.M. – Diaper Changes/Storage of Cots
- 2:30 P.M. – Snack
- 2:50 P.M. – Art Time/Centers
- 3:30 P.M. – Outside Play (weather permitting)
- 3:30 P.M. – Table Activities
- 4:00 P.M. – Free Play
- 5:30 P.M. – Center Closes/Final Pick-Up

What to Send and What Not to Send to the Center

Parents are responsible for supplying the following:

All Children:

- Extra clothing (in a zip lock bag). Two extra changes are recommended. Please ensure that these clothes are appropriate for the time of year.
- Family photo to personalize the classroom.

Younger Children/Infants:

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Diaper Ointment if applicable together with a signed Diaper Ointment permission form.
- Swaddles or Sleep Sacks
- Breastmilk/premixed formula in separate bottles. All bottles must be labeled with your child's name. All bottles must be pre-made by the parent/guardians.
- Labeled baby foods/snacks if applicable.
- If a pacifier is needed, it must be labeled and cannot be on a ribbon or cord.
- Older babies are eligible to eat the center meals and snacks if the parent chooses and/or may supply their own food or snacks
- Sippy Cups (older babies)
- Cloth Nap Mats (if transitioned to sleep mats)
- Soft sole, close toed shoes for daily wear (No sandals)
- Other items may be needed at different times during the year, your child/ren's teachers will keep you informed.

MCELC provides crib sheets and burp cloths

Older Children-Ages One to Three

- Individual Cups
- Diapers if applicable

- Wipes if applicable
- Diaper ointment and signed ointment permission form if applicable
- Tote bag or backpack
- Soft sole, close toed shoes for daily wear (No sandals)
- Soft toy to sleep with
- Cloth Nap Mats
- Pacifiers if needed are only allowed at naptime, they may not be on a ribbon or cord and must have child's name on it.
- No bottles
- Other items may be needed at different times during the year, your child/ren's teachers will keep you informed.

Please ensure that your child's name is on all his/her personal items.

Please **DO NOT** send the following:

- Any food items containing nuts
- Gum and candy
- Toys from home (We encourage this because it can lead to loss, breakage and sharing problems. If it is not necessary for your child/ren's sense of security, please leave these items at home)
- Valuable clothing that cannot be replaced

Your First Day at MCELC

We want the days leading up to your child/ren's first day in care at MCELC to be positive, smooth, and special. Here are some tips and information to make your transition the best that it can be!

WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOUR FIRST DAY:

- **COME MEET US!** You are welcome to stop by and make yourselves comfortable before your first day. You are invited to meet the classroom teachers and your child/ren's new friends. This will create an opportunity for you and your child/ren to familiarize yourselves with their new surroundings before their first full day.

- **TALK ABOUT US!** Bring up your child/ren's new 'school' in conversation! Countdown until their first day: "In three more days you get to go to your new school!" Make a paper chain with a countdown to the number of "sleeps" and place on the bathroom mirror for them to look at while they brush their teeth at night. Mention their child/ren's teachers names. Let them ask and answer questions (if they can talk!). Say a prayer for their new teachers and friends, and know we are praying for you!
- **ESTABLISH A ROUTINE:** Give your child/ren and your family a few days or a week to adjust to new bed and waking times. Especially on the first day, make time to arrive a little early so you have extra time for good-byes, answering any questions and getting your little ones settled in. For older children, give them an idea of what their day will look like. "We will wake up, get dressed, pack your backpack, and then drive to school...etc." Be as detailed as possible about what will happen at school. After pick-up on the first few days, make time for extra bonding to talk about their day.
- **TRUST YOUR CHILD'S CARE GIVERS:** Our teachers will communicate with you frequently about your child's day. Notes may be sent home, connect via the class DOJO, and watch for emails from the administrative office. We are always receptive to any questions and concerns you may have so don't hesitate to request a time to visit!
- **CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL:** Arrive on time, be respectful of all center staff members and families you may meet. Communicate the needs of your child/ren with the appropriate classroom teaching staff and or administrative personnel. If there is discord in communication with any staff members, please direct your concerns to the Director via email and/or text requesting a meeting. Be respectful of all rules within this Parent Handbook. Be mindful of our 5:30 p.m. pick up time, as our license only allows our center to have children on the premises to that time. Picking up any child after 5:30 p.m. will be assessed a late fee beginning at 5:31 p.m. as this puts the MCELC license at risk. Teachers will give you a list of rules and expectations for their classroom.

Meal Policy/Nutrition

Nutritional Information/Menus

Food and beverages from home will be allowed but should be nutritious and meet the guidelines of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The center serves a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack daily, with an emphasis on whole grains, USDA approved meats and produce. We follow a monthly posted menu of which you will receive a copy at the beginning of each month. MCELC follows the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) guidelines. For children over one year of age our meals are prepared by an in-house chef. We will make every effort to accommodate children with food allergies within reasonable means. If posted menu items pose a risk to your child/ren or you would like vegetarian meals, please let the Director and administrative office personnel know so that special arrangements can be made. At this time, meals and snacks are incorporated into your tuition fees.

Parents of infants under one year of age are required to provide pre-mixed, pre-filled bottles that are labeled with child's first and last name. Baby food and bottles are stored in the classroom refrigerator. **Please do not require your infant's teacher to be the first person to introduce a new food to your child, as adverse reactions and allergies can be unknown.** Once your child is accustomed to a new food, your child's staff members are happy to introduce it in the classroom.

Breakfast is served at 8:15 A.M. and ends at 8:45 A.M.

Children arriving after 8:45 A.M. need to eat breakfast at home

Lunch is served by 11:15 A.M. and ends at 11:45 A.M.

Snack is served by 2:00 P.M. and ends at 2:30 P.M.

Physical Activity/Outdoor Policy

All children are provided with a time and space for age-appropriate physical activity either in the playground, the gymnasium, or with play in the classroom that promotes gross-motor skills for at least one-to-two-hour total per day. Because children need exercise and fresh air, they will go outside once or twice a day as weather permits. We believe that if children are well enough to attend the center, they are well enough to play outdoors. **We will not keep a child indoors at parental request.**

Our older children are given an opportunity to have a combination of physical activities that are both child-led and teacher-led.

Dependent upon the weather, all children one year of age and older will spend from 15-minutes to one hour or more per day outdoors. Children under two years of age will play outside in the playground at the discretion of the staff members. Babies in our Infant to older babies' classes may on occasion engage in walks with the staff strapped into our six-seat stroller. **Due to the increase in crime, stroller rides have been suspended until further notice.**

It is necessary that children have freedom of movement, it is imperative that children are dressed accordingly, and must wear soft soled, closed toe shoes and socks. Children are encouraged to explore their environment so they may become rumpled and messy at times. There needs to be a labeled, full set of extra clothing in the classroom always.

In the event of a water-play activity outside, staff members will give advance notice via lesson plan, note and/or Class DOJO.

Naptime Policy

We provide for a balance of active and quiet play throughout our daily planned schedules, a planned nap period is included in the daily routine. For children ages one and older this rest period is planned after lunch. Children burn a tremendous amount of energy and need to have as much time as possible to relax. Though they do not have to sleep, they are provided with a relaxing atmosphere. **Children under the age of four shall have a minimum of an hour and fifteen minutes of rest time per day.**

Infants:

- Infants sleep in their own labeled cribs and at their own schedules.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate with the staff members as to their child's regular sleep patterns.
- Infants must be placed on their backs to sleep. As infants grow older and roll on their own, this is the only time an infant will be on their stomachs. All infants will be started out on their backs to sleep.
- Swaddles and/or sleep sacks are to be supplied by the parents/guardians for the warmth of their infant. No blankets are allowed in cribs.
- Bottles are not allowed in cribs.

Children One Year of Age and Older:

- Toddlers are provided a vinyl nap mat for sleep
- Parents/Guardians provide roll-up mat and/or blanket to accommodate rest time.
- Refer to individual classroom daily schedule for rest time.
- Children ages one and above may not have bottles at nap time.

Children Ages Two and Above:

- As children get older, they may need less time for daytime sleep, however, rest-time is required for all children. Sleep is not required during this time but is encouraged by creating a comfortable, quiet environment.

- Parents/guardians of older children are to provide a cloth roll-up mat.

All parents/guardians are required to take home their child/ren's bedding every Friday and/or last day of the week to be laundered and returned to the center on Monday and/or the first day in care of the following week.

Special Needs Policy

MCELC does not discriminate against children with special needs, we welcome them into our classrooms if we can fully meet their individual needs. Close communication between parents/guardians and teaching staff is essential to providing high quality care for all children. To stay within our allocated ratio patterns, we may not be able to provide additional staffing for your child.

If we feel that a child needs an evaluation for extra help, we will make recommendations to parents/guardians. If your child has been identified special needs, we will need to meet regularly.

Through close communication and conferences, we will work together to determine if we can provide the care needed or if we can assist you in finding an alternative arrangement for more appropriate care.

Outside Services

Parents/guardians may contract with outside tutors and resource professionals, if necessary, for sessions to be held during the day. Written requests via email or text must be submitted to the MCELC Director. Prior to receiving access to your child in the MCELC facility, all outside tutors or resource professionals must submit a driver's license, a copy of their professional license, and a right to review a copy of their criminal background check. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify tutors or resource professionals directly if their child will not be in attendance on any given day when services are rendered.

Assessment Policy

MCELC uses a variety of assessments to gain an accurate picture of each child's development. As children progress in the center, staff members detail progress on the children's physical, social-emotional, language and cognitive development. These are compiled from continual observation and interaction by teachers in each child's classroom.

Checklists are completed twice a year, providing information on how a child is progressing based on his/her chronological age. If needed, parents/guardians will be referred for developmental screening and/or diagnostic assessment. All teaching staff are trained in child development with continuing staff development each calendar year.

As teachers observe and interact with the children, they reflect on how each child is progressing from one developmental stage to the next or how they might be acquiring a specific skill. The goal of all assessments is to support the learning opportunities and experiences for the individual child. All assessment information is gathered with the general goal of understanding the children's development and helping them move to the next level. Program improvements are developed from assessment activities and teachers determine what is working and what areas of the program need to be improved or adapted.

Assessments are shared formally during a Parent/Teacher Conference scheduled twice yearly, in the fall and spring.

Parent and Family Relations

Open Door Policy

We encourage you to visit our center at any time and to participate in any of the special events that we plan for the children. Whenever possible we love it when parents/guardians share their talents and family culture with our children. Parents are allowed to visit the center at any time during the normal hours of operation and children are present.

Throughout the year we will provide two or more opportunities for family members and staff members to attend events hosted by MCELC. Parents/Guardians will be notified through various channels for family events related to holiday celebrations, parent/teacher conferences, or special events. This is one way we show our commitment to allowing children the desire to learn and share their love and creativity.

All staff members are here to serve by providing the best early care and learning environment possible for all the children in our center. If you ever have comments, questions, or suggestions about our center please do not hesitate to bring them to our attention. Feedback is always welcome!

Communication Guidelines

For messages concerning MCELC to be received requiring action to be taken, the center has developed some guidelines which may save time and frustration and speed up the action process. We realize that from time-to-time questions or problems may arise, it is crucial for the well-being of the children in our care that we resolve these difficulties as soon as they arise. MCELC values your opinion and input, and we strive to understand your point of view. If at any time we do not meet your needs or expectations, we have a system in place that will enable us to address your concerns most effectively.

First speak with the staff member most directly involved. It is important to maintain communication with your child's teaching staff and the center's administrative personnel. This makes any negotiations more efficient.

If matters are not resolved in this manner, you may request to speak to the MCELC Director, and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss your concerns.

If the issue remains unresolved, a meeting may be arranged with the Director's Supervisor and/or the MCELC Board of Directors.

At all times conferences should be informal, friendly, and relaxed.

Concerns over policy matters, major concerns with the curriculum, conflicts with administrative personnel and/or teaching staff, or anything that one believes to be detrimental to the center should be discussed with the MCELC Director.

Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement is crucial to our success. Here are just a few suggestions for you to consider!

- Participation in Fundraisers
- Serve on our ELC Advisory Board
- Daily volunteerism inside or outside of the classroom
- Talk to your child daily about his/her day.
- Read the weekly/monthly lesson plans to be aware of special themes or concepts.
- Make plans to attend special events such as parties or holidays.
- Share your talents and time with us! Play a musical instrument, read a story, help facilitate an art project with the class.
- Share your family's culture with us by sharing music, stories, special food, etc. with the children.

We encourage as much participation as possible. Please feel free to visit and take part in activities whenever possible. Just let us know what your plans are ahead of time.

Birthday Celebrations

We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays! Please feel free to bring a special treat to the classroom on your child's birthday. Please let your child's teacher know well ahead of time which day you would like to bring treats. If another child is already celebrating a birthday that day, you may be asked to pick another date.

Specific birthday practices vary slightly, so please contact your child's teacher for details. In general, the teachers prefer the celebration take place during regular snack time.

Please do not send party hats, treat bags, balloons, or other party favors as these can become choking hazards. Please save entertainment for out-of-center celebrations.

Other Celebrations

During the year, we celebrate many special days, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras. If your family has additional celebrations that you would like to share with the children, please let the classroom teachers know. We especially like it when families share their own cultures with the children. If there are special items needed for holiday celebrations, you will be notified via class note sent home and/or DOJO notice and/or email from the administrative office.

Holiday Schedule

MCELC will be closed for one or more days (but are not limited to) the following holidays. There will be additional closures for professional development of all staff members at various times throughout the year. Regular rates are applicable during all center closings. Parents will receive reminders of days in which the center will be closed throughout the year.

- Winter Break – Christmas through New Years
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Mardi Gras
- Holy Thursday & Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Memorial Day
- Summer Break – Week of July 4th
- Labor Day
- Parent-Teacher Conferences – Spring & Fall
- Thanksgiving Break
- Teacher Professional Development Days

EXACT DATES WILL BE ON YOUR YEARLY SCHOOL CALENDAR ISSUED IN AUGUST FOR THE COMING YEAR. ANY CHANGES THAT MAY ARISE IN BETWEEN, YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED VIA NOTE SENT HOME AND/OR DOJO AND/OR EMAIL FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE.

Parent and Visitor Code of Conduct

In keeping with MCELC's goal of providing an environment in which children are safe to grow and develop, we require that all adults on Canal Mosaic Church premises behave respectfully, courteously, and decently. In accepting a place for your child at our center, as a parent/guardian you agree to refrain from the following:

- Swearing/Cursing: No adult is permitted to use inappropriate language on church/center property, whether in the presence of the child/ren or not. At no time should such language be directed at staff members.
- Threatening language: Threats of any kind will not be tolerated and will be reported to the proper authorities.
- Physical/Verbal punishment of children at the center: Corporal punishment is not permitted at the center. Parents/guardians must refrain from disciplining a child that is not their own. If parents/guardians are concerned that a child is behaving inappropriately, they should notify the Director as soon as possible.
- Cell phone use: Please do not use your cell phone in the center or when dropping off and/or picking up children and utilizing designated drop off zones for the MCELC. While in the center, your child needs your full attention as they transition from your care to ours and vice versa.

Please be advised that parents/guardians or other adults who violate this code of conduct may be banned from the center and/or church property, and the center may terminate services to the family involved.

Employment of Center Employees

Under no circumstances should parents employ center staff for outside engagements, including personal babysitting or transporting a child to and from the center. Center employees who accept such employment from parents/guardians of children enrolled at the center will be subject to discipline, including termination of employment.

Transportation Policy

MCELC will not provide transportation under any circumstances, including field trips. Center employees who provide transportation will be subject to discipline, including termination.

