

**City of Menlo Park**

**Community Services Department**



**Menlo Children's Center  
Preschool Program**

**801 Laurel Street  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
652-330-2262**

Welcome to the Menlo Children's Center Preschool Program! We are pleased that you have chosen to enroll your child in our preschool program. As this may be your child's first experience (or not) in childcare, we hope that the information within this handbook will cover most questions and concerns that you may have. Our handbook was designed with the NAEYC's (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Code of Ethics in mind.

***We are here to provide a safe, fun and a high quality program that fits the needs of both you and your child.***

Our program is designed for children 18 months to 5 years old to experience and gain the love for learning at their own pace through play. We provide a developmentally appropriate and caring environment, where children can explore and discover their world around them. We believe in helping children understand concepts through play and planned and spontaneous activities. The focus of our program is for children to learn through exploring the process not the product. The emphasis of our program is on each individual child's social development, which provides them problem solving skills that will help prepare them for kindergarten readiness.

Menlo Children's Center opened its doors in 1988. The center moved to 801 Laurel St. in May of 2006. It is now operated in conjunction with the Burgess School Age Program, which serves K-5th grade students.

### **Center's Hours**

Hours of operation are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.

MCC Summer Camp Hours (end of June-mid August) are from 8:00 am-6:00 p.m.

### **Contact Numbers**

You can contact the Program Supervisor, Natalya Jones at 650-330-2262 or via email at [nrjones@menlopark.org](mailto:nrjones@menlopark.org).

Toddler/Early Preschool Classroom	650-330-2266
Preschool Classroom	650-330-2263

### **Mission Statement**

We are a team of dedicated, diverse, and positive role models who provide a safe and caring environment that promotes self-expression and social development. Through enriching and physical activities, we recognize each child and their families' individuality. We inspire, through play, a lifelong love of learning !

## **Philosophy**

The philosophy of our preschool program is to allow the children to learn through play. We give them the opportunity to grow socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. The children develop positive feelings, establish friendships and increase physical and motor skills when allowed to play. Our program provides a safe learning environment. Working, playing, and sharing with other children, developing the ability to follow instruction, as well as establishing self-direction are our basic goals. Our primary task is to develop a well rounded program to meet individual needs and help each child feel good about himself.

## **Goals**

To provide a high quality childcare program in which children are encouraged to grow socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively.

To keep open communication with parents concerning their child's growth and development.

To provide a nurturing, relaxed environment with caring adults where self-concepts are enhanced; independence encouraged; free choice decision offered; social skills acquired and individuality respected.

To provide large portions of time in which the child can spend with their friends in a range of different and satisfying activities. These activities include: art, science, cooking, music and movement and large and fine motor activities.

To help the child gain self-discipline in an environment where they know the limits and expectations.

To develop in the child an active curiosity about the world in which they live and an enthusiasm for learning which stimulates exploratory behavior and creativity.

To provide an atmosphere in the classroom which promotes respect for others and materials.

To expose children to an environment in which it is acceptable to express feelings, both positive and negative.

To have fun!

## **Licensing Information**

The Menlo Children's Center is licensed by the Department of Social Services under Community Care Licensing. The Center's License number is 414002020 with the capacity of 58 children.

## **Curriculum**

Our play based curriculum is based on the principle that children construct their understanding of the world around them from their own active interactions with people, materials, and ideas. The curriculum encourages both the teacher and the child to initiate learning experiences; therefore, daily activities are not just created by the teacher, but also from the child's interest and ideas.

## **Description of Classes**

Each classroom has its own schedule to meet the developmental needs for the age group to serves. Typically we enroll and transition children into the next classroom during the months of June-September (we will notify you at that time).

Below is a description and schedule of each classroom:

### ***Toddler Classroom-***

The toddler classroom is designed for children ranging in age from 18 months to age 2 ½. The state licensing ratio is one teacher to 6 toddlers. This classroom is located in the back of the Early Preschool Classroom.

#### Toddler Daily Schedule

7:30-9:00 Greetings/Health Check/Indoor Free Play  
9:00-9:30 Morning Snack  
9:30-10:30 Outdoor Play  
10:30-10:45 Circle Time\*  
10:45-11:45 Indoor Activities  
11:45-12:15 Lunch Time  
12:15-12:30 Books  
12:30-3:00 Nap/Quiet Time  
3:00-3:30 Afternoon Snack  
3:30-5:00 Outdoor Play  
5:00-5:30 Indoor Activities  
5:30-6:00 Closing Activity/Departure of Children

\*Schedule subject to change

**Early Preschool Classroom-**

The Early Preschool is designed for children ranging from age 2 ½ to 3 ½. We have two teachers in the classroom with a total of 20 children. State licensing ratio is 1:12.

Early Preschool Daily Schedule

- 7:30-9:00 Greetings/Health Check/Indoor Free Play
- 9:00-9:30 Morning Snack
- 9:30-10:30 Art Activity/Open Indoor Areas
- 10:30-10:45 Circle Time\*
- 10:45-11:45 Outdoor Play
- 11:45-12:15 Lunch Time
- 12:15-12:30 Bathroom and Books
- 12:30-3:00 Nap/Quiet Time
- 3:00-3:20 Afternoon Snack
- 3:20-4:00 Indoor Activities
- 4:00-5:30 Outdoor Play
- 5:30-6:00 Closing Activity/Departure of Children

\*Schedule subject to change

**Preschool Classroom-**

The Preschool Classroom is designed for children ranging from 3 ½ to 5 years old (entering Kindergarten.) The classroom is state licensed to hold 34 children at this capacity we have 3 teachers in the classroom. State licensing ratio is 1:12.

Preschool Daily Schedule

- 7:30-8:45 am Greetings/Health Check/Indoor Free Play
- 8:45-9:15 am Morning Snack
- 9:15-9:30 am Clean Up/Transition Time
- 9:30-9:50 am Circle Time\*
- 9:50-10:30 am Planned Activities and Project Time
- 10:30-11:45 am Outdoor Play
- 11:45-12:00 pm Bathroom/Hand Washing Time
- 12:00-12:30 pm Lunch Time
- 12:30-1:00 pm Clean up/bathroom and book time
- 1:00-2:30 pm Rest Time for all children
- 2:30-3:00 pm Wake up Time/bathroom/,mats and blanket put away time
- 3:00-3:30 pm Circle Time/Outdoor Play
- 3:30-3:45 pm Afternoon Snack
- 3:45-4:30 pm Planned Activities and Project Time
- 4:30-6:00 pm Outdoor Play/Departure of children

\*Schedule is subject to change.

\*Circle Time includes: calendar, finger play songs, movement activities, and story time

### **Daily Requirements**

We provide a morning and afternoon snack for the children which include two food groups. The snack menu is posted in each classroom and located on the weekly curriculum. Parents provide lunch for their child each day. We have microwaves in each classroom and encourage parents to pack leftovers to be warmed up.

Children are encouraged to eat their entire lunch but never forced to eat it all. Some days children have a bigger appetite and on other days they do not.

It is helpful and recommended that you wash, peel and cut your child's fruit when you pack his/her lunch (the same way they are used to eating it at home). It is our experience that children do not know how to peel for example a tangerine or an orange and also a full apple is challenging for some children to eat. During lunch, teachers are helping children with opening containers and heating food. If fruit is cut and peeled, children do not need to wait for teacher assistance.

We offer a Friday hot lunch option at an additional cost. Most Fridays we offer pizza, fruit, veggies and a drink. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month we offer a different meal such as Chinese (chicken and veggies), Mexican (bean burritos, rice), or Italian (pasta or tortellini). We will post a sign the Thursday before to notify you of the selection.

Each child is given a personal cubby to use during the year. These cubbies are placed at the child's level and they hold lunches and extra clothing and jackets. The use of the cubbies encourages the children's sense of responsibility and independence.

On the first day of school, we ask that you bring along extra changes of clothing (labeled with your child's name): pants, shirts, underwear, and socks. These should be washable and easy to put on. You will need to check these items throughout the year to ensure that they still fit and are season appropriate. Should we need to send home the dirty clothing and you will need to replace the "cubby clothes".

During the hours of 12:30 and 3:00, all classrooms lights are dimmed, soft music is played, and teachers read appropriate books. This is considered our rest time and all children must rest their bodies to re-energize for an exciting afternoon.

### **Diapers/Wipes/Potty Training**

Parents provide diapers for their children. Each child has a cubby in the changing area of the Toddler/ Early Preschool restroom where their diapers are stored. Pull-ups are not used at MCC. Please check weekly to make sure your

child has the amount needed for changes. We will also post a note in their main cubby if diapers are needed.

We also ask that you bring two (2) packages of wipes each month for your child.

Potty training must be initiated at home and is continued at the center. Please make sure you communicate with your child's teacher that you are beginning the process. The teachers will encourage you to potty train your child at home for a couple of weekends or during a break (winter) before training them at school. This will help the child become more comfortable with the process. Please do not send your child in pull-ups during this process. We also encourage parents to leave extra sets of clothes in case of accidents. Remember this is one of the most stressful stages in your child's development, so as adults we have to remember to be patient and give a lot of positive reinforcement. Also every child is unique, some children may take longer than others to get trained (girls have a tendency to get trained faster than boys). Forcing a child into potty training can hinder the developmental stage. Feel free to ask the teachers advice as they may have additional paperwork on potty training and are all experienced in this matter. Pull-ups are not encouraged during potty training. Kids become dependant and lazy. With underwear, there is an immediate feeling and reaction. Also, some children have been known to be quite motivated to achieve mastery when they own underwear with their favorite cartoon or movie character.

Children entering our preschool classroom must be fully self sufficient of using the bathroom on their own.

### **Personal Belongings**

We have a NO TOY POLICY. Our school has many developmentally appropriate toys that children may use during the school day. We realize that toys from home are one way in which children can ease their transition from home to school; however they can also cause unnecessary conflict with other children. Too many times arguments have arisen among children about their possessions. In some occasions children have become disappointed because of their toy getting broken or lost. There are a couple of exceptions to this rule:

- 1) Children are allowed to bring an item on sharing day. Parents will be notified when sharing days occur.
- 2) Children may also bring a stuff toy in for naptime. Otherwise please leave all toys at home.

MCC also discourages the use of pacifiers and bottles. MCC discourages this use for sanitary reasons. Sippy cups are used only in our Toddler Program as these young children are learning to transition from drinking out of bottles to regular drinking cps.

## Preparing Your Child for MCC

We will set up two visits prior to your child's first day at MCC. We will have you and your child visit for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon to explore his/her new environment for the school and to meet the teachers. All children new to the center will have a half-day visit for the first day, this way your child can explore his/her environment on their own without feeling overwhelmed.

Establishing trust with the teachers as a base enables children to become comfortable with the separation from their parents. The younger the child, the more intense is the feeling of fear. Encouraging children to participate fully in saying goodbye, hugging, kissing, crying, waving, and saying, "I'll miss you", are all ways of bringing feelings out in the open. Once in the open, they are easier to deal with. Parents should never sneak out. Just as it's important to let your child know that you are leaving, it is important to let them know that you will be back.

The suggestions below are to aid your child's adjustment to his/her first regular experience away from home. We have one objective, which is to have your child enjoy school.

- Tell him/her what to expect—simply and in your own words; the teacher's name and that he/she is there every day to help him/her.
- Do not paint an extremely alluring or exaggerated picture of fun and joyous games.
- Do not drill her/him in advance and do not ask your child to be a "good boy" or "big girl." If she/he is upset, acknowledge the reality of her/his feelings.
- The parent is encouraged to act relaxed, cheerful, and unconcerned in these first days at school. Your child is very perceptive of your feelings and senses if you are anxious about his reactions to school.

Remember, each child is different. Some children are happy and well adjusted at school after three minutes and for others it can take three months. If your child adjusts immediately—consider yourself lucky. If not, don't worry. Many children take several months until the transition is complete. If you are at all concerned, speak to your child's teacher and see if there is anything in particular that seems to be bothering your child at school. Rest assured, the day will come, sooner or later, when your child will run into school with barely a glance backwards, looking forward to the exciting day ahead!

During our play based day, there are many opportunities for learning...

Inside Activities	Possibilities For Learning
Block Play	Block play develops concepts of numbers, sizes and shapes.
Manipulative Materials	Puzzles, bead stringing, and pegboards motivate children to solve small problems with little or no assistance. Children

	learn to match shapes, colors, sizes and develop eye-hand coordination.
Music	Music and rhythm give children a chance to express such movements as clapping and dancing. It develops a sense of rhythm and aids in developing language and listening patterns.
Cooking	Cooking acquaints children with basic skills such as stirring and measuring. It provides an opportunity to taste, feel, and smell foods and helps to develop an adventurous attitude toward foods.
Nutrition	Tasting and learning about healthy foods is a parts of the curriculum. Basic hygienic skills such as washing hands and faces are encouraged. Self-help skills are developed.
Stories	Stories are read informally to small groups during each day and before rest time. This activity is intended to give children an appreciation of books and to increase their language skills and knowledge of the community and world. It also develops sustained listening habits.
Science	Science gives the children a chance to become familiar with and explore and understand their environment through such things a nature walks, experiments, plants and animals.
Math	Math provides an opportunity for children to become aware of quantity through counting and discrimination.
Dramatic Play	Dramatic play provides an opportunity for exploration and insight into one's own feelings, and to exercise imagination, initiative, and verbal skills.
Creative Play	Creative art, such as easel painting, play dough, pasting, collage, and crayon or chalk drawing provide a chance for exploration and discovery. It develops small hand muscles control and teaches concepts of colors, shapes, textures and spatial relation.

Outside Activities	Possibilities For Learning
Digging, Wheel Toys	Outside activities develop large and small muscles and eye-hand coordination. Skills such as ball throwing and catching, tricycle riding, climbing and balancing are developed. Remembering rules and sharing equipment are objectives which develop during the year.
Water Play	Water play provides an opportunity for exploration, manipulation, emotional releases, satisfaction, and enjoyment.
Sand Box	The sand box allows the child to explore the possibilities of sand and the combination of sand and water. It can be used to each classification and comparative relationships.

## **Policies and Procedures**

Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month and considered late by the 5<sup>th</sup>. Payments paid after the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month are subject to a \$20 late payment fee. Children may not be accepted into the program if payments are not made by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

\* In case of financial hardships, payment plans can be set up with the Program Supervisor.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month prior to the month approaching payment you will receive a payment form. On this payment form you can pay by check or with your credit card. Payment Slip and payment must be placed in black payment box located on the file cabinet in the Program Supervisors office near the door. Please do not give the teachers payments.

We do not prorate the monthly tuition for vacations or absences. Parents must pay full tuition to hold their child's space in the classroom.

### Our Late Policy

Children are to be picked up **NO LATER THAN CLOSING HOURS** of the program. While it is understandable that there might be occasional delays due to business emergencies or transportation difficulties, certain procedures must be followed in such cases. Should such delay occur, the parent or guardian must contact the center/program director, so the staffing can be arranged and there should be a reasonable excuse for the delay.

Abuse of this policy will result in suspension of your child from the program and the center.

We are compelled to enforce this policy due to our concern about children's safety, program liabilities, and of course as a courtesy to our staff, and their schedule.

Each time a child is picked up after closing hours, a "Late Pick Up Notice" will be filled out and put in your child's file. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> notice within a month, children will be suspended for 1 school day.

There also will be "Late pick up charge" charged to you as followed:

**There will be a \$15.00 charge for each child the first 15 minutes, and additional \$1.00 per child per each minute after 15 minutes.**

If you need to make temporary or permanent changes to your child's schedule please check in with the Program Supervisor. Depending on availability we will do our best to accommodate you.

We require one-month (30 days) notice in writing, prior to your child leaving the program. If one month notice is not received, parents are financially responsible for the month's tuition, even if the child does not attend the program. Notice must be given directly to the Program Supervisor in writing.

*We will provide you with a yearly calendar which may be subject to change. The center is closed to observe the following holidays and trainings:*

New Years Day

Veteran's Day

Day after New Year's Day

Thanksgiving

Martin Luther King Day

Day after Thanksgiving

Washington's Birthday

Christmas Day

Memorial Day	Christmas Eve
Independence Day	2 In-Service Days plus 1 ½ day (TBD)
1 Staff Retreat Day	Labor Day
Winter Break (Dec-Jan-TBD)	

State regulation requires that you sign your child in upon arrival and out upon departure. You must use your full legal signature. There is a sign in and out binder in each classroom near the parent board.

Our primary concern is your child's safety. Therefore, you must sign your child in and out everyday! The sign-in sheets are used to account for children during fire drills and actual disasters.

In your admissions paperwork there is a place for you to write down those people with whom you would like to give authorization to pick up your child. No one under the age of 18 is allowed to pick up your child or authorized to sign in/out. Children will only be released to those persons listed on the emergency form. If someone comes to pick up your child whose name is not on the list, you must inform the teachers with a note authorizing the change. We will not release any child without prior authorization. Please have adults be prepared to show photo identification.

\*Children are to be picked up no later than 6:00 p.m. Please see late pick up policy.

Parents are to report any allergies that your child has. Special medications with doctor's prescription should be available in case of emergency.

Parents, please be aware that your child will be in contact with large numbers of children on a daily basis. This may add to the risk of acquiring infectious illnesses.

### **DO NOT BRING YOUR CHILD TO THE CENTER IF HE OR SHE IS ILL!!**

State law prohibits us from accepting sick children. If your child becomes ill while at the Center, **you must pick up your child within 30 minutes.** This protects your child and other children from contact with communicable diseases.

Symptoms for which a child should be kept home or sent home from school:

- Headaches
- **Fever-more than 99 degrees and child must be kept out of the school for 24 hours after the fever breaks before returning.**
- Excessive runny nose and eyes
- Coughing- a wet, wheezy cough with mucus secretion.
- Stomach ache
- Earache- Fever of lethargy, nausea, vomiting, loose stools, drainage, irritability, tugging on ears. Child may return to center when medication

and 24 hours after constitutional symptoms are gone. (A doctors note maybe required, call the program supervisor prior to bringing your child back to school.

- **Vomiting- Child must be kept out of the center for 24 hours after vomiting stops before returning.**
- **Diarrhea- child must be kept out of the center for 24 hours after diarrhea stops before returning.**
- Sore throat
- Skin rashes (until definite diagnosis is made by a doctor)
- Head lice-child may return to the center after appropriate treatment and shampoo.

Other Communicable Infections- a child may return when infectious symptoms have subsided and the child is feeling better. In some instances, a physician's release may be required. Call the Program Supervisor prior to returning back to the center.

When a child develops any of the above symptoms, she/he will be isolated from other children and parents will be contacted and asked to come pick up their child immediately (within 30 minutes, please)

A child with a communicable disease must be kept home. A statement from your physician is necessary for re-admittance to the center.

On the first day of absence, please notify Menlo Children's Center by calling your child's classroom. If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease (including head lice) call the Program Supervisor and the classroom so they can notify other parents of the exposure.

For minor cuts and injuries we use soap, water, Band-Aids, and ice packs if necessary. We will place an Injury Report Form in your plastic file to describe your child's injury. If your child has a head injury during the day a teacher will call you to inform you of the incident.

Hand washing is encouraged after the bathroom; wiping the nose; changing clothes after toileting accidents; before eating, serving or preparing food; and whenever a person has been sneezed or coughed upon. Children's hand washing is supervised by staff and taught when necessary.

We realize that there are times when your child may need medication while at the center. Your child's teacher will administer medication only if it is dated, labeled and prescribed by a physician (this includes over the counter medications.) Parents must complete the authorization form and provide staff with the prescription or doctor's note. Only when absolutely necessary will the staff administer medication.

**Please submit a copy of your child's up-to-date immunization requirements upon admission. As children receive shots, please continue to submit copies of these immunizations to the preschool so they can be updated in your child's file.**

### **Discipline and Behavior-**

Our staff uses the positive techniques of guidance, including logical or natural consequences applied in problem situations, redirection of children to more acceptable behavior, anticipation of and elimination of potential problems and encouragement of appropriate behavior rather than comparison, competition or criticism. Consistent and clear rules are established. Staff members encourage the children to deal with the problem rather than impose the solution. We help children to recognize and respect each others feelings. The staff members encourage pro-social behavior such as cooperation, helping, taking turns, and talking to solve problems. The goal is to help children the internalize rule and become self-directed in the behavior. When this fails, the following guidelines will take place:

- an incident report is written and sent home with parents
- a conversation will take place with the staff and parents to discuss further action.

If inappropriate behavior continues and a child has had repeated reports written on him/her during the program, then the following procedure will take place:

- a behavior contract is implemented.
- If the problem persists, the child will be removed from the program.

In accordance with California law, staff is obligated, under penalty of fine and jail term, to report Child Protective Services and/or local police, the reasonable suspicion of physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse, inadequate supervision or sexual abuse or exploitation.

Parents need to be aware that the Center does NOT allow and will stop all emotional or physical abuse occurring on the centers premises; acts such as spanking, shoving, pushing, hair pulling, slapping, yelling, threats and any other form of physically reprimanding their children on center grounds will not be allowed.

### **Emergency Procedures**

The center will provide safe temporary accommodation for your child until an authorized adult picks up your child. Please make arrangements for an authorized adult who is closest to the center (within an hour) for pick-up. In the event of emergency or disaster, your child may be temporary relocated to the Menlo Park Gymnasium 701 Laurel Street, (650) 330-6300.

In case of fire, the children will be first evacuated to the grassy field behind Menlo Children's Center. The children can only come back into the main building if it is

cleared by the Fire Marshall. Otherwise, they will be taken to the Burgess Recreation Center. A fire drill routine is done once a month by the staff to help children become more comfortable if the need ever arises.

In an earthquake situation, the children will be evacuated to the grassy area behind Menlo Children's Center. A building inspector will assess whether or not it is safe to go back into the building. If not, the children will be taken to the Burgess Gymnasium or Recreation Center.

Photographs/video may be taken of your child during the regular classroom activities, on field trips and other special occasions by teacher and parents. There is also the possibility that other local media (newspapers, television news programs, and marking materials (brochures, videos etc.) may wish to cover MCC and include pictures of students as part of their news coverage. All parents are aware that their child's picture may be included in promotional purposes and agree to authorize such use.

## **Communication**

**Menlo Children's Center has an Open Door Policy. Parents are always welcome to come visit and/or observe their child during daily interaction (just remember, sometimes, it is hard for children to say goodbye a second time).**

**If at ever a time, your family has any questions, ideas, or concerns, please feel free to talk to the teachers or Program Supervisor. If your matter needs specific attention, we are always willing to set time aside for discussion.**

Consistent Communication is one of our biggest goals at MCC. Staff communicate through various ways. There are plastic sleeves in front of each child's sign in/out sheet. Please check and empty file daily. There is also a white board located in each classroom near the entry way. This is another form of communication.

We are aware that families come in all shapes and sizes. To help us give your child the most successful experience we can, we need you to inform us of any changes in your family life. Sometimes changes that adults adjust to easily are more difficult for your children. Let us know if Grandma has come to visit, your nanny quits, or you remodel your home, etc.

For your child's safety, it is critical that you keep emergency names and numbers updated. If your child needs you, we want to be able to contact you or your designated emergency contact as soon as possible. Any day that your child will not be in school, please call us. We worry when we don't see your child's smiling face.

Parents are welcome to send a snack or lunch to share with the classroom on birthdays. Snacks can consist of cookies, cupcakes or cake and a drink. If you are interested in providing lunch for the class you can provide pizza, fruit salad, sliced vegetables and a drink or your child's favorite lunch.

Children not enrolled at Menlo Children's Center are able to join in celebration but the center cannot be held responsible.

Occasionally, small fees may be collected from each child for field trips or special activities. Parents are made aware of such field trips and fees at least a month in advance.

Parent Participation is strongly encouraged. In the past we have had parents come in and lead circle time, arts and crafts projects, and other special events for a number of different reasons. We encourage parents to come in and teach us about cultural events that are important to the family.

Once again, thank you for choosing MCC as your child's preschool experience. We look forward to growing, developing, and learning with your child !



*I have read and reviewed the information, policies, and procedures in the Menlo Children's Center Preschool Handbook.*

*Child's Name* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent's Name* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent's Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date* \_\_\_\_\_