



Early Learning Family Handbook

Early Learning Center & Hoosier Hills Childcare Center 2022-2023 School Year

Contact Us

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MCCSC Early Learning Philosophy

Young children learn best through active exploration in an environment that is rich in materials and opportunities to converse, socialize, work, play, and negotiate with peers and teachers. Teachers plan learning experiences to encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving in an atmosphere of warmth, affection, and respect for each child. Teachers strive to get to know children, and plan curriculum based on children's interests in a way that is culturally relevant and appropriate to the developmental ability of each child. Children have the opportunity to work individually or collaboratively and are actively involved in daily experiences that include foundational concepts in math, science, social studies, creative art, language arts, music, movement and dramatic play. All aspects of children's growth and development are considered – intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and creative.

All MCCSC Early Learning programs are inclusive programs. We believe that children thrive when they are embraced as full members of the communities in which they live, including school. This means that children with and without disabilities develop, play, and learn together in classrooms, where they have access to the support required to participate in all aspects of our high-quality Early Learning programs.

MCCSC Policy 2260.01 –It is the policy of the Corporation to afford qualified students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in education, and in non-academic extracurricular services and activities sponsored by the Corporation. The Corporation will evaluate students who may need reasonable accommodations to participate to the fullest extent possible in a Corporation-sponsored activity or services. Upon a request by a qualified student with a disability to participate in any academic or non-academic activities or extracurricular services sponsored by the Corporation, the Corporation will conduct an individualized assessment of the student. The Corporation will evaluate the student based on the specific nature of the disability and the specific reasonable accommodations that student needs to participate in the Corporation-sponsored activity or service. The individual assessment will include an evaluation of whether existing policies, practices or rules may be modified to accommodate the students.

At MCCSC, our goals for children include:

- Fostering children's active curiosity and questioning
- Supporting children's growing ability to solve problems with adult support and on their own
- Developing a child's sense of initiative, persistence, and flexible thinking
- Enabling children's ability to see varying points of view
- Encouraging holistic development in all areas of learning
- Expanding intellectual growth and critical thinking
- Assisting children's ability to identify and safely express their own emotions and appropriately respond to the emotions of others

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Accidents and Injuries

All early learning staff members are trained in CPR and First Aid. Minor injuries will be treated at school and families will be notified at pick-up. If a more serious injury or accident occurs, first aid will be rendered and the family will be notified immediately to seek additional medical treatment for the child.

In the case of a medical emergency, Emergency Medical Services (911) will be contacted first, and the family immediately afterwards. Upon arrival of EMS, school personnel will defer to first responders. If necessary, EMS will transport the child to the nearest hospital for treatment.

It is vital that your child's emergency and medical information be kept up to date in their student file.

Allergies and Special Diets

Allergies and Special Diets: Families must notify administration regarding any food allergies or required special diets. A note from the child's healthcare provider will be required for their student file.

Vegetarian diets: MCCSC provides a vegetarian alternative for meals and snacks if desired. A note from the child's parent or guardian will be required for their student file.

Assessment and Screening

Child learning is assessed using the following tools:

- "Learning Beyond Paper" Progress Monitoring Tool – Infants & Toddlers
- Indiana Student Performance Readiness and Observation of Understanding Tool (ISPROUT) – Preschool & Pre-K

Assessment data is collected over the course of the entire school year by the child's classroom teachers while children are engaged in day-to-day learning activities at school. Assessment data is further informed by a family's knowledge of their child. The LBP Progress Monitoring Tool and ISPROUT assessment is used for a variety of purposes, including:

- Curriculum planning
- Informing instructional practices
- Ensuring that curriculum is meeting children's individual needs
- Overall program improvement

Staff are trained on the use of assessment tools at annual in-service trainings and throughout their formal teacher education.

Bullying

While bullying is atypical in populations of very young children, MCCSC takes the issue of bullying very seriously. Children should feel safe in every area of our programs, and teachers strive to create that environment. In addition, required supervision by sight and sound means that children are always under the eye of a watchful adult.

All MCCSC staff are trained in protocol to report instances of bullying. If you are concerned that your child is experiencing bullying, please let your child's teacher or an administrator know right away.

Challenging Behaviors - Biting

Biting is a typically developing behavior that may present itself in an older infant, toddler, or preschool classroom. Teachers work with the children in the classroom on building communication, conflict management, and social-emotional skills to help prevent physical incidents from happening. When biting incidents occur in the classroom, families of both the child who bit and the child who was bitten are notified. If biting incidents continue to occur, teachers and families will work together to identify behavior patterns and develop solutions.

Child Abuse Prevention, Detection, and Reporting

State law requires that any person, including school staff, who suspect that a child is being abused or neglected report such suspicion to Child Protective Services. All staff are trained annually on policies regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect. Procedures are as follows:

- 1) A person who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected by a person either outside or inside the school must immediately report that suspicion to the Department of Child Services (DCS).
- 2) The reporter must notify orally (in person or by phone) the head of school (or designee) that a report was made.

If a report is made concerning alleged abuse or neglect of a child by a staff member, that staff member will be placed on paid administrative leave pending investigation by the school and/or DCS. No persons with a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect will be employed or retained by the school corporation.

Communication

The Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Childcare Center use the app, "HiMama" to inform families about their child's day. Families have access to daily reports, pictures, and messaging to communicate with their child's teachers. You will receive an invitation to the "HiMama" app upon enrollment.

Curriculum

MCCSC's Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Childcare Center use multiple curricula to support learning through the Indiana Early Learning Foundations.

Creative Curriculum

The Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Childcare Center use materials from the Creative Curriculum to bolster the curriculum. These materials include ideas for planned activities and units of studies. Book studies are also included to assist in learning and development.

“Learning Beyond Paper”

The written curriculum plan, “Learning Beyond Paper” is also used as a tool to assist teachers in their classroom curriculum development. This curriculum offers child-led and play-based experiences for children in the following areas:

- STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math, Language & Literacy; Physical Development; Music & Movement; Interactive Reading (Preschool & Pre-K); Cognitive (Preschool & Pre-K)

Lesson plans will be posted for families to view in the classroom, and teachers send weekly lesson plan summaries through the “HiMama” app.

Indiana Early Learning Foundations

Indiana's Early Learning Foundations is an early learning development framework for the care and education of children from birth to age 5, and aligns with the state's K-12 academic standards. Early learning staff use the Foundations as a basis for planning the types of inquiry-based, hands-on experiences that help prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. The Foundations includes the following content areas:

- Social-Emotional Development, Math, English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Creative Arts, Physical Health & Growth, Approaches to Play & Learning

Early Intervention and Family Support Services

If your child's teaching staff suspect a potential developmental delay or other special need, they will:

- Collect observational data related to the suspected delay or need
- Meet privately with family members to discuss the concern, share documentation, and get input from the family
- Suggest steps for a more formal evaluation, if necessary, through First Steps (for children under 3) and through the school system for children 3 and older
- Support the family in moving through those steps

As the people who know your child the best, we encourage you to bring any concerns you have about your child's development to your child's teacher.

Our Monroe County community offers many resources to support families with food, housing, medical care, and other necessities for living. If you need support connecting to these resources, please see your child's teacher, your school's social worker, your school's or principal, or visit the student services page at www.mccsc.edu/page/881.

Emergency Preparedness and Procedures

In accordance with Indiana Department of Education guidelines, MCCSC has developed an emergency preparedness plan. In the event of an emergency situation, you will be notified through at least one of the following methods: phone, text message, email or "HiMama" message.

Additionally, all early learning staff are trained annually in CPR and First Aid. Children practice evacuation procedures monthly, and other emergency drills regularly.

Equal Education Opportunity

No person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to unlawful discrimination on such basis under any educational function or student activity. Education services, programs, instruction, and facilities will not be denied to anyone in Monroe County Community School Corporation as a result of race, color, religion, national origin, creed or ancestry, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran's status.

Family Conferences

Families are offered two formal teacher conferences each year, and may request additional meetings if necessary. Written reports documenting children's progress will be made available at each conference.

Informal conversations with teachers regarding child progress may occur at drop-off and pick-up times, or via email or phone. Due to supervision of students, conversations of more than a few minutes may need to be scheduled in advance.

Families are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns about the assessment process for their individual child whenever such questions or concerns arise.

Illness and Exclusion Policy

CHILDREN SHOULD **NOT** COME TO SCHOOL WITH ANY OF THE PROBLEMS LISTED BELOW:

1. Fever higher than 100° orally. Child may return to school when temperature has been normal for 24 hours without the use of medication.
2. Any inflammatory eye condition with a mucous discharge – especially redness of eyes associated with any mucous discharge, swelling, or eyes that are matted shut in the morning.
3. Any rash with open sores or blisters – unless the child has a note from the doctor stating rash is not contagious.
4. Coughs associated with fever (or profuse runny nose).
5. Sore throat in presence of elevated temperature.
6. Vomiting. Student should be vomit free for 24 hours.
7. Diarrhea with fever. Student should be diarrhea free for 24 hours.
8. Open sores that have a crusty appearance.
9. If your child has chickenpox, they may return to school when all lesions are crusted over and dry.
10. If your child has head lice, contact your school's health office. After shampooing your child's hair with medicated shampoo and removing eggs from the hair, students need to be seen by the health aide, health aide plus (LPN) or travel school nurse (RN) before returning to school. Your child may return to school after treatment if he/she has been checked by the health aide, health aide plus (LPN) or travel school nurse (RN). Your child may not ride the bus or return to school until cleared by the health aide, health aide plus (LPN) or travel school nurse (RN). MCCSC Lice guidelines may be found on the MCCSC website: <https://www.mccsc.edu/Page/3233>

For other diseases and conditions, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/>, <http://www.in.gov/isdh/>

Inclement Weather

If MCCSC schools are operating on an online learning day due to inclement weather, all early learning programs, including Hoosier Hills and the Early Learning Center are closed.

If MCCSC schools are delayed, The Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Child Care programs will open at 6:45 am (normal start time)

If MCCSC schools have an early dismissal, The Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Childcare Center will maintain normal hours, but will call families to encourage early pick up

School delays and closings are announced on the radio, on television, via MCCSC's messaging system, and on our website at www.mccsc.edu.

Infant Feeding

All infants (6 weeks-12 months) must have a current feeding plan on file and posted in their classroom. Feeding plans will be signed by the child's healthcare provider initially, and updated as needed.

From 6 weeks-12 months, meals and snacks will be provided by the families for the child. When a child turns 12 months, the child must switch to school-provided meals and snacks. Your child's teacher and center administration will work together with you and the child to provide for a smooth transition.

Insurance

Medical insurance coverage for children is the responsibility of the child's parent(s). MCCSC offers a student accident insurance policy for district children. Contact your school office for further information.

MCCSC Early Learning Discipline/Guidance Policy

The early years of a child's life are important for the development of foundational learning, including the social-emotional skills that support children getting along with one another, building friendships, and cooperating with other children and adults. Adverse behaviors are typically the result of a child's misunderstanding of how to accomplish a specific goal in a socially acceptable manner, or a child's inability to exert control over emotions. In the classroom, we support children's use of socially acceptable problem-solving skills by:

- Setting up an environment with clearly communicated expectations and rules
- Teaching problem-solving skills
- Actively supporting children's use of positive problem-solving skills in action
- Acknowledging, labeling, and accepting children's emotions
- Teaching self-calming strategies
- Redirecting children to appropriate activities

If misbehaviors become extreme, are ongoing, or putting other children or staff in danger, early learning staff will take the following steps to help the child engage safely with others:

- 1) Meet privately with the child's family to discuss the behavior concerns and to formulate a plan of action to meet the needs of the child.
- 2) Utilize school/center leadership and/or behavior specialists to observe in the classroom in order to determine the cause/function/triggers for the behavior, and to create an action plan that can be taken to minimize the causes of the behaviors. This action plan will include positive behavior strategies such as modifying the environment, or changing the daily schedule.

- 3) If the behaviors are thought to be related to a developmental delay or other special need, teachers and families will work together to seek assessment and intervention.

It is the goal of MCCSC to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. Due to the regulatory requirement to maintain specific child/staff ratios, temporary exclusion may occur if a child requires one-on-one support to maintain safety and offering such support prevents the program from meeting ratio. Permanent exclusion is only considered after all other possible interventions have been exhausted and there is agreement that removal from the program is in the best interest of the child. If it is determined that a child must be permanently excluded from the program, early learning staff will aid the family in accessing services and alternative placements.

This policy is in compliance with federal and state civil rights laws.

Medication

1. Parent/guardian will assume responsibility for delivering medications to and from school.
 - a. Medication(s) should be delivered to the school health office, where they will be kept locked and away from children.
 - b. Only medications received in their original bottles or containers with attached labels will be accepted.
 - c. Only FDA approved medications may be dispensed at school.
 - d. All medications, whether prescription or non-prescription must be clearly labeled as follows:
 - i. Name of student
 - ii. Time of administration (clock time preferable)
 - iii. Name of medication, including quantity of dose
 - iv. Name of the prescribing physician, as copied onto the label by the pharmacist if prescription medication
 - e. No more than a 30-day supply of such medication should be delivered/accepted.
 - f. The school nurse or other designated employee will check in the medication and arrange for safe keeping.
2. A written authorization from the parent/guardian will be on file in the school health office before any prescription or non-prescription medication will be administered. The written authorization may be withdrawn by the parent/guardian at any time and shall be kept on file for no longer than one year.
3. Written directions from the prescribing physician must be received by the school before any prescription drug can be administered. A copy of the directions will be kept on file.
4. With the exception of school nurses and health aides, only employees designated by the chief building administrator may administer medications, and the medication must be

administered in the presence of another adult. The school nurse will assume the responsibility or delegate the responsibility, after giving proper training, of the administration of all medications which require an injection.

5. A log of all medications administered will be maintained by school medical personnel or by the designated employee in the health office and periodically reviewed by the school nurse.

6. Emergency medications, including EpiPens, may be kept in the classroom and transported by the teaching staff wherever the child goes. Emergency medications will be kept inaccessible to children at all times.

Partnering with Families

We recognize families as their child's first and most important teachers and we view teaching as a process taken in partnership with you. To that end, we offer and encourage:

- Communication in convenient, accessible ways, including in-person and via various types of technology
- Regular sharing of information between teachers and families
- Volunteering in the classroom
- Participation in family and school events

If you need to access translation services, please contact your child's home school or center. To join MCCSC's volunteer services, please visit www.mccsc.edu/volunteer.

We recognize that despite our shared goal of supporting and educating children, it is possible that some difference of opinion or conflict may occur between staff and families. Despite any differences that occur, we are committed to maintaining a professional working relationship in the best interest of the children. When differences occur, we recommend the following steps be taken:

1. Speak to the lead teacher in your child's classroom about your concerns to see if they can be resolved directly.
2. Speak to the coordinator at your child's center or the assistant principal or principal at your child's school.

Release of Children

For the protection of the children in our care, children will only be released to those adults listed as authorized on enrollment forms.

Please be prepared to show a photo ID at pick-up time. For safety reasons, we are unable to release a child to another minor unless that minor is the child's parent.

If a court order exists barring a parent or guardian from accessing the child, please provide a copy of that court order to the office. We are legally unable to withhold a child from a legal guardian without this documentation.

“Safe Sleep” Guidelines

The Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Childcare Center practice “Safe Sleep” guidelines for infants age 6 weeks-12 months as directed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and Indiana Department of Child Services.

These guidelines require teachers to place infants on their backs to sleep in a crib (even if they can roll over.) Blankets or comfort items are not permitted in a crib.

Sleep sacks (without the swaddle or weighted attachments) and pacifiers (without attachments) are allowed.

Security and Access

All early learning programs in MCCSC are kept locked during the day. Visitors or others entering the program will be required to ring a bell and identify themselves in order to gain admission to the building.

Sunscreen, Diaper Rash Cream, and Other Preventative Products

Sunscreen, diaper rash cream, and other topical preventative products may be kept in classrooms, out of reach of children, and administered by teaching staff only with written parental permission. Products must be labeled with the child's name and must be in the original container.

Visitors

In addition to family members, the Early Learning Center and Hoosier Hills Childcare Center occasionally have visitors to their sites. Visitors include the following:

- MCCSC Employees and Administrators
- Child Care Licensing Unit
- High School and College Students
- Accrediting Agency Representatives (ex: Paths to Quality, NAEYC)

These visitors are required to sign in at the front desk and will wear identification while they are in the building.