

## CREC Early Childhood Programs Supplemental Practices & Procedures

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## **Section 1-Welcome**

Welcome to CREC's Early Childhood Programs. Our goal is to provide your child with a healthy, safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Each CREC school offers a unique theme that allows children to identify, refine and develop their talents and interests. Each school provides a diverse learning community that prepares children for living and learning as global citizens in a diverse environment. Our schools offer a personalized educational approach for each child in a curriculum designed to spark a lasting appreciation for knowledge. The focus of our early childhood curriculum is not just an accumulation of facts and skills but rather the strengthening of an ability to reason and think independently.

### **Mission of CREC Schools**

The CREC Mission Statement is: Equity, excellence, and success for all, through high-quality educational services.

### **Early Childhood Program Philosophy and Curriculum**

We believe that children learn best in an environment where their interests and opinions are supported, their solutions to problems are encouraged, and active learning through play is valued. Our philosophy emphasizes respect for self, others and the classroom environment.

CREC's Early Childhood Program curriculum has its base in developmentally-appropriate practice and uses the State of Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) as a guideline for curriculum development. The CT ELDS are learning and developmental outcomes to be intentionally addressed through planned experiences, materials and interactions. Learning outcomes are achieved through:

- a variety of hands-on discovery activities and materials on a daily basis that support learning goals
- responsive teaching staff who meet the individual needs of the children and families we serve
- reflective practices that create an environment of inclusion and honor diversity
- partnership with families that fosters strong reciprocal relationships and achieves mutually desired goals

Our curriculum is implemented using teacher observation and documentation to plan relevant, developmentally appropriate experience where children can explore, experiment, play and ask questions.

### Montessori Magnet School Curriculum Statement:

- Montessori Magnet School is located on the Learning Corridor Campus in Hartford, CT; it is an inter-district magnet school operated and managed by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). The school's philosophical foundation is based on Dr. Maria Montessori's educational philosophy and curriculum. Children in grades PreK-3 through sixth are grouped into multi-aged classrooms divided by a three-year range.
- Serving 131 children ages 2 ½ to six years, each of our Primary classrooms is designed to meet the emerging developmental needs of pre-school age children. While each of the classrooms has a unique character, all are governed by the core goals of concentration, coordination, independence, and order. Sometimes known as "children's houses" (after the original casa dei bambini in Rome), each classroom is a home for children. Here a child will find a peaceful, orderly environment, rich in hands-on materials, where he or she can grow among his or her peers. Teachers observe the child and meet each one where he or she is to ensure each student is receiving the lessons required to be successful in literacy and numeracy, as well as in practical life and grace and courtesy.
- These bright, beautiful environments allow free movement and exploration during an extended morning work cycle. Older children experience mid-day special instruction in art, library arts/technology, music, physical education, and computer science, while also taking part in an afternoon work cycle and outside time.
- Our Primary Program follows nationally-recognized standards and best practices including NAEYC Accreditation Standards for Early Childhood programs. The faculty consists of highly-qualified, early childhood certified teachers who design, develop and implement the curriculum with assistant teachers who are skilled and trained in early childhood education. Additionally, works in collaboration with the Montessori Training Center Northeast to host observers and student teachers who are completing their Montessori training program. CREC offers educational opportunities to its students regardless of race, color, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation or genetic information.
- Other unique features of the program include:
  - Large classrooms
  - Observation rooms for visitors
  - Music, computer science, art, library, and gym classes are offered weekly
  - Access to outdoor spaces including a playground and an expertly designed courtyard

## **Section 2-Classroom Routines and Procedures**

### **A Typical Day in our Program**

### A Typical Day in the Early Childhood Classroom at MMS

8:00-11:00 Morning Work Cycle	Students enter the classroom and are immediately able to begin a lesson of their choice. Children move freely from one activity to the next and are able to spend as much time engaged in a lesson as they desire. Teacher and assistant work with children 1:1 or in small groups throughout the work cycle.
11:15-11:45 Lunch	Children may bring lunch from home or buy at school. We eat in our classrooms, children are responsible for the set up and clean-up of the lunch area. Real cups, plates, napkins, placemats and silverware are used.
12:00-12:30 Recess	Children participate in energetic outdoor play and contact with nature
12:30-1:00 Essentials	Daily opportunity to participate in one of the following: Music, computer science, art, library, and gym
1:00-3:00 Afternoon Work Cycle	Upon returning from essentials children are able to transition back into the classroom for an afternoon work cycle. Children may continue work with lessons that were started in the morning or make new choices for the afternoon. Teacher and assistant work with children 1:1 or in small groups throughout the work cycle.
3:00 Dismissal	

PreK students attend school from 8:00-11:15 a.m., full-day students attend school day from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Students in PreK4 transition to full day on a staggered entry scheduled: November, January and April. All PreK4 students are full day by April.

Before-care is offered from 7:30-8:00 a.m. and after-care is offered from 3:00-5:30 p.m. daily.

### Safe Arrival and Departure

7:30 – 8:00am	Before Care drop off – Parents must sign children in (\$3.00/child/day)
7:40am	<b>Buses</b> only at the front door
8:00 – 8:15am	Student drop off at the back door only
<b>8:15am</b>	<b>Instructional day begins, doors are locked.</b>  <b>Late arrivals are to enter through the front door only.</b> <b>All late arrivals must report to the office and be signed in by Parent/Guardian</b>
11:15am	Midday pick up of primary students at the back door.
2:45 – 3:15pm	<b>Buses</b> only in the front driveway

3:00pm	End of instructional day, student pick up is at the back door.  If you would like to park and pick up your child, please do so through the front door. <b>No</b> cars should be in the front driveway.
3:15 – 5:30	After School pick up at the front door.

The Montessori philosophy encourages independence. In order to support children in their development of independence and to ease in the transition into the classroom, we ask that families follow our drop-off procedures rather than personally escorting children to their classrooms.

### **Using the Bathroom**

As a preschool program, we do not have the essential equipment or staffing to meet optimal health standards for diapering children. Therefore, families are strongly encouraged to ensure that their children are toilet trained **before** starting in our Primary Program at the beginning of the school year. The exception would be if this is identified in an IEP or 504 Plan. We understand the transition to school may result in some initial toileting accidents. We will work with the child’s family to ensure consistency both at home and at school. Children should be as self-sufficient as possible. Children are more successful when they wear pants with no snaps, buttons or zippers. Pants with elastic waists and underwear (not pull-ups) support children’s independence with toileting. Early Childhood teachers assist in changing the child in an emergency.

### **Clothing**

Children use sand, water, paint and play dough. Aprons are provided for water work and painting but still sometimes, clothing gets wet or soiled. Children are encouraged to wear clothing that they do not mind getting dirty and that they can easily pull on and off by themselves as needed. We ask that families provide their child with two sets of extra clothing at school at all times. This includes: easy to pull on/off pants, socks, underwear and shirts.

### **Outdoor Play**

Children in the full day program participate in 30 minutes of outside play every day, weather permitting. Children in our morning program may participate in outdoor work or activities. The school nurse informs the teaching staff if recommendations from health authorities or dangerous conditions prevent outdoor play. We ask that families send their child to school with the appropriate outer wear. Playground-safe shoes are important. We ask that children wear non-slip, closed toed shoes (sneakers are ideal).

### **Snacks/Meals**

#### **Snack**

At the Montessori Magnet School, daily snacks are served family style. Families are scheduled for a monthly/bi-monthly snack day, when they are responsible for providing snack for the whole class.

Daily snacks are an important part of meeting the nutritional needs of young children. Parents are offered a list of healthy snack options and are encouraged to speak to their child's teacher with any questions or concerns regarding providing snack.

If a child has food allergies, the school nurse will develop a care plan that will be shared with all relevant teaching staff.

### **Lunches**

At the Montessori Magnet School students eat lunch in their classrooms and either bring their lunch from home, or order hot lunch from school.

### **Celebrations**

- no invitations are sent through the school
- any food served at celebrations meets nutritional guidelines for children
- celebrations are relevant and meaningful to the class community

On a day-to-day basis we do not decorate for or hold any school-sponsored holiday celebrations, this way we remain neutral to all beliefs and traditions. Celebrations or holidays may be covered as learning opportunities in connection to the curriculum in individual classroom lessons and plans.

### **Section 3-Health and Safety** (in addition to school policies identified in the Family Handbook)

#### **Handwashing Practices**

Young children are particularly susceptible to illness once they begin school, affecting health and causing missed educational opportunities. While illness is not always preventable, we take measures to reduce the risk of infection by practicing good handwashing and cleaning procedures. We will teach the proper handwashing procedure as part of our curriculum, and we ask all children to wash hands upon arrival, before and after meals, after playing outdoors and after using the toilet. We will use hand sanitizers as an alternative when hands are not visibly soiled.

#### **Sunscreen**

Weather permitting, children participate in outdoor play on a daily basis. Please apply sunscreen on your child every day, being sure to protect areas of skin not covered by clothing and subject to sun exposure. Please note that teachers do not apply sunscreen to children, and children may not bring in sunscreen to be stored in school.

### **Section 4-Home-School Communication & Family Involvement Opportunities**

#### **Communication between Family and Teacher**

A strong family-school partnership is important to the success of our Primary Program. In addition to the formal parent-teacher conferences held twice year, each teacher sends home regular newsletters and or emails keeping families apprised as to what is happening in the classroom. Handouts and flyers with information from our school and PTA are sent home weekly in Blue Bag communication folders. In addition, we encourage all families to schedule classroom observations at least once a year. Families can always contact teachers by phone or email.

### **Volunteering**

If you would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please arrange a time to do so with your child's classroom teacher. You might like to plan a special activity around the unit the children are concentrating on or you might want to do a cooking project with the children. You may want to read a story to the children or help them write their own! We hope you will consider volunteering in the classroom. It is an ideal way to see what the children are working on and how learning through play is valued. As a volunteer, please remember, you are expected to maintain confidentiality.

There are many other additional opportunities to get involved in our school. For more information, please see our schools Family/Student Handbook.

### **Conferences**

At the Montessori Magnet School, an Intake Conference is held at the beginning of the year so that families can tell us about their child as seen through their eyes, while we simultaneously conduct the DIAL screening. Together we develop mutual goals for each child. Twice a year, in December and March, we address children's interests and progress through parent-teacher conferences.

### **End of Year Transitions**

At the Montessori Magnet School, the Primary Program is a three-year program. Children stay in their present classroom with their current teacher a three-year cycle, this includes two years of PreK and a year of Kindergarten. At the end of each school year, teachers will help prepare each child for the transition to summer and for the move to first grade (lower elementary) when applicable. Children moving on to first grade will visit their lower elementary classrooms to familiarize themselves with the new environment and meet their new teacher.

### **Program Surveys**

We ask that all families please complete an annual survey to help us evaluate our programming. The Family Survey provides parents with an opportunity to share with staff their thoughts about their child's care and education in our program. Responses to the survey questions will inform our on-going strategy for maintaining high-quality standards in our program.