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Family Handbook 2023-2024

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Madison, WI 53705
608-233-9776

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NOTE: Policies in this Family Handbook may be condensed. All School Policies, in their entirety, are available at the office for review.

Introduction

Welcome to Meeting House Nursery School! You have become a member of one of Madison's oldest and finest preschool programs. Your child will play at a school that has delighted thousands of children since 1949.

Meeting House Nursery School was originated by the First Unitarian Society in 1949 as a daycare program and was re-established as a nursery school in 1953. Its present status as a non-profit, non-sectarian corporation was completed in 1975.

The Meeting House philosophy is based on the premise that children learn through play. While attention is given to the child's total development, emphasis is placed upon developing the child's social skills and self-concept.

The teachers at Meeting House are warm and caring individuals. All primary teachers hold degrees/credentials in Early Childhood Education. The program is developmentally appropriate, respecting and celebrating the uniqueness of every child.

General Information

1. FACILITY: Meeting House Nursery School, Inc. leases the west wing of the First Unitarian Church located at 900 University Bay Drive. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, who is noted for his prairie style homes and organic architecture, the church is a national landmark visited by architects, students, and tourists from around the world. The nursery school wing, added in 1963, was designed by the Taliesin Foundation to meet the special needs of the nursery and church school programs.

The school has six classrooms—rooms 1, 2, and 3 on the main level; room 4 downstairs; Room 6 is in the Atrium wing; and room 5 upstairs. Two fenced playgrounds are located adjacent to the classrooms. The “Whale Yard” and “Tree House Yard” offer a variety of large motor equipment and activities.

2. REGULATION:

☐ **Licensing**—As a private early care and education program, Meeting House is licensed by the State Department of Children and Families. The purpose of licensing is to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of children in child care centers. Periodic visits are made by a State Licensing Specialist, which includes an inspection of the school's records and facility. The school is re-licensed every two years. A copy of DCF 251 “Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Centers” is available at the school office for review. Families receive the pamphlet “Your Guide to Licensed Child Care” upon enrollment. This brochure is an overview of these rules.

☐ **City Accreditation**—Although the school is located in the Village of Shorewood Hills, Meeting House is accredited by the City of Madison through the Child Care Unit of the Office of Community Services. Accreditation specialists make annual visits to the school, focusing on program content and staff/child interactions.

☐ **Young Star**—Meeting House has received the highest rating for a program (5-stars) in the Young Star Quality Rating Scale. You can find out more about YoungStar at [Young Star](#)

3. HOURS OF OPERATION: Meeting House is in session from September through mid-June. The Summer Program is in session during the months of June. School closes for a 2-week winter break and a 1-week spring break. The Nursery School calendar is available at the end of July. The school's hours of operation are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Individual program hours are:

8:00-9:00 AM Morning Bunch

8:30/8:45/9:00-11:30/11:45/12:00 Morning Program

11:30-1:00 Lunch Bunch

1:00-4:00 Afternoon Program

The office is generally open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

4. DROP OFF AND PICK UP:

When you arrive and leave, always check in and out with the teacher(s). You must also sign your child into the procare system either using the QR code or your 4 digit pin.

☐ **Children will only be released to an authorized person; staff may ask for identification if they are unfamiliar with the person picking up the child.**

☐ **Pick up and drop off time are busy times. If you need to get a message to the teachers, write it down. A log book is located on the door of each classroom for this purpose.**

☐ **If your child will not be at school, you must email (meetinghousenurseryschool@gmail.com) or call the office at 233-9776 and leave a message or notify teachers in advance if you know your child will be absent. Unreported absences will receive a call from the office in accordance with state licensing procedures.**

We appreciate your adherence to our school hours. The teachers use the time before and after school for planning and preparation. Children should not be dropped off before the scheduled program hours. If you should arrive early, please feel free to read stories on the bench by the office until school begins. It is equally important that children are picked up on time.

Our "Late Pick-Up Policy" states:

- If a child is picked up more than 5 minutes past the pick-up time, the parent or child care provider will receive a verbal warning.
- On the second occurrence, a written late pick-up warning will be issued.
- Subsequent incidents will result in a fine. (The first fine is \$20.00. This fine increases in \$5.00 increments per occurrence.)
- There is no grace period for the Lunch Bunch program. Fines will be issued immediately.
- When a child is still at school 10 minutes past the scheduled pick up time, the school will place a call to the child's home.
- When a child is still at school at 15 minutes past the scheduled pick-up time, and the child's parents cannot be reached, the school will begin notifying those persons listed on the Enrollment Form as emergency contacts.
- If late pick-up becomes chronic, the Executive Director will contact the parents/guardians to discuss resolution to this problem. Chronic lateness can be cause for discharge from the program.
- The school recognizes that sometimes a late pick up is unavoidable. If you find yourself in this situation, please try to call and let us know you are on your way. ***If you are late due to difficult parking at school, let your teacher know and you will not be fined.***

VISITATION: Parents are welcome to visit or participate at the school whenever they wish during their child's regular school day. Please make arrangements with your child's teachers.

Emergency School Closure Policy

I. Snow/Weather Related Closure:

Meeting House Nursery School, Inc. will close when the Madison Metropolitan School District closes either its Public School Programs or its Early Childhood Programs. If the Public School Programs or Early Childhood Programs are closed for the morning only, Meeting House Nursery School will close morning classes and will be open at the start of our Lunch Bunch Program. If the Public School Programs or Early Childhood Programs cancel classes once the day has begun, Meeting House Nursery School will close our Lunch Bunch and afternoon programs. Certain conditions may necessitate closing school even when the Madison Metropolitan School District and its Early Childhood Programs remain open. 4K instructional hours must meet the requirements of the Dept. of Public Instruction. Days lost due to school closures will be made up to assure compliance with the DPI.

II. Emergency Closure:

Site-specific conditions may necessitate closing school for a limited amount of time. Examples may include loss of heat, loss of plumbing, loss of electricity, etc. The decision to close school would be based upon the health, safety, and welfare of the children.

III. Procedure for closing school:

- A. The Executive Director will make the decision to close and will notify all staff.
- B. If the decision is made to close school when MMSD remains open families will be notified by telephone by 7:30 a.m.
- C. If the decision to close school is made after the school day has begun, school families affected by the closure will be notified by phone.
- D. The school closing announcement will be emailed via procare, facebook, and on channel 15 news.

Admission

Meeting House Nursery School is licensed for children aged 2-12 years. Meeting House Nursery School will not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, creed, ability, national origin, or ancestry against any enrolled child and family or any applicant for enrollment in regard to admission, privilege of enrollment, or discharge condition except to meet the necessary age requirements specified by State Licensing.

REGISTRATION: Registration for the 9.5-month academic year and summer camp will be done separately online through pro care and tuition express. Families interested in enrollment at Meeting House can call, write, email, or visit to obtain information about the program. Scheduling an appointment to visit is preferred to assure the Executive Director or Administrative Assistant is available. An Enrollment Open House is scheduled during late January.

Registration materials are available at the end of January. These materials are emailed to new families on the Registration Mailing List. Currently enrolled families will receive enrollment information via email. Paper copies can be found in the office. Current families do not need to place their name on the Registration mailing list.

The placement of children into classes will be completed by the Executive Director and current classroom teachers and will be announced in July. The Executive Director may take into consideration the following when making these placements:

- Scheduling needs of classrooms and families
- Peer groupings
- Parent/Guardian requests
- Consultation with Meeting House teaching staff
- Special needs of a child or family.

Beginning on July 1st, openings remaining in classrooms will be filled as needed.

Priority for registration shall be given as follows:

1. Children/grandchildren of current staff members.
2. Currently enrolled children (placement determined by the order in which registration forms are received in the office).
3. Siblings of currently enrolled children.
4. UW students and Employees
5. Children of former Board members and former Staff members not currently enrolled.
6. Former families on the Registration Mailing List prioritized by the date they placed their name on the list.

7. Waitlisted families (from the prior year's waitlist) on the Registration Mailing List prioritized by the date they placed their name on the list.
8. Families on the Registration Mailing List prioritized by the date they placed their name on the list.

Registration takes place during the months of January and February, with confirmation made no later than the first week of March. Forms must be completed and submitted by the stated deadline to receive first consideration. After the deadlines have passed, all forms will be considered on a first come-first served basis.

Waitlists will be composed of those children who were not offered a place in the program or their choice of placement in a particular class was not available. The waitlist will follow the priority schedule. Parents of children on the waitlist will be notified if a space becomes available.

4K Registration: Meeting House children registered for 4K with the Madison Metro School District must also complete registration with the district. Registration takes place in February/March. Failure to register with the school district will result in the loss of the tuition-free 4K spot at Meeting House.

ENROLLMENT FORMS:

Each child enrolled at Meeting House Nursery School must have on file the following forms before the first day of class:

- *Registration Agreement
- *Enrollment Form (includes permission for emergency care & field trips)
- *Personal Information Form
- *Immunization Record
- *Health Report (signed by a Health Professional).
- *Health History and Emergency Care Plan
- *Emergency Information Card (includes authorized list of people who may pick up your child from school)
- *Toilet Information Form (if needed)
- *Allergy Action Plan (if needed)

Children's records are confidential. The parent or legal guardian shall have access, upon request, to their own child's records.

1. "BACK TO SCHOOL" OPEN HOUSE: Meeting House holds an Open House prior to the first day of school for students in all rooms. The teachers send out invitations in early August to this event. Parents/guardians and children have the opportunity to visit the school during a scheduled time to meet their teachers, play in the classrooms and meet some of their classmates.

WHAT TO BRING ON THE FIRST DAY: Each child has a labeled cubby in the hallway outside of the classroom. This is a place for storing outerwear, school bag, etc. Be sure to bring the following:

- An extra set of labeled clothing should be brought each day in a labeled backpack
- This should include underwear, socks, slacks/shorts, and a shirt. Because of limited storage the backpack should go home each day.
- Children in Room 2, 3 and 5 should bring a change of clothes in a labeled zip lock bag to be kept at school.
- Diaper or pull-ups if needed.
- A normal size backpack

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD WEAR TO SCHOOL:

Children should be dressed in clothing that is appropriate for inside and outside play. Comfortable clothing that your child will not have to be overly concerned with getting dirty is best. Children are very active at school. Be sure footwear is suitable for running and climbing. Crocs and flip-flops should not be worn. Boots, mittens, snow pants, and hats should be worn in winter weather, as we try to go outside each day. Boots are also encouraged in wet weather. Be sure all clothing is labeled! The Lost and Found is located outside of Room 2 on the Lunch Bunch shelf.

SEPARATION: For some children this will be their first experience away from home. Many children will have no adjustment problems; they will bounce into the classroom without looking back. Some children will have a harder time saying goodbye. For the first days of school your child might feel more comfortable with you around. However, try to gradually spend less time in the classroom or on the playground at drop off time. It is important that you tell your child when you are leaving and not try to “sneak out”, even if this causes tears. A goodbye hug and kiss and an “I’ll be back soon!” is a good separation routine. Once you leave the classroom avoid the temptation to peek again—even if your child is in tears. This gives your child a mixed message and may even prolong the situation. The teachers are very competent and caring when faced with difficult separations. Remember, this is one of the goals of nursery school! It has been our experience that most children do stop crying within a short period of time when they see all the fun activities taking place. Setting a daily unhurried routine, talking with your child in a positive way about school, and consistency help make separation a positive learning experience. Do feel free to call school at any time to find out how your child is adjusting. Arrival time does get easier as the year progresses and your child will learn that when you leave, you will return; that school is fun; and that you can all trust the teachers as new special adults in your child’s life.

WITHDRAWAL/DISCHARGE:

- A. Meeting House Nursery School reserves the right to withdraw/discharge any child at any time during the academic year or summer school program.
- B. All withdrawal will require approval from the Board of Directors and will be made only after consultation by the Executive Director with the child’s parents/guardians.
- C. Reasons for school withdrawal/discharge shall include the following:
 - 1. Failure of the parents/guardians to observe the rules of the school including, but not limited to, failure to submit required health information and failure to pay tuition. (Families that are 60 days in arrears with their tuition payment, without making prior arrangements with the Executive Director, will be denied further attendance.)
 - 2. The inability of a child to benefit from and appropriately participate in classroom activities.
 - 3. Withdrawal from the Morning/lunch bunch program must be given with a written 30-day notice. A family will be obligated to continue “brunch” payments during the 30 day period of notice.

Educational Program

Meeting House Nursery School builds its program around the premise of children learning through play. Research has shown that children learn best in a play-based environment that allows the child to explore at his/her own pace.

“Child-initiated play lays the foundation for learning and academic success. Through play, children learn to interact with others, develop language skills, recognize and solve problems, and discover their human potential. In short, play helps children make sense of and find their place in the world.”-The Alliance for Childhood, 2006

1. *Mission Statement:* Meeting House Nursery School, Inc. provides children with a play based curriculum in a welcoming environment that encourages exploration, celebrates the individual, and fosters meaningful relationships.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: The purpose and philosophy of Meeting House Nursery School, Inc. is:

- To provide the preschool child with an educationally sound program in an atmosphere of warmth, friendliness, and freedom
- To offer opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and inquiry
- To encourage curiosity and expression of ideas
- To accept each child as an individual, helping the child grow in

3. PROGRAM FOCUS: The teachers plan a program that is developmentally appropriate, focusing on the “whole child” in terms of his/her social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Brief definitions of these developmental areas are:

- **Social:** how the child interacts with other children and adults and their environment
 - **Emotional:** how the child feels about him/herself and the ways the child accepts and expresses personal feelings and ideas
 - **Cognitive:** the thinking skills that are needed to catalog new information, formulate ideas and solve problems
 - **Physical:** the awareness and control of the physical body that the child acquires through the five senses, rest, exercise, and nutrition
- Development in these four areas occurs simultaneously. Together they form the foundation for life-long human development.

4. DAILY PROGRAM: The daily program is planned around a play based approach to curriculum development. This curriculum is based upon the knowledge of child development and learning. The observation and assessment of individual needs and interests are the key components to curriculum planning. Curriculum changes according to the needs and development of the children, taking into account the children's interests. The curriculum is inclusive -- respecting individual differences and similarities. Meeting House is committed to providing a quality environment and program that promotes an anti-bias and multicultural awareness.

The teachers design their daily programs to offer a balance of large and small group experiences; a variety of materials and media for the children to explore at their own pace; opportunities to use and exercise developing muscles; and the opportunity to explore in a safe and healthy environment.

Lesson plans which identify the scheduled activities and projects for each days are posted outside each classroom. Flexibility is built into the program, with plans subject to change.

5. WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE? While each classroom's daily schedule is planned around the needs and developmental level of the children in it, a typical day in all of the classrooms will offer a balanced program that includes:

❖ **Free Choice Time (Interest Centers)**—Play options inside the classroom include small manipulatives (puzzles, construction toys, games, etc.), dramatic play, art experiences, sensory activities, music, science experimentation, cooking projects, large muscle equipment, and books. The children are encouraged to make individual choices of activities and materials.

❖ **Group Time**—Group experiences include sharing information, stories, music (songs & instruments), and games. This is a time that encourages the child to learn the social skills of expressing ideas and feelings to others, listening and taking turns.

❖ **Outside/Large Motor Time**—Time to play on our playgrounds is planned daily. The outside play may include climbing, running, sand play, riding toys, group games and walks.

❖ **Inclement Weather**—Children will not play outside when:

- The temperature is below 0 degrees or the wind chill is below zero.
- the temperature exceeds 90 degrees(Including heat index)
- conditions are hazardous, as determined by the Executive Director

❖ **Snack Time**—a mid-morning/mid-afternoon snack is provided by the school. Our snack coordinator plans the daily snacks and the parent helpers

prepare and distribute these snacks. Snack menus are posted on the bulletin board across from the school kitchenette and sent to families via email monthly. Snacks meet the nutritional guidelines set forth in State Licensing rules. Snacks provided by the school will be **free of peanut/nut products**. Parents of children with food allergies/sensitivities must notify the office in writing of their child's needs and follow the procedures as outlined in the "**Food Allergy Policies and Procedures**" found in this handbook. All parents are welcome to bring snacks for their child's class. **Snacks brought from home must be free of all peanut/nut products and cannot be "processed in a facility that also processes nut/peanut products"**. A nutritious snack is encouraged (fruit, cheese, muffins, etc.).

MHNS is a participant in the Child and Adult Food Program.

In guidance with the CCAFP lines included [CACFP "And Just for All"](#)

CACFP Non-Discriminatory statement:

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling 866- 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax:
833-256-1665; or 202-690-7442
3. email:
program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

5. 4K: Meeting House Nursery School contracts with the Madison Metropolitan School District to provide 4K programming to children. The 4K program fits well with our "learning through play" curriculum. Teachers provide hands-on developmentally appropriate activities for the children. These activities, the social interactions with others and establishing routines in the

classroom all help to prepare the child for their entrance into Kindergarten. is available to families for a fee. Families must register for 4K both with MMSD and Meeting House. Families who do not reside in Madison may be eligible for our 4K program through the Open Enrollment process.

4K Nap policy: Children enrolled in our 4K full day program will have a rest time of at least 30 minutes per day. A child who does not fall asleep will be let up to play after 30 minutes.

A child will need to bring a child size sleeping bag that is zip closed on three sides. This sleeping bag will be taken home every 5 days to be washed.

CELEBRATIONS: Meeting House Nursery School, Inc. understands the importance of developmentally appropriate and relevant celebrations in children's lives. These celebrations include birthdays, milestones (zipping up a coat "all by myself!" a loose tooth, etc.), seasonal changes, family changes, and family traditions (Christmas, Hanukkah). The nursery school may include these celebrations in a respectful and sensitive manner in the classroom. We welcome and encourage parent participation in these celebrations.

FIELD TRIPS (4K Full day Programming only): Teachers incorporate field trips into their classroom program to enhance a particular theme. Examples of field trips include visits to the fire station, apple orchard, pumpkin patch, zoo, etc. Younger children go on fewer field trips. Teachers try to schedule trips to fall on different days of the week; however, if a field trip is scheduled on a day when your child does not attend, he/she may attend if accompanied by an authorized adult (due to ratios). We rely on parents to help chaperone trips. Due to child/staff ratios and the need for parent volunteers to focus on the children in their care, we ask that child care for siblings be arranged. No siblings will be permitted on field trips. Permission slips are sent home prior to the trip outlining the events and cost of the trip.

When individual classes go on field trips in the community, the school will use a rented school bus with a driver or the class may walk to a nearby destination.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE: At Meeting House, we believe that children should be allowed to express their need to feel strong and self-confident, while at the same time learning the elements of respect for their peers and adults. We emphasize positive guidance of children's feelings and behaviors.

Every effort is made to avoid the potential for conflict by choosing materials and planning activities that are developmentally appropriate.

Careful attention to the room arrangement, adult modeling, established routines, and clear-cut limits and expectations all help to reduce conflict.

When conflicts do arise, we encourage children to verbalize their needs and their feelings, to “use their words”. Teachers are prepared to gently intervene when necessary and to help guide the children through problem-solving. Problem solving includes identifying the problem and reaching a solution. We express ourselves in language that children can understand and we provide reasons and explanations without judgment, respecting the children’s feelings. We offer choices when possible and redirection if necessary. Punitive measures are not used with the children. If a child should reach an impasse and is not able to attend to a problem or conflict, he/she may be removed from the situation until he/she has regained the control to talk about what happened. We see problem-solving and conflict resolution as skills children need to learn. We want children to be aware of their feelings, be empathetic to others, and in control of their own bodies and minds. If we feel a child has frequent conflicts, we will meet with the parents/guardians to work together to best serve the needs of the child.

PARENT COMMUNICATION:

□ Arrival and Departure Times: Families are welcome to share information with teachers at the start and end of a school session. Please keep in mind that teachers are still supervising children at drop-off and pick-up times so in-depth discussions would not be appropriate at those times. Please make arrangements for your teacher to call you or set up an appointment to discuss items that require lengthy conversations. Pro Care connect app also provides instant messaging to your classroom teacher.

□ Parent/Teacher Conferences: Parent-Teacher conferences are held once per semester. Each teaching team schedules the conferences based on the age and needs of the classroom. Conferences can be held during regular school hours with substitute teachers in the classrooms or on a designated day when programming is closed.

- The purpose of the fall conference is to discuss how the transition to the school year has progressed, goals for the child, and answer questions with regard to the classroom.
- Spring Conferences provide an excellent opportunity to discuss progress through the year and thoughts about the upcoming year.
- Additional conferences may be scheduled by making an appointment with the teacher(s).

□ Newsletters: Information is sent home to families via email. A family may request a paper copy.

- An all-school newsletter is sent monthly via email from the office. This newsletter includes information about upcoming events at school, dates to

remember, reminders, Board news, and Staff news. Also included are articles about child development.

- Classroom newsletters are sent out from each classroom. These include information about what is happening in your child's classroom.
- Special notices regarding upcoming events, exposure to communicable illness, etc. will be sent home through email or mail tubes as needed.

□ Bulletin Boards:

- *Snack:* near kitchenette—snack menu, special snack menu, Allergy Food Authorization slips and playdough recipe
- *Board:* near office—Board list, agendas, minutes
- *Parent News:* large board near office—Scholastic Book orders, community events, special information, volunteer opportunities, extra forms
- *Classroom Board:* outside each classroom—lesson plan, log book (on doors), other important classroom information

SCHOOL OFFICE: The Executive Director and/or Administrative Assistant are generally in the office to answer your questions. The office is typically open from 8:00-4:00. The school answering machine (233-9776) will take your call when no one is available. You may also reach us via email (office@meetinghousenurseryschool.org). Email is typically checked at least twice each day. Messages requiring immediate attention are best given over the phone. The "Tuition Box" is a mailbox located on the wall just inside the office. **Feel free to schedule an appointment with the Executive Director to answer questions, offer comments or express concerns. The Directors email is director@meetinghousenurseryschool.org**

Am Extended care: This is an extension to the morning program and is a multi-age class. Permanent spaces can be scheduled in this program

Lunch Bunch is an extended program that is offered from 11:30-1:00. Lunch Bunch can be signed up for on a permanent basis or used as a drop-in program if space is available.

If a family is choosing to sign up on a permanent basis and would like to withdraw from a bunch program they must give a 30-day written notice.

This program is not available to children under the age of 3.

Children bring their own lunch and the school provides milk.

Note:Children in Lunch Bunch may bring peanut/nut products for their own consumption. Lunch Bunch is held in Room 2.

A "peanut/nut free" table will be available upon request for a child enrolled in Lunch Bunch who has a peanut/nut allergy.

12. HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING?

- Extend the classroom's theme at home by checking out theme-related materials from the public library
- Check out one of our SPARC bags
- Talk with your child about school—use leading questions that require more than a yes or no answer: “What story did you read today? What dinosaurs were in the block corner? Tell me about this great art project!”
- Share information or materials with the classroom that you may have at home (collections, books, experiences)
- Volunteer to join in classroom activities
- ***Your positive and excited attitude will help your child feel confident and will help make your child's school experience the best!!***

14. FOOD ALLERGY POLICY & PROCEDURES:

Food Allergies/Sensitivities/Dietary Preferences Policy

Food allergies are common in young children today. In particular, there is a high incidence of peanut/nut allergies. Meeting House does provide daily snacks that are peanut/nut free and requires that all food brought into the school (i.e. for birthdays, family events and other special occasions) be peanut/nut free and do not have a warning that items “were processed in a facility that uses peanuts/nuts”. Homemade items sent in for snacks should contain an ingredient list. We expect cooperation from the entire school community in following this policy.

PLEASE NOTE: Children enrolled in Lunch Bunch may bring peanut/nut products for their own consumption. Lunch Bunch is held in Room 2. A “nut/peanut free” table will be available for a child enrolled in Lunch Bunch who has a peanut/nut allergy.

It is very important for parents of children with severe allergies to peanuts/nuts to be aware that Meeting House Nursery School is located in the First Unitarian Meeting House which conducts classes in the Nursery School rooms in the evenings and on the weekends. While the staff will make every effort to minimize the exposure to peanuts/nuts and related products, we cannot guarantee that children will not be exposed to peanuts/nuts.

Meeting House practices a shared responsibility approach in developing plans to accommodate an individual child's specific needs. Please alert the Director at the time of enrollment if your child is food allergic, has a sensitivity to a particular food, or if you have other dietary concerns. Meeting House Nursery School has adopted written practices and procedures for parents, staff and volunteers, which are available upon request.

Food Allergy Procedures:

1. The parent will notify the school in writing of the child's allergy.
2. The parent must complete a "Food Allergy Action Plan" which includes description of possible symptoms and reactions, and steps to take in the event of a reaction. This form must be signed by the parent and the child's physician. This form will be posted in the child's classroom and will include a photo of the child.
3. The parent will complete the following forms: Health History/Emergency Care Plan; Authorization to administer medication (if medication is required for reaction).
4. The parent will provide the school with the required medication to be kept at school. The medication must include the prescription label which includes the child's name. All medication must be in the original container.
5. The parent will monitor the medication for expiration date and replace medication after use or upon expiration.
6. The parent will be responsible to provide a "safe" snack for the child each day the child is in attendance. If the daily snack provided by Meeting House Nursery School is deemed "safe" by the parent, a Snack Approval form (located on the Snack Menu bulletin board) must be completed and signed by the parent and presented to the child's classroom teacher.
7. The parent must provide a container of "safe" snacks to be left at school in the event that there is a change in the planned school snack. (Some parents also leave a supply of special treats for the child in the event that a birthday snack is provided for the class.)
8. If the child is enrolled in the Lunch Bunch program, the parent may request an allergen-free table be provided for the child. **NOTE: Children enrolled in Lunch Bunch may bring in peanut/nut products for their own consumption. Lunch Bunch takes place in Room 4 and Room 1.**
9. The parent will work to educate their child on safe eating practices (eat only the foods provided to them by the adult in charge; do not trade or eat other children's food; explain what food allergies are and what the reaction could be if the child eats said allergen.)
10. It is the recommendation of Meeting House Nursery School that parents provide a Medic-Alert bracelet for their child.
11. The parent must notify the office of any change in the treatment or status of the allergy and provide a letter of explanation from the physician.
12. The parent will meet with the teachers to review the allergy action plan prior to attending the program.
13. If a child ingests or comes into contact with a known allergen parents will be notified immediately by MHNS staff.

Organization

1. **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** The Meeting House Board of Directors is the corporate policy-making body. Duties of the Board include establishing the corporate and legal existence of the school, setting the governing policies for the school's program, and appointing an Executive Director to

be the administrative officer in charge of the implementation of these policies and the day-to-day program operation. Membership on the Meeting House Board of Directors is open to parents and interested community persons and also includes one teacher representative from the staff.

The executive officers of the Board are:

the Chair, Vice Chair, Officer at Large and the Treasurer.

The Executive Director is a nonvoting member of the Board.

Board meetings are generally scheduled monthly on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm. These meetings are held at school and are open to interested parents. Board meeting minutes and agenda are posted on the "Board News" bulletin board in the hallway. Board information of specific interest is highlighted in the newsletter. To have an item placed on the agenda, please notify the Board Chair or Executive Director at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting.

In accordance with the Bylaws of Meeting House Nursery School, Inc., Board members hold a two year term with five positions voted for each year by the Annual Membership Meeting in May.

Board Contact information:

mhnsboard@gmail.com

Executive Director: Devon Zuleger

meetinghousenurseryschool@gmail.com

2. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: The role of the Executive Director is to:
 - assume the administrative responsibilities for the day-to-day program operation, including legal responsibilities for compliance with all statutory rules and regulations
 - act as a liaison between the Board, Staff, and parents so that each group understands the goals and needs of the others
 - serve as a professional advisor to the Board, contributing his/her knowledge of preschool programs and the developmental needs of preschool children

Executive Director: Devon Zuleger

3. SUPPORT STAFF: The school is fortunate to have an Administrative Assistant, Accountant, and Cleaning Service to support the day to day program operations.

Administrative Assistant: Mo Lancaster

Accountant: N4N

4. **DELEGATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY (Chain of Command):** The Board of Directors of Meeting House Nursery School, Inc. delegates to Devon Zuleger, in her capacity as Executive Director, the administrative authority to carry out the philosophy and policies as set forth by the Board and to be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school. In the event of her absence, the chain of command for assuming the responsibility for the school during hours of operation shall be as follows:

1. Mo Lancaster-Administrative Assistant
2. Resource Teacher
3. Cherie Carver, Teacher
4. Kari Hack, Teacher
5. Tera Disch, Teacher

5. **TEACHING STAFF:** Teachers on the staff of Meeting House Nursery School are hired based on their education and experience in early care and education. Each primary teacher has, at minimum, a degree/credential in child development or a related field and is responsible for the curriculum planning and development of her classroom program following the school's philosophy and according to the developmental needs of the children they teach. We are very fortunate at Meeting House to be recognized for the longevity of teaching staff.

Meeting House Teaching Staff 2023-2024

Room 1: Kari Hack, Kari Arciszewski

Room 2: Lish St. Piere, Meggan Beyer

Room 3:Tera Disch/Cherie Carver

Room 4: Katie Norcross/Dawn Gebler

Room 5: Michelle Leinbach

Room 6: Paige Flietner and Julie Cushman

6. **SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS:** In the event that a teacher is unable to be at school substitute teachers may be provided from the regular staff, parent volunteers or former teachers. Certification of substitutes is required if a long term substitution (greater than 5 days) is needed. The nursery school retains a permanent Substitute/Resource teacher on staff.

7. **STUDENT TEACHERS:** Edgewood College, UW-Madison and MATC often place student teachers in our program for field experience. Student

teachers work directly with our staff to plan and implement the program. On occasion, the student teacher's supervisor visits to observe. Also, area high school students occasionally join our program for field experience. Student Teachers participate in an orientation to our program and have on file a background verification form and a Criminal Records check through the Department of Justice.

8. COMMITTEES: Parent involvement is always welcomed and appreciated at Meeting House! One way to participate is through committee work. Parents/Guardians are invited to sign up for a committee on the "Parent Survey" sent out in August. Committees open for parent volunteers are:

Fundraising Committee
House & Grounds Committee
Connections Committee
Special Events Committee

9. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE: The goal of the grievance procedure is to resolve grievances when the parties involved are unable to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Procedure

1. A meeting should be scheduled between the involved parties. It is expected that the majority of issues will be resolved in an informal manner.
2. If resolution is not reached through informal means, a conference with the Executive Director and the involved parties will be held. The Executive Director will keep a written summary of the grievance and its resolution on file and will give a copy to the Board Chair.
3. If resolution is still not reached, the involved parties should schedule a meeting with the Grievance Committee (consisting of the Executive Committee and the Executive Director).
4. A written summary of the grievance and the Grievance Committee's decision will be placed on file.

Appeal Process

1. If the grievance is still not resolved, the involved parties should place the original grievance and reason for the appeal in writing and it will be placed on the agenda of the next scheduled Board meeting. Prior to the Board meeting, the Board will receive a copy of the written summary of meetings held regarding the grievance, along with the appeal by the aggrieved parties. The Board reserves the right to limit the time allowed for discussion of the grievance. The Board will attempt to remain objective and will hold the discussion of the grievance and any resolution confidential. A written summary of the grievance and the Board decision will be placed on file.

2. Any party not satisfied with Meeting House Nursery School's resolution may contact the State Licensing Office or the Office of Community Services City Child Care Unit.

Financial Information

1.TUITION: Tuition is **due on the first of each month**. Families that have consented to an ACH withdrawal will have funds taken on the first or the next business day available. A family who does not pay by ACH can pay by check. The check A one-month non-refundable tuition deposit is due at the time of registration. This tuition deposit is not included as an installment. The remainder of Tuition is divided into 9 equal tuition installment payments to be made September through May. The tuition is due regardless of the number of days the school is in session for a given month and must be paid even if the family is on vacation, ill or if the child is absent.

Parents will not be billed each month, but a reminder will be posted at the front entrance of the school. You can check your current amount due by logging into your MyProcure portal that was set up this summer. Timely payments are the parent's responsibility. Checks should be made out to "Meeting House Nursery School". The Administrative Assistant shall notify in writing those who have not paid tuition within seven working days from the 1st of the month. **Late payments** will be assessed a \$5.00 charge for each week overdue. Checks returned for **insufficient funds** will be subject to a \$20.00 charge.

Failure to pay tuition is grounds for dismissal from the program. Families that are 60 days in arrears with their tuition payment, without making prior arrangements with the Executive Director, will be denied further attendance. Any additional fees for drop-in services (Lunch Bunch or Extended) are due at the end of the month the service was rendered.

Parent Helper

Snack and housekeeping needs, while at the same time making the school more affordable for the parents. Participating parents receive a tuition reduction of \$80.00 per month in exchange for working at school one day per week. Interested parents should stop in the office for more information and fill out an application form.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: The nursery school offers scholarships each year. We have two scholarship funds. The Max Gaebler Fund honors a former minister of the FUS who was instrumental in the forming of the nursery school. The Connie Johnson fund began in 2007 in honor of Connie for her 30 years of service to the school. The school budgets \$7000 towards financial aid annually. Generally, financial assistance is distributed at the time of our Registration period in February for the following academic year. However, financial aid may be available once the academic year has begun for families that should find their

financial situation has changed. Interested families should inquire in the office.

FUNDRAISING: The school supports special projects including equipment purchases, capital improvements and scholarships through our fundraising efforts. We have two fundraisers each year: our direct-appeal campaign in the fall and our Silent Auction in the spring. Meeting House also has a t-shirt sale each fall and school photos in the spring. These service activities include a percentage of sales being awarded to Meeting House.

DONATIONS: Donations to the school program of money, services, or materials are always welcomed. Your donation may be designated for a particular purpose (Staff appreciation, scholarship, equipment, etc.). Our Federal Tax ID number is **23-7448560** for your tax purposes. Classrooms have amazon wish lists and the school has a paypal giving fund. Links to all donation sites can be found on our web page.

6. WITHDRAWAL:

A. In the event that the school asks to have a child withdrawn, any unused portions of tuition will be reimbursed to the family. The registration fee is non-refundable.

B. If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw the child after July 1st and the Executive Director is able to find a child to fill the vacancy, the family will be financially responsible for only as much of the school year **as has passed until the vacancy is filled**. If another child is not found to fill the vacancy, the parents/guardians will be financially responsible for the tuition charge for the remainder of the year. **The registration fee and tuition deposit is non-refundable in either case.**

C. A 30-day written notice is required to withdraw from any program.

D. If a child would withdraw for medical reasons affecting the child, and a physician's statement to this effect is provided to the school and the board approves the withdrawal, the parent or legal guardian will be liable for only the fees already incurred. The registration fee is non-refundable.

E. If a family withdraws from any program on or before July 1st, the registration fee and last month's tuition deposit will be non-refundable. The family will not, however, be financially responsible for any further school tuition.

F. The tuition deposit for Extended programs and/or Lunch Bunch is non-refundable after May 1st. If a family chooses to withdraw a child from the lunch/breakfast bunch program they must provide a 30 day written notice. During the 30 day period the family will be obligated to continue lunch/breakfast bunch tuition payment. After 30 days, they will be released from any lunch/breakfast bunch fees.

Health and Safety

1. HEALTH

- Smoke Free Environment: Meeting House Nursery School is a smoke free environment. Smoking is not allowed in the building or on the grounds.
- CPR-AED/First Aid Training: Our staff is trained in Infant/Child CPR, Rescue Breathing and Pediatric First Aid by the American Heart Association. Staff is recertified every two years as required.
- Prevention of Communicable Disease and Infection Control: The staff receives annual training and is required to follow the Universal Precautions as found in OSHA standards when handling body fluids. Only staff members immunized for Hepatitis B will handle blood. The Staff is also trained and follows licensing guidelines for hand washing, sanitizing toys and furniture and diapering procedures.
- Injury: In the event of an injury, the staff will follow first aid procedures. A superficial wound will be washed with soap and water and covered. Parents will be notified immediately in any of the following situations: head injuries (any bump, blow, or jolt to the head) and seizures. Parents/guardians will be notified about any injuries and the injury will also be noted in the Medical Log book located in the office. If the injury has included the head a parent or guardian will be notified immediately by phone call or text messaging (procare connect). If emergency treatment is required, the parents will be notified and the school will take necessary measures. The University Hospital Emergency Room is the nearest medical facility. A Staff member will accompany a child in an ambulance or by car to the University Hospital Emergency Room.
- Illness: In accordance with State Licensing regulations, a child may not attend school if he/she shows any symptoms of illness such as sore throat, inflammation of the eyes, fever of 100.4 degrees or more, live lice, cough, skin rash, diarrhea, vomiting, or other illness or condition having the potential to affect the health of others. A child should be symptom-free for 24 hours and on the required prescription medication, if applicable, for the proper time to assure no communicability. We will follow State Licensing guidelines and the guidelines of the Dane County Public Health Department with regard to illness and communicable disease.

- A child who has been ill with infectious hepatitis, infectious mononucleosis, or tuberculosis must have a doctor's permission to return to school.
- If a child becomes ill at school, he/she will be isolated within sight and sound of a staff member. The parent/guardian or other authorized person will be notified to pick up the child immediately.
- Families will be notified in writing via email if their child has been exposed

to a communicable disease.

- Emergency Treatment: Written permission from the parent/guardian to call the family physician or to refer the child for emergency medical care must be on file at school (Emergency Card and Enrollment Form). This permission will be used only when the child's parent/guardian cannot be reached.
- Medication: Medication of any kind will not be administered to a child except on written order of the physician and/or written permission of the parent/guardian. This medication must be in the original container and bear the child's name, dosage, and directions for administering. Medication also includes sunscreen, insect repellent and diapering cream. "Authorization to Administer Medication" forms are available in the office.
- Health Form: All children and staff will have a health form on file in the school office.

2. SAFETY:

- Parking: Parking for the Nursery School is permitted in any open space near the nursery school entrance. Because of the limited space in the parking lot we ask that your drop off and pick up be done in a timely fashion. The Staff has been issued parking stickers. Nursery school parents and visitors do not need stickers or visitor passes **unless they expect to be at school for more than 15 minutes.** (Permits are not required for events held in the evenings.) If you are issued a warning notice for a parking violation, bring it to the Nursery School office. We will inform the parking monitor that you are a nursery school parent and the warning will be erased. **If you do not tell us about the warning you run the risk of being issued a parking ticket by the Shorewood Police.** We are not able to erase parking tickets once they have been issued!

Do not park in fire lanes or handicap parking, unless you have a permit to do so. You will be issued a parking ticket. When driving in the parking lot follow the arrows entering and exiting the parking lot in a counter clockwise direction.

CHILDREN MAY NOT BE LEFT UNATTENDED IN CARS during drop off and pick up times. Please do not leave your car unattended with the motor running. Parents/guardians should accompany children to and from the classrooms.

Occasionally the church may hold a function that fills the parking lot and makes parking difficult. On those days, the nursery school Staff will help families in the parking lot by directing traffic or taking children from the parking lot to the classes so that parents do not need to park.

- Release of Children: Your child's safety is very important to us. We can only release a child to those adults you have authorized for pick up on your

emergency card. Please make sure your emergency card is up to date throughout the school year. If the Staff is not familiar with an adult they may ask to see a photo ID. If a child needs to be picked up by someone not listed on your emergency card please give us advance notice.

- Drills and Inspections: Emergency drills (fire and tornado) and building safety inspections will be conducted monthly. These reports are posted on the “Board News” bulletin board. The Madison Fire Department inspects the facility several times per year. Fire extinguishers are checked periodically and Staff and volunteers are trained in their use. In the event that we need to evacuate the building the staff and children will go to one of our pre-arranged off-site evacuation locations:

- The Waisman Center, 1500 Highland Avenue or

- University Stations Clinic, 2880 University Avenue

Parents will be notified by phone of the evacuation and the location for pick up. The Staff is also trained in “lock down” procedures.

Staff has been trained and an Emergency Procedures process. The staff is retrained at the beginning of each year on proper protocol and procedure during various emergencies.

Traditions

With a history of over 65 years we do have our traditions!!

1. **Child of the Week:** This is a popular tradition in our older classes (Room 2 & 4). It is designed to enhance each child’s self-esteem by giving that child an opportunity for special attention. During their child’s week, parents/guardians are encouraged to send in photos, share some time at school, bring in a special snack or share a family tradition. Parents should consult with the teachers for ideas.
2. **Scholastic Book Club:** Each month the school emails a reminder that it is time to order scholastic books. All orders are placed on-line. This the optional program provides the opportunity for families to purchase books inexpensively. The school receives bonus points for books purchased and uses the points to obtain books and equipment for the school.
3. **Birthdays:** Families are welcome to send in a special snack or visit the classroom to celebrate a child’s birthday. ***Please be sure snacks are free of all peanut/nut products and have not been processed in a facility that uses nuts/peanuts.*** Some families purchase a gift for the school to commemorate the day and all such donations are always welcome! A “Wish List” is posted in each classroom.
4. **Family Night:** Each fall the school has a whole family Open House in

the early evening for families, friends and relatives. Families visit classrooms, the playground and have the opportunity to enjoy refreshments.

5. **School Photographs:** In spring school photos are taken. A portion of the sales is given to the school by the photographer.

6. **Week of the Young Child:** Each spring a week is designated as the Week of the Young Child. This is a national event sponsored by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). Fun events are planned all week that may include Pajama Day, Beach Day or an all-school sing along.

7. **Special Person Night:** On an evening during Week of the Young Child each child is asked to invite **one** special **adult** to attend an Open House at school. This casual evening provides ample opportunity to meet the teachers, explore the classroom and playground all at your own pace! Children typically invite a grandparent, mom or dad, close adult friend or a child care provider.

8. **Fall/Spring Spruce-up Day:** This is our annual playground clean up day which includes gardening, weeding, painting and repairing our building and playgrounds.

9. **Annual Membership Meeting and Board Orientation/Organization Meeting:** This is a chance to meet Board Candidates, review the past year and add your questions or comments. The Board election officially closes at this meeting. The Board is oriented to their roles and elects its officers at this time.

10. **End of the Year Picnic:** This is an opportunity for families to bring a picnic supper and enjoy the company of other families and Staff members at a local park.

13. **“Parents Night Out”-Silent Auction:** Local businesses (and families!) are solicited for items beginning in January. We open an online auction format about a week before the event. Our “Parent’s Night Out” adult-only evening in April is our live and silent auction event. This is a casual, fun filled evening of games, and social interaction with other parents. The Fundraising Committee plans this event and strives to create a fun, pressure free and casual atmosphere for all families to attend!

14. **Parent Programs:** Throughout the year the school schedules Parent Programs on topics of interest to parents. Past programs have included kindergarten readiness, learning through play, developmental milestones and activities to do with your child.

How Can You Be Involved??

You are a member of the Meeting House community. This may be your first experience with school or you may be a veteran. Regardless, participating in your child's school will make you and your child feel comfortable and part of the community. A few suggestions for getting involved are:

- ❖ Share yourself! Read a book, play on the playground...
- ❖ Share your skills! Carpentry, landscaping, sewing...
- ❖ Share your ideas! Drop an email or speak with the Director...
- ❖ Share your marketing! Your positive "word of mouth" keeps our school full!
- ❖ Share your time! Serve on the Board, volunteer for field trips, work on committees...
- ❖ Share your talents! Sing with the children, share your occupation, do a craft project...

Learning Through Play

As previously stated, Meeting House Nursery School has provided play-based activities for children since 1949. We use the philosophy "learning through play" as the basis for curriculum development.

Jean Piaget a Swiss-born biologist and pioneer in studying how children learn felt that the best strategy for children's learning is to keep children curious, make them wonder, and offer them real problem-solving challenges rather than giving them information. He believed that play provides an important avenue for learning. When children play they are making sense of their surroundings. As they imitate what they see, they begin to understand how things work and what things are for.

The Alliance for Childhood states that "Child-initiated play lays a foundation for learning and academic success. Through play, children learn to interact with others, develop language skills, recognize and solve problems, and discover human potential. In short, play helps children make sense of and find their place in the world."

The Benefits of Play

- Physical Development: Active play facilitates children's sensorimotor development. It helps children develop healthy exercise habits.
- Academics: There is a close link between play and healthy cognitive

growth. It lays the foundation for later academic success in reading and writing. It provides hands-on experiences with real-life materials that help children develop abstract scientific and mathematical concepts. Play is critical for the development of imagination and creative problem-solving skills.

□ Social and Emotional Development: Make-believe play increases cooperation, empathy, and impulse control.

□ Sheer Joy!! The evidence is clear—healthy children of all ages love to play! Experts in child development say that plenty of time for childhood play is one of the key factors leading to happiness in adulthood!

What you can do to help your child play:

1. Reduce or eliminate “screen time” (TV watching, computer games, smart phones/tablets).
2. Reduce time spent in adult-organized activities. Children need time for self-initiated play. Overscheduled lives leave little time for play.
3. Choose simple toys. A good toy is 10% toy and 90% child. Blocks, Lego, dolls, sand toys and other open-ended materials help to stretch creativity.
4. Encourage outdoor adventures. Children should play outside every day so they can run, climb, or dream up dramas. Natural materials such as sticks, mud, leaves and rocks are the “raw materials of play”.
5. Let them participate in “real work”. Believe it or not, adult activity (cooking, raking, and cleaning) actually inspires children to play! Children like to help for short periods of time and then engage in their own play.