



## Early Learning Family Handbook

### Contact Us

Monroe County Community School Corporation Office of Early Learning  
553 E. Miller Drive, Bloomington, IN 47401

Phone: 812-330-7702 | [www.MCCSC.edu/EarlyLearning](http://www.MCCSC.edu/EarlyLearning) | [earlylearning@mccsc.edu](mailto:earlylearning@mccsc.edu)

# Early Learning at MCCSC

## 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

## Curriculum

Indiana's Early Learning Foundations is an early learning development framework for the care and education of children from birth to age 5, and align 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:** Social-emotional learning in preschool aims to help children develop a strong sense of self, confidence, and to be able to identify and express emotions. Preschool teachers focus on helping children gain impulse control, planning skills, and emotional regulation. In addition, teachers and children work on forming positive relationships and handling conflict in appropriate ways.
- **MATH:** Early math experiences support children as they gain a foundational understanding of quantity and counting, positional relationships, and patterning. We offer children experiences that support the acquisition of early geometry skills and measurement. Importantly, our mathematics curriculum supports children thinking about the world in mathematical ways, which includes comparison and analysis of numerical information.
- **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS:** We engage young children in language arts experiences by encouraging back-and-forth conversation, introducing new vocabulary, reading stories, and giving children opportunities to write for real-life scenarios. By helping children see themselves as readers and writers, they gain the confidence they need to ultimately learn these complex skills.
- **SCIENCE:** Young children learn foundational science concepts by exploring objects and the world around them in hands-on ways. We support children's understanding of the properties of objects and how the physical world changes. We help children understand the natural world by exploring the earth, sky, weather, and seasons, and we offer experiences that help children understand the characteristics of living creatures and plants. We foster critical thinking and problem solving using the scientific method.
- **SOCIAL STUDIES:** Social studies curriculum helps children begin to learn about themselves and their role in families, school, the community, and eventually, in the world. Children assimilate knowledge about family and community roles through play. Children begin to understand the passage and measurement of time, as well as how to describe natural and manmade features of locations. They begin to understand the foundational concepts of economy, including that people have jobs and use money. They learn that citizens in a democracy have responsibility to work together to accomplish tasks.
- **CREATIVE ARTS:** Early learners develop foundational skills that support creative expression through music, dance, the visual arts, and dramatic play. The arts supports children in listening, observing, discussing, moving, solving problems, and imagining using various modes of expression and thought. Further, fine arts allows children to represent their knowledge in other content areas, including literacy, math, social studies and science.
- **PHYSICAL HEALTH AND GROWTH:** A child's physical development proceeds from gross motor skills (big muscles) to fine motor skills (small muscles). Children need many opportunities to move their large muscles in order to be able to effectively use their small

muscles to hold pencils and write. Children are given many opportunities to use their big muscles as they run, climb, jump, and balance, and their small muscles as they stack blocks, string beads, pinch playdough, and more. Children learn about healthy nutrition, personal care, and their senses.

- **APPROACHES TO PLAY AND LEARNING:** We seek to support children's curiosity as learners, and to prompt them to take initiative, be self-directed, and show interest in school and the world around them. We help them develop flexible thinking and positive social interactions during play. Children's attentiveness and persistence to tasks are fostered. Children are encouraged to engage in imaginative and cooperative play with others.

Additional information regarding the Foundations is available at <https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/indiana-early-learning-foundations>

## **Assessment and Screening**

All children receive a developmental screening using the Brigance, a tool that offers a quick picture of a child's development in the areas of physical development, language, cognitive, self-help, and social-emotional skills. This tool helps to highlight potential developmental delays or giftedness, and can inform possible interventions.

Child learning is assessed using the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting-Kindergarten Readiness (ISTAR-KR). 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 ISTAR-KR 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. Staff utilizing the Brigance screening tool receive training particular to that instrument.

More information about ISTAR-KR is available at <https://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/kindergarten-readiness-assessment>

## **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](http://www.mccsc.edu/page/881).

## **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.

## **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](http://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.

## **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. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination.

Discrimination based on disability: Dr. Kathleen Hugo Director of Special Education 315 E. North Drive, Bloomington, IN 47401 812-349-4756

All other types of discrimination: Dr. Andrea Mobley Assistant Superintendent 315 E. North Drive, Bloomington, IN 47401 812-330-7700

### **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
- Re-directing 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 offer assistance to the family in accessing services and alternative placements.

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

## 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 child has 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/>

### 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.

### **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 child's name and must be in the original container.

### **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) notify 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.

### **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 School Age Care office. We are legally unable to withhold a child from a legal guardian without this documentation.

## **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.

## **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 via phone or text message to the number you provided.

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

## **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.

## **Accidents and Injuries**

All early learning staff members are trained in CPR and First Aid. School nurses and health office staff have more advanced training.

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 with the School Age Care office.

## **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.

## **Inclement Weather**

**If MCCSC schools are closed**, all early learning programs, including Hoosier Hills, the Early Learning Center, school-based preschools, and extended day are closed.

**If MCCSC schools are delayed**, the following is in effect:

- Morning-only half-day preschool will be canceled
- Elementary school-based full-day preschool classrooms observe a two-hour delay (11 am start)
- Preschool children who are enrolled in extended day may arrive at 7am (normal start time)
- 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**, we will open extended care at time of dismissal and 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](http://www.mccsc.edu).