



Mandala

CHILDREN'S HOUSE

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Parent Handbook

Mandala Children's House
PARENT HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Mandala Children's House.

We would like to share with you our history, philosophy, activities, policies, and procedures at Mandala. We are here to support both you and your child while you are enrolled at Mandala, and we want to assure that your experience in our program is as positive as possible. Welcome to the "Mandala family."

Please take time to read through this information carefully. In your packet, you will receive an *Admissions Agreement* to be signed, acknowledging that you understand and agree to follow the policies and information presented here.

Mandala: The Symbol Behind The Name

The Mandala is a universal symbol representing wholeness and harmony. The basic symbol is that of a circle with a centerpoint. The circle with a cross drawn in it is a form drawn by people all over the world since primitive times. It is the first symbol drawn by children when they pass from the scribbling stage into drawing. MANDALA was chosen as the name for our school because it symbolizes our commitment to the development of the *whole* child. The term CHILDREN'S HOUSE comes from Maria Montessori, who called her educational programs "children's houses."

PHILOSOPHY

Mandala Mission ❖ *“Nurture the child. Support the family. Nourish the staff.”*

Our highest value is that Mandala be a caring and nurturing place for children, parents, and staff. The staff, child care providers, and Board of Directors have kept Mandala a positive enriching environment for children and their families through their ongoing commitment to this philosophy.

We value these ideals...

- ❖ *Providing an education for the whole child: mind, body, and spirit.*
- ❖ *Nurturing the child and supporting the family.*
- ❖ *Supporting cultural, religious, racial, and socio-economic diversity that is representative of our community.*
- ❖ *Modeling open communication and creative problem-solving for children and adults alike.*
- ❖ *Creating an environment where teachers, staff, and child care providers can learn and thrive through support of their personal as well as professional growth.*
- ❖ *Sustaining a harmony between the needs of the individual and the needs of the organization.*

MONTESSORI

A Developmental Point of View ❖ *Following The Child's Lead*

Our curriculum and learning activities are set up to enhance four developmental areas: physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and creative. The child progresses at his own pace according to his needs, interests and abilities. We will not hurry or push a child in his or her development. Instead, we support the child in his or her own unique development.

Montessori ❖ *A Method of Implementing Our Philosophy*

We choose to use the Montessori Method because we believe it is the best curriculum for implementing “a developmental point of view” and supporting a child’s developing brain. Montessori education, in keeping with the philosophy of Mandala, is concerned with the learning and development of the WHOLE CHILD.

Maria Montessori created a philosophy of child development based on her observations of children. Dr. Montessori observed that “...*education is not something the teacher does...it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to, but in virtue of, experiences in which the child acts on the environment.*”

The Montessori Classroom

From this philosophy, Maria Montessori developed educational materials which young children could use as they explored and experienced their environment. These self-teaching, sequential materials are the foundation of the Montessori classroom. The young child, through interacting with the materials and equipment, has many opportunities to problem-solve (the basis for all later learning) and to reinforce concepts already acquired.

The child comes to Mandala with an absorbent mind, a natural and spontaneous urge to learn about his or her world. The ***prepared environment*** of a classroom and the materials in it are designed and specifically arranged to meet the needs of the developing child’s ***sensitive periods*** to learning. The ***teacher acts as a catalyst*** and is the link between the child and the environment

A Child’s “Jobs”

In a Montessori classroom, a child’s learning activities are often referred to as “jobs” because Maria Montessori viewed a child’s learning through activity and play as his or her own “work.”

High Scope

High Scope is used as a supplemental curriculum in our classroom. Like Montessori, it employs an interactive, experiential approach that follows a child’s natural process. High Scope focuses on the areas of creative art, science, and dramatic play, which compliments the Montessori areas of practical life, sensorial, math, and language.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Mandala Organization

From its beginning, Mandala has been dedicated to a participatory style of management in keeping with its philosophy. We are committed to a team approach in which employees at each level are given independence and self-determination in decision-making that affects their particular area of work.

- **Administrative Management Team** - *Located in the Mandala Office Building Phone: 251-8633*

The Administrative Management Team is composed of the four office administrators:

<i>Administrative Director</i>	Marilyn Drino	<i>Preschool Program and General Administration</i>
<i>Office Director</i>	Roberta Sota	<i>Payments and Accounts</i>
<i>Child Care Director</i>	Jean Buell	<i>Child Care Referral and State Funded Child Care Program</i>
<i>Family Services Director</i>	Anne Kangas, L.C.S.W.	<i>Family Support and Child/Parent Resources</i>

The Administrative Team members collaborate and function cooperatively in goal-setting and decision-making for the school. Each director is responsible for her own program area and is accountable to the Administrative Director and the Board of Directors. The Administrative Director takes leadership of the Administrative Team, keeps the overview of the school, and carries ultimate responsibility and authority for the operation of the total school program.

- **Teaching Team** - *Classroom Building Phone: 251-2422*

The teachers work together cooperatively as a Teaching Team and interface with the Administrative Team. They implement the goals and philosophy of the school by setting up and maintaining the environment in the classroom and planning appropriate curriculum. The Administrative Director supervises the Teaching Team and the Family Services Director provides regular consultation. The Teaching Team meets for weekly staff meetings on Tuesdays with the Administrative staff.

- **Board of Directors** - *Mailboxes in the Office Building Leave Phone Message: 251-8633*

The Board is responsible for setting general policies that reflect the philosophy of Mandala Children's House. There is a monthly Board meeting that is attended by the Administrative Director and representative members of the Administrative and Teaching Teams, as needed.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict Resolution ❖ *Mandala Children's House Grievance Policy*

Most problems occur from misunderstandings, misinformation or lack of information. Thus, it is important that you check out any concerns, questions or problems as they occur. In this way, issues can be dealt with before they escalate into something larger.

- The first step is as follows: It is important to take the problem to the most appropriate person at an appropriate time. If the problem is in the classroom, ask one of the teachers if you can arrange a time to talk to her. If the problem occurs in a child care home, talk to the child care provider. If the problem is with your payments or bill, talk to Roberta (Office Director). If the problem is about the Child Care Program in general, talk to Jean (Child Care Director). If the problem is about school policy, or the school program in general, talk to Marilyn (Administrative Director). If the problem is about a child's behavior, a referral for outside services (speech screening, etc.) or a parenting issue, talk to Anne (Family Social Services Director). Sit down with the person and talk honestly and clearly about the problem and your concern. Hopefully, you will reach a conclusion that is helpful and satisfactory.
- The second step occurs if you are not satisfied with the results of talking to the appropriate person. At this point, talk to Marilyn (Administrative Director) for assistance in resolving the problem unless the concern is with one of the child care homes or child care provider. If that is the case, talk to Jean (Child Care Director).
- The third step would be taken if you do not believe your concern has been satisfactorily resolved up to this point. Write a letter to the Mandala Board of Directors, stating the problem and requesting a response and/or a meeting with the Board. The Board Chairperson will contact you directly.

HISTORY

Small Beginnings

Mandala Children's House was founded in 1975, through the vision and commitment of *Marilyn Drino*, a credentialed teacher, and *Linda Hovis*, a Montessori-trained teacher with administrative experience in Early Childhood Education. We call Marilyn and Linda our "Founding Mothers." Linda assumed the role of Administrative Director and Marilyn assumed the role of Preschool Director. They began the first year with 11 students in one morning preschool class and both Linda and Marilyn teaching in the classroom. There were five child care homes affiliated with Mandala who served low-income children in the area through a county grant.

The First "Vision" of Mandala

The essence of Linda and Marilyn's original "vision" can be found in the Mandala philosophy. In Marilyn's words:

"We wanted to set up a quality school on the East Side and we were really committed to diversity, which is why we sought grants from the State so that we could have low-income students in our school population. We wanted to offer quality preschool to everyone. Probably the most important part of our vision was the idea, which was quite novel at the time, of integrating social-emotional growth with cognitive and physical growth and creating a means for children to blend all of these areas into their learning...not as separate entities...but as a WHOLE.

We also wanted to establish a place where we could work and be mothers and not feel the pull between work and family. We wanted to create a work environment that supported people in caring for their family, rather than hindering them. Our vision was a work-place where people are committed to using good communication skills, where people are supported and respected, and where the staff is encouraged to continue to grow and develop, both personally and professionally.

We've become more sophisticated in what we do now, and more professional, but all the attitudes are still the same today."

Mandala Qualifies For A State Department of Education Grant

By the end of 1976, Mandala had expanded to include an afternoon session and a Home Child Care network serving thirty low-income children, through a special grant from the State Department of Education. We became a model program for our innovative combination of services: family "home" child care plus Montessori preschool.

Changes Over The Years

The years that followed were highlighted by an increase in staff, a summer session, the Early Preschool class, a Pre-Kindergarten program, and an extended lunch program during the summer. Linda Hovis left her position in 1982 but acted as a consultant and remained on the Board of Directors of the school until 1985. From 1982-1984, Ximena Pearson served as Administrative Director, and she was instrumental in organizing a complete remodeling of Mandala.

Administrative Reorganization: Creation of the "Management Team"

In 1984, a "horizontal" Management Team model was formally adopted by the Board to reflect an operational style consistent with Mandala's philosophy. Marilyn Drino became the Preschool Director, Jean Buell the Child Care Director, Roberta Sota the Office Director, and Patricia Bagby the Business Manager. The Board of Directors acted in a supervisory role to the Management Team. 1989, the Patricia, our accountant, left the team to serve as an off-site consultant.

Marilyn Takes On New Role Of Administrative Director

In 1987, this model was modified slightly by the Board, and Marilyn was appointed to the position of Administrative Director. This change expanded her role to that of overseeing the management of all of Mandala, including the functions of Preschool Director. On a day-to-day basis, the Management Team continues to work in a horizontal manner, but as the Administrative Director, Marilyn carries the ultimate responsibility for leadership of the entire organization.

Family Services Added

In 1991, we created the position of Family Services Director. Anne Kangas, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, joined the Administrative Team to offer more specialized early childhood intervention services to parents, children, staff, and child care providers. Anne had been part of the original founding and history of Mandala, and she had served on the Board as the Personnel Chairperson since its inception.

Additional SDE Grant

In 1992, we received an additional grant from the State Department of Education to serve low-income working parents. In 1997, our Child Care Program received an Outstanding Commendation Award from the State Department of Education *"for the comprehensive social services provided to families by employing an L.C.S.W. and for the enrichment activities provided to children in the family child care homes by including them in the center-based preschool program on a part-time basis."*

25th Anniversary

In the school year 2000-2001, Mandala families and friends celebrated our 25th Anniversary. What a significant milestone for us! Many of our staff have been with us for over twenty years. Although we are constantly growing and changing, our core values have remained the same throughout the years. Our motto "*Nurture the child. Support the family. Nourish the staff.*" described our original vision in 1975, and it still inspires us today. We are proud of our total school program and the excellent reputation we have earned in our local and state-wide community.

CHILD CARE

Family Child Care

The concept for Mandala's Preschool and Home Child Care Program came from Linda Hovis, co-founder of Mandala. She researched and formed a model for this concept in the thesis she wrote for her Masters Degree from the College of Notre Dame. The children are cared for in the nurturing home environment of licensed family child care homes and they are able to have a preschool experience in the Mandala classroom. We believe this arrangement offers the best of both worlds to children in early childhood education.

In 1976, the State Department of Education awarded grants to programs offering innovative child care approaches. We received a grant that we have retained and expanded, enabling us to give child care and school services to low-income families.

Mandala has a referral list of 10 to 12 licensed family child care homes. The child care providers are independent contractors and contract with Mandala on a semi-yearly basis. All parents are welcome to our referral list.

Mandala Children's House Referral Policy

Mandala Children's House believes that parents are best able to choose and evaluate child care for their children because they know their own child's needs. Mandala will give parents our referral list and parents may choose a home that most suits their needs. Each child care home is licensed and monitored by the State of California. A Mandala referral does not imply a recommendation, and we urge parents to carefully interview and check references before leaving a child in care.

ADMISSION POLICIES

Registration Process

Children may be admitted to the school in one of two ways:

❖ Open Enrollment Throughout the Year

New children are accepted throughout the year from our waiting list as openings occur and space is available.

❖ Spring Pre-Registration for Summer and/or Fall

Registration for classes for the following summer and/or fall occurs every spring at a designated time.

The process is as follows:

- First, applications are accepted from continuing Mandala families only.
- Second, we take applications from families from our waiting list to enter school during the current year.
- Third, we accept applications from all new families.

Your child will be enrolled according to the date that your signed and completed registration form and fees are received in the office. If your first choice class is already filled, your child will be put in your second choice class and on the waiting list for your first choice.

★ **REMINDER:** *Continuing families must re-register each year. You are not automatically re-enrolled.*

Enrollment Packet

You will receive this packet at the “*New Parent Orientation Meeting*” or after you register. All your completed forms must be turned into the office before your child may attend class (except *Physician’s Form*, which is due within 30 days).

Orientation Meeting

A child of a new family can not be admitted to class until the parent/s have attended or signed up for our *New Parent Orientation Meeting*. Families enrolling in the middle of the year will be given an individual orientation when they register.

Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are admitted on a case by case basis.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Mandala Children’s House, Inc. Preschool admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex, political beliefs, marital status, disability or special needs in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and other school administered programs.

Working In Partnership With The Family

We believe that Mandala staff and parents need to work hand in hand for the good of their child. We place a high value on partnership. We have found that when *all* the people who share a common interest in a child meet as a team to share information and make decisions, the greater the benefit to the child. Positive change occurs when everyone cooperates.

“Family” has many meanings. At Mandala, we consider family to be those persons primarily responsible for a child and/or whomever the child considers to be his “family.”

Developmental Needs and Special Services

Our staff has an expertise in child development and we frequently identify behavioral or developmental needs in young children that parents may or may not recognize. Every effort will be made to involve the parents/guardians in the process of identifying the need and working towards possible solutions. In these instances, the preschool staff may recommend additional professional help or services for the child or family. Our Family Services Director is available to assist with intervention and referrals in these cases.

Termination

If we have concerns that a child’s developmental needs are not being appropriately met in our school, or if we believe that our school program cannot meet the needs of the parent/guardian, we will work together to identify the problem and seek solutions.

However, if after reasonable and appropriate interventions have been tried, it is determined by Mandala that our school is not in the best interests of the child or the parent/guardian, we reserve the right to request that the child be withdrawn from our program. We will assist a family, as best as possible, in finding a program that will meet their child’s needs, and we will help

to prepare the child for withdrawal in a way that is consistent with the child's ability to understand. Withdrawal procedures will be implemented in the time frame that Mandala believes is appropriate.

☞ *We reserve the right to suspend services to any family due to behavioral problems in dealing with a child or parents.* ☞

Confidentiality

It is Mandala's policy that any information regarding the child, the child's family, or other matters discussed with the Director or staff will be held in strictest confidence.

Conflict of Interest

In an effort to maintain the professional status of Mandala staff and to prevent any potential conflict of interest, contracting with the teaching staff for personal babysitting services is discouraged by Mandala. However, should you hire any Mandala staff, it must be outside the school premises and with the understanding that such arrangement and payment for services is solely between you and the staff member. The arrangements are not sanctioned by Mandala Children's House.

PAYMENT POLICIES

Non Profit Status

Mandala Children's House, Inc. is a § 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation.

Tuition Is computed Yearly

Tuition is figured on a yearly basis, over a 9 ½ month school year. It is divided into monthly installments for ease of payment. Our operating budget includes periodic holidays, staff in-service days, and anticipated child absences. Tuition is non-adjustable. In no case can credits or rebates be given, as Mandala has limited enrollment and fixed costs.

Second Child Family Discount

Families with a second child receive a discount of 5%, deducted monthly from their family tuition.

Payments

▪ **Registration Fee**

This is a non-refundable yearly fee (per family) paid at the time of registration.

▪ **Family Activities Fee**

This is a non-refundable yearly fee (per family) which covers the cost of school events. It is paid at registration.

▪ **Deposit**

A ½ month deposit is due in advance, before your child enters school. This payment is for June (the last two weeks of the school year). It serves as a deposit that holds your child's place in a class. This deposit is refundable if you withdraw your child from the school before April 1st and also give 30 days notice.

▪ **Monthly Tuition**

Tuition payments are due and payable on the 1st of each month. We do not send out monthly bills, due to the added expense of mailing. Payments may be left in the classroom mailbox or brought to the office.

▪ **Late Payments**

A late charge of \$10.00 is due if the bill is not paid by the 15th of each month. If a payment is not received by the 25th of the month, the child may not return to school until the tuition balance is paid in full.

▪ **Unpaid Accounts**

It is our policy to use a collection agency for unpaid accounts. Parents are liable for reasonable attorney fees and collection costs in the event of a default.

▪ **Questions or Concerns?**

Our Office Manager handles all payments and accounts. She will try to work with you if difficulties arise.

Notification of Withdrawal

Parents must give Mandala **30 days notice** if they plan to withdraw their child from school. Notification must be given to the Office (in writing) and also to the Classroom. School fees are payable for 30 days following notification of withdrawal. Under special circumstances, the Administrative Director may waive the 30-day withdrawal notification.

DISCIPLINE

Positive Discipline Guidelines

Mandala is committed to providing a supportive learning environment where young children can grow to their fullest potential. We are committed to respecting the uniqueness of each child and following each child's own developmental chronology. These values are reflected in our discipline policies and procedures.

We believe "discipline" is another aspect of teaching and learning, not punishment. Discipline encompasses all those actions taken by the teachers to encourage the development of social and behavioral competence in children.

We follow these guidelines for teaching children to behave in responsible ways:

- ❖ *Set realistic expectations for young children's behavior.*
- ❖ *Create an environment that enhances the possibility that children will behave in appropriate ways.*
- ❖ *Focus on positive communication techniques to gain children's cooperation.*
- ❖ *Give children alternatives to turn destructive situations into constructive ones.*
- ❖ *Use natural and logical consequences to motivate and empower children to make responsible decisions about their behavior.*
- ❖ *Teach preschool children to use problem-solving skills and strategies to resolve conflicts.*

ILLNESS POLICY

Information Regarding Illness or Injuries

According to state law, children who are ill may not be at school. In order to prevent contagion and provide comfort, a child must remain home, or will be sent home, for any one of the following conditions:

- **Fever** - A temperature of 100° orally, 99° under arm, 101° by ear. Child's temperature must be normal for 24 hours in before returning to return to school.
 - **Diarrhea** - Child must be free of symptoms for a full 24 hours.
 - **Vomiting** - Child must be without symptoms for 24 hours.
 - **Severe upper respiratory illness** - including congestion, constant uncontrolled nasal discharge, mucus in the eyes, colored mucus in the nose, severe uncontrolled productive cough (raising phlegm).
 - **Skin infections or rashes that are suspicious of being contagious** - including ringworm, impetigo, measles, chicken pox, herpes, etc. *Report to Mandala Office.*
 - **Communicable diseases** – including measles, tuberculosis, whooping cough, etc. reportable to the Department of Public Health. *Report to Mandala Office.*
 - **Any lesion, wound, or skin rash with bleeding or oozing of clear fluid or pus** - A child may be returned when:
 - (1.) a health care provider signs a note stating that the condition is not contagious, *and*
 - (2.) the area can be covered by a bandage without any drainage through the bandage.
 - **Head Lice, Scabies or other infestations** - *Report to Mandala Office.*
 - **Conjunctivitis ("pink eye")** - with white or yellow discharge. *Report to Mandala Office.*
 - **Mouth sores with drooling.**
 - **Severe injury**
 - **Any condition which appears to need medical attention**, which keeps a child from participating comfortably in usual activities, or which requires one-on-one care.
- ❖ *The final decision as to whether a child may attend school or is to be excluded from the program is made by the school staff. We may request that a doctor's release be obtained before the child returns to school.*

Medication

- **Prescription medication** - If medicine is a "prescribed" medication from a doctor, it must be in the prescription bottle and labeled with the child's name, the time to be administered, and the dosage amount. Medication labeled for someone else cannot be given to your child.
- **Over the counter medication** - If medication is an over the counter medication, then clear directions must be printed on the label appropriate to the age of the child.
- **Written permission from parent/guardian** - Both of the above must be accompanied by a written note from the parent giving permission to administer the medication. This note must be written and dated daily for the entire time the medicine is to be given.

Emergency Forms

Current emergency forms providing accurate, up-to-date information are required by law. We should be informed of any changes in emergency information. New emergency forms are required each new school year.

Grooming

Your child will be expected to come to school each day odor-free and with clean clothing, hair, and fingernails.

YOUR CHILD'S DAY ❖ EARLY PRESCHOOL

EARLY PRESCHOOL ❖ Daily Schedule

All young children do best when they have predictable routines, so the teachers follow the same schedule consistently every day. The times are slightly flexible, to accommodate the activities of the day. For instance, if Snack takes less time, the children may have a slightly longer time on the playground.

MWF Schedule

9:00 - 9:10	Quiet Story Time
9:00 - 10:15	Work Time
10:15 - 10:25	Clean-up/Hand-washing
10:25 - 10:40	Snack Time
10:40 - 11:00	Small Group
11:00 - 11:25	Music & Movement
11:30 - 12:00	Playground Time

T/Th Schedule

9:00 - 9:10	Quiet Story Time
9:00 - 10:05	Work Time
10:05 - 10:15	Clean-up/Hand-washing
10:15 - 10:30	Snack Time
10:30 - 10:50	Small Group
10:50 - 11:05	Music & Movement
11:05 - 11:30	Playground Time

❖ Quiet Story Time

When the children first come into the Early Preschool, they begin their day by coming to the large group area and sitting with the teachers for a quiet story or two. This calming activity helps them with separation. The story engages them, and their focus shifts away from Mommy (or Daddy, or Caregiver) towards an interest in school and the other children.

❖ Work Time: A Time of "Individual Choice"

After Story Time is over, the children are free to work in the classroom or in the outdoor covered patio area, moving from one area to another. They may choose any job or activity they wish, and they may work alone, with a teacher, or with other children.

- **Inside Activities** for the Early Preschoolers include a variety of puzzles, peg boards, Duplo blocks, shape sorting, texture matching, color sorting and matching, sorting by size, etc. Children also have an opportunity to play in the dramatic play area, look at books in the book corner, or participate in art activities (gluing, coloring, etc.).
- **Outside Activities** in the Patio Area include painting at the easel, playing in the sand box, building with blocks, sliding down the slide, and climbing on the play structure.

During Work Time, the teachers encourage children's language development and assist them in their social and emotional development. Some of the focus during this time, as well as during the rest of the day, is to support the children in gaining skills that lead to greater independence. The teachers help those children who are ready to learn to use the toilet. They teach the children how to wash their hands, to put away their jobs, to clean up spills, to put on their jackets, and gain self-help skills.

❖ Small Group

Small Group is a quiet time where one teacher and six children meet each day and share special moments together. It is a focused time for teaching social-emotional skills, using sensory-based activities. Each day, the teacher leads her group through one of many structured activities in a theme area from our *Coping Curriculum*. The Early Preschoolers are just learning how to be together in a group, so their Small Group activities are very simple and experiential. As the year unfolds, the children are able to be in a group setting for a longer period of time and they develop more and more oral language skills. The teachers use books and puppets to focus on subjects that are important to all children at this age. For two year-olds, most of their concerns are centered on separation, missing their parent, building trust with other caregivers, emerging independence, and learning to use the toilet.

❖ Music and Movement

This is a favorite time of the day for most Early Preschoolers. The teachers teach a variety of songs, finger plays, and movement activities during Music Time. They love doing the finger plays and dancing to music and they quickly learn all the words to the songs.

❖ Playground

At the end of the morning, the children go out to the big playground. We close off the top part of the play structure to the Early Preschoolers. They use the lower part of the structure with the small slides. The rest of the playground, with the sandbox, cars, fire engine, climbing tubes, and swings, are open to their use, as well.

YOUR CHILD'S DAY ❖ PRESCHOOL

PRESCHOOL ❖ Daily Schedule

Children like predictable routines, so we follow the same schedule each day. The times are slightly flexible to accommodate the activities of the day. For example, if Snack takes less time, the children will have a longer time on the playground. Or, if we have a complicated Small Group project, we will shorten playground time a little to give Small Group more time. On rainy days we lengthen the times of the other activities to fill in the time we won't be on the playground.

MWF Morning Schedule

9:00 – 9:10	Story Time
9:10 – 9:25	Table Time
9:25 – 10:20	Work Time
10:20 – 10:25	Hand Washing
10:25 – 10:40	Snack Time
10:40 – 11:10	Playground
11:10 – 11:30	Music Time
11:30 – 11:50	Small Group
11:50 – 12:00	Story Time

T/Th Morning Schedule

9:00 – 9:10	Story Time
9:10 – 9:25	Table Time
9:25 – 10:05	Work Time
10:05 – 10:10	Hand Washing
10:10 – 10:25	Snack Time
10:25 – 10:50	Playground
10:50 – 11:05	Music Time
11:05 – 11:20	Small Group
11:20 – 11:30	Story Time

Afternoon Schedule (M-F)

1:00 – 1:10	Story Time
1:10 – 1:25	Table Time
1:25 – 2:20	Work Time
2:20 – 2:55	Playground
2:55 – 3:00	Hand Washing
3:00 – 3:15	Snack Time
3:15 – 3:30	Music Time
3:30 – 3:50	Small Group
3:50 – 4:00	Story Time

❖ Story Time

When the children first arrive, they go right into the story room, where a teacher greets them and reads a short story to the group. This is a quiet time that helps children transition from their parents to school. By the time the story is finished, all the children have arrived for the day, and the children move to their small groups for Table Time.

❖ Table Time

Table Time is a focused learning time where each teacher meets with her own small group for about 15 minutes. This period sets the tone for the day and serves as a bonding time for the group. The teacher begins by greeting each child and the children say "good morning" to each other. From there, the teacher demonstrates one of the Montessori jobs or activities that are available in the classroom. Each child has an opportunity to try the job or a part of it. After this, each child is asked what they want to work on that day. It helps the children focus their energy and find an activity to start their day. They are then dismissed to individual Work Time.

❖ Work Time – A Time of Individual Choice

During this time, the children are self-directed and are able to choose freely from activities in the prepared environment. They may pick from activities in a variety of areas:

- In the **Practical Life** area, children choose activities from every day living: polishing shoes, using tools (hammer, screw driver, socket wrench, etc.) sanding wood, wet and dry pouring, flower arranging, silver polishing, tying laces, zipping, etc. These activities teach children skills that help them to be more independent, to care for the environment and each other, and to develop small muscle coordination.
- In the **Sensorial Area**, children choose from activities that use their five senses, such as color sorting, matching sounds/smells/textures/weight, grading objects by size, using peg boards, etc. These sensorial exercises also provide a foundation for speech, writing, and arithmetic.
- In the **Language Area**, children work in areas that enhance oral language and set the foundation for reading. All of the activities are important building blocks that prepare the child to become a successful reader. Some of the activities included in this area are puzzles, metal insets, object/picture matching, picture/picture matching, lotto games, story dictation, classification of objects (i.e. put all the flying things in one pile, all the crawling things in another), 3-5 part story sequencing, rhyming words, opposites, letter recognition, and letter sound recognition.
- In the **Math Area**, the Montessori activities teach the child the concepts of quantity and symbol. We use the child's senses to first introduce these concepts. We introduce quantity using the number rods. There are 10 rods in graduated segments. Each segment represents a unit. We introduce number symbols (i.e. "7") with sandpaper numbers. The child traces the rough numbers with his finger. We then put quantity and symbol together in a variety of exercises. We begin introducing the first three numbers and then add a number at a time, up to 10. We then introduce such concepts as: teens, tens, hundreds, thousands, counting by two's, and the Hundred Board.
- In the **Art Area**, children have an opportunity to work creatively using a variety of materials to create an expressive piece of art, including gluing, painting, water colors, markers, scissors, tape, stamps, stencils, and color crayons.

- In the *Patio Area*, children paint on the easel, use a sand/bird seed/or water tray, play with the doll house, and play with boats in a water canal.
- In *Dramatic Play*, children have an opportunity to work cooperatively, to try on and practice adult roles and gain skills in socialization, as well as learning skills in independent living.
- In the *Block Area*, children can build with blocks and Legos. They may also set up tracks and use trains and cars.
- In the *Cooking Area*, children are able to participate in food preparation, and they practice spreading, cutting, stirring, pouring, and learning how to follow a recipe.

❖ **Playground Time**

This is an extremely important time in your child's day. This is when children work on the development of their large muscles, building coordination and strength. This is also a time when they can practice social skills. The children may choose from a variety of activities including: swinging, sliding, playing basketball, running, climbing, playing in the sandbox, crawling over and under the tubes, and participating in imaginary play.

❖ **Music and Movement**

This is a large circle time. We introduce songs, finger plays, and movement activities. Periodically, we bring out simple instruments (tambourines, sand blocks, triangles, drums, etc.) to accompany the songs. Music is a wonderful way for children to be exposed to and practice using language. We also use a parachute with music to teach rhythm and cooperation.

❖ **Small Group: *Coping Curriculum***

Small Group is a focused time for teaching social-emotional skills. This is a quiet time of day where each teacher meets with her eight children (divided into groups by age for the year). The children form trusted relationships with the teacher and with each other. Each day, the teacher leads her group through one of many structured activities in a theme area from our *Coping Curriculum*. These activities are designed to teach young children communication skills, problem-solving, and stress relief. Using a combination of relaxation exercises, puppets, symbolic play, role-play, and creative art, the children are given an opportunity to express their feelings and develop personal powerfulness. They learn empathy for others and a respect for their world. They also learn coping skills as they master difficulties and work together to solve problems. Monthly themes include topics such as: Trust and Belonging, Self-Acceptance, Feelings, Making Friends, Kindness and Care for Others, Cooperation, Respect for Differences, Conflict Resolution, and Growth and Change.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

❖ Parking

Please, park your car in the large parking lot ONLY when dropping off or picking up your child. We can not park or unload along the street because of a ruling by the County Board of Supervisors. The small parking lot is for the church office only. We realize that this is inconvenient, but in order to use the facilities at St. Philip's, we must abide by these rulings. Please inform anyone who may bring your child to school about this ruling.

❖ Dropping Off Your Child

It is necessary that you bring your child into the classroom so that you can sign the attendance sheet. When you sign in, please use your full signature. This is required by State law. You will be legally signing responsibility for your child over to Mandala. When you pick your child up and sign out, you are taking back legal responsibility for your child. Since this is a legal document, only people over 18 may sign the child in and out of school. PLEASE BE PUNCTUAL when bringing and picking your child up from school. We encourage parents to get to know each other and visit, but we ask that you do this outside of the classroom, so as not to disturb the class.

❖ Picking Up Your Child

It can be distressing for children to be left after school hours. Please come on time to pick up your child. This is also a show of respect for the teachers and their time. **Please be careful with your time and pick up your child within five minutes after class.** Ten (10) minutes after class ends, there will be a late pickup charge of \$10.00 for the first 10 minutes and \$1.00 per minute thereafter. This fee is due at the time of pick-up of your child or before your child's next class. Payments may be given to the teacher in the classroom or brought to the office. Consistent lateness may result in termination.

Remember to sign your child out and pick up all their art work and belongings before you leave.

❖ Release of Children

Children will be released only to a parent/guardian or to persons whose names are listed on the Emergency Form. Therefore, in order to provide for emergency situations that prevent you from picking up your child, be certain to include those individuals whom you would authorize in such events. Parents/guardians should advise the Director in advance, in writing, if a person who is not listed on the original form is to pick up the child. Identification will be requested of these authorized persons picking up children. Children will not be released without written authorization.

❖ Separation

Part of the preschool experience is for parents and children to learn to separate from each other. There are resources available through the office and *Family Services* if you want help with this issue. Here are a few helpful hints for what can be an emotional time for both parent and child. Let your child know ahead of time what is going to happen when you take him/her to school. Be aware of how you are feeling about your child starting school? (Are you fearful about leaving him/her? Are you ambivalent? Will it be hard for you to separate from you child?) Your feelings are normal, but it's important not to let your child absorb your anxiety. If you act overly worried, your child will think there is something to be afraid of. Be positive and upbeat. Have a goodbye ritual that you do every time you leave to soothe your child. Always say goodbye before you leave. Never sneak out! Your child needs to be able to trust you. If your child is crying, give him/her to a teacher, say good-bye and then leave. Lingering often makes it worse for a child by prolonging the separation anxiety.

❖ Transitional Objects

"Transitional objects" are those special belongings that give a child a sense of security and help soothe him or her. Blankets, pacifiers, stuffed animals, etc. are often used as transitional objects. If these objects help your child to make an easier transition from home, they are welcome at school. They are usually most appropriate for two and young three year-olds. As soon as possible, we have a child keep his special object in his cubby. Children are free to visit their "loveys" whenever necessary to boost security. We gradually help wean children from the need for transitional objects, which is the ultimate goal at school.

❖ Toys

Toys from home are not welcome at school because they cause problems between children. It is up to parents to make sure that toys stay at home. We have wonderful materials for the children to use while they are at school.

❖ **Change of Clothing**

Please put name labels in your child's jackets, sweaters and clothes kept at school. We ask that each Early Preschool child have one change of clothes at school including: pants, underwear, shirt and socks and diapers, when appropriate. If your child wears extra clothing home from school, please remember to bring another change of clothes back to school again. The preschoolers do not need to have an extra set of clothes at school unless they are still toilet training.

❖ **Snacks**

We are committed to fighting childhood obesity by teaching children healthy eating habits from an early age. At Snack Time, we serve fruits, vegetables, healthy crackers, and water. We try to avoid sugars and fats. The snacks we serve the children are provided by parents and the school. We ask each parent to bring snack several times a year. The teachers will notify you with a calendar the month that you are assigned to bring snack. Snack ideas and amounts for each class are included. Please do not bring cupcakes, cookies, candies, and such because they do not fit into our healthy eating curriculum.

❖ **Birthdays**

We acknowledge birthdays as part of our calendar time and honor children with a special song and activity. Please save your special birthday treats for home.

❖ **Visiting the Classroom**

You are welcome to visit your child's classroom at anytime. Please sign in at the office to get a name tag first. If you are planning to stay for the entire class, we would appreciate it if let the teachers know.

❖ **Newsletter**

You will receive a *Mandala School Newsletter* about the fourth or fifth day of the month. This newsletter consists of a calendar of the current month and the following month, general school information, and classroom information. It is important that you look over the newsletter each month. It is our way to keep you informed and it is your way to know when school will be closed, when special events are occurring, and what your child is learning in the classroom. You will also receive periodic *Family Services Newsletters* from our Licensed Clinical Social Worker on topics related to parenting and understanding children's behavior.

❖ **Website**

Check our website www.mandalachildrenshouse.com for periodic updates. Our calendar, newsletters and Family Services articles are posted there, as well as lots of other good information about Mandala.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES and PARENT INVOLVEMENT

❖ **New Parent Orientation**

This orientation is mandatory for all new parents. Orientation meetings for new parents are held before the Summer Session begins and before the Fall Session begins. For parents whose children begin during the school year, the director will give an orientation at the time of registration. The orientation includes information on what the school offers during the year, a review of the policies and procedures, a review of the enrollment packet, information about our philosophy and teaching method, a classroom visit, and a time for questions.

❖ **“Meet and Greet” Open House**

The day before school opens, children are invited to come to the classroom with their parent(s) for a short introductory visit. This is a time for them to meet their teachers, find their cubby, and become familiar with their new surroundings. We are open for one hour for each class.

❖ **Back To School Ice Cream Social**

On a Saturday afternoon in September, Mandala holds an ice cream social for children and their families to get to know each other. The classrooms are open so that the children can show their parents around. The teachers, staff, and board members are also available to answer general questions. We have a Book Fair on display where parents can browse and buy good quality children's books.

❖ **Small Group Parent Meeting**

In October, parents have an opportunity to meet with their child's Small Group teacher to learn what their child will be working on during the year. This is an important one-hour meeting (for parents only) that offers a chance to get to know your child's teacher better, to ask specific questions, and to meet all the other parents in your child's Small Group.

❖ **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

In the fall, you will receive a one-page *Fall Summary of Your Child's Developmental Progress* completed by your child's Small Group teacher. This is a short, written evaluation highlighting your child's strengths and describing the areas your child is currently working on.

In the spring, your child's Small Group teacher will meet with you for a 20-30 minute Parent-Teacher Conference. We close school for two days during this period so that the teachers can dedicate the time to meet with you to share information about your child. At this conference, the teacher will review the *Spring Summary of Your Child's Developmental Progress* and show you the assessment form (*Desired Results Developmental Profile*) she has been using throughout the year to document your child's growth. It covers four main areas: (1) Personal and Social Competence, (2) Effective Learning, (3) Physical and Motor Competence, and (4) Safety and Health. This will give you a picture of what your child is doing and the progress s/he has made. If age-appropriate, the teacher will also include a *Kindergarten Readiness Screening*, and she will discuss your child's developmental readiness for kindergarten.

You may also make an appointment at any time to talk with a teacher about your child.

❖ **Holiday Party**

We have two parties in early December: one for the Tuesday/Thursday classes and one for the Monday/ Wednesday/Friday classes. The parties are held in the early evening and the whole family is invited. The children present a very simple program of songs they have learned. We then have a puppet show or ventriloquist. We end the evening with refreshments.

❖ **School Picnic**

The Saturday before school ends in June, we have an all-school family picnic on the school grounds. Families are encouraged to bring a dish that reflects their culture for the pot luck lunch. We also have games, face painting, and crafts available for the children. It is a special time to celebrate the end of school, to visit and to play with friends.

❖ **Parent Volunteer Hours**

We ask that each family donate five (5) hours a year or \$50. A *Parent Volunteer Form* will be sent home at the beginning of the fall session offering opportunities for volunteering. You can sign up to help with specific events (classroom projects, workdays, fundraisers, family events, etc.) or you can sign up for having certain skills (sewing, carpentry, painting, electrical, plumbing, gardening, etc.) and the teachers, room parents, or Board Members will call you when we need your expertise. You may also donate supplies, food, or equipment.

Parents may fulfill their five hour obligation by “giving” in any of the following ways:

- 5 hours of time (in the classroom or outside the classroom)
- \$50.00 check
- Supplies, food, or equipment (up to \$50 value)
- Fundraising support (equal to \$50.00)
- Any combination of the above

You will be given a record to document your completed hours. It is the parent’s responsibility to keep track of and document all volunteer hours.

❖ **Workshops**

Throughout the year we offer workshops for parents. Raising children can, at times, be an overwhelming task. The parents who attend our workshops find that the task becomes much more manageable and enjoyable with the skills that they have learned. These workshops are available to our parents free of charge and are usually one and a half hours long. Child care is always available on-site for a small fee.

❖ **Fundraising**

Mandala has a number of fundraisers throughout the year. We do not expect our families to support all the fundraisers. We ask that you pick the ones that suit your needs or interests. Examples of our fundraisers are: See’s candy sales, Avon, Tupperware, Book Fair, Rummage Sale, and a direct-mail campaign. We use the money from these fundraisers for specific projects such as playground and classroom equipment and facility improvements. In the past we have remodeled the bathrooms, put in new carpeting, purchased new cabinets, and replaced our playground. Along with fundraising, we apply for grants whenever possible. We need lots of parental support to make our fundraisers a success.

❖ **Triad Fundraiser**

Triad includes representatives from the various organizations that use this property: St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, Mandala Children’s House and the other programs that share the facilities. The main purpose of Triad is to oversee the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and grounds and to share information and ideas. We co-sponsor two fundraisers a year, an Art Auction in March and a Luau in May. The proceeds are used for upkeep and development of the grounds. In the past, we have used the money to put in walkways, add landscaping, resurface the parking lot, put lighting in the parking lot, put up signs, remodel the kitchen, add new lighting to the classroom, and replace the boiler.

FAMILY SERVICES

Mandala Is Committed To Supporting Families

We believe that parenting children is the most important job in the world. Being a parent is also one of the most difficult tasks most of us will ever face. No one prepares us for this monumental life change, and we often experience doubts and confusion without a clear road map to guide us. Many families today are isolated from the support of relatives and other parents, and they find they have no one to help them with their questions and challenges. Mandala's Family Services Program was created to meet just this need.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Mandala

Anne Kangas, L.C.S.W. (LCS#14384) works on-site as the *Family Services Director* at Mandala. Her job is to support families and assist children in healthy emotional development. With over 25 years of experience as a child and adult therapist, her specialty is early intervention, child trauma, developmental difficulties, and family issues.

Family Services To Assist You

Anne is available as a resource for parents, teachers, and child care providers to offer the following:

- **Information** about parenting and child behavior
- **Counseling** for children and parents
- **Classroom observation** and feedback
- **Suggestions** for handling problem behaviors
- **Support** during a crisis or family difficulty and **Education** about how to help your child manage it
- **Resources** for special needs (physical, emotional, educational)
- **Parent Workshops** and support groups
- **Parent Resource Library** (books, tapes, and videos on loan)
- **Newsletters** on parenting topics

What Concerns Might You Call About?

- *Normal childhood problems*
toileting, eating, bedtime
separation anxiety
sibling rivalry
- *Parenting frustrations*
discipline strategies
defiance/non-cooperation
temper tantrums
- *Single parent concerns*
adjustment issues
shared custody/transitions
solo parenting
- *Family disruptions or changes*
marital separation or divorce
new baby/new home
parent's illness or disability
- *Worrisome child behaviors*
fears and nightmares
hitting/acting-out
sexual play/"bathroom language"
- *Family problems*
relationship difficulties
domestic violence
addictions (alcohol/drugs)
- *Unexpected crisis*
an accident/body injury
a sudden trauma or loss
a death in the family
- *Anticipated "challenges"*
scheduled hospitalization
parent's absence/travel
adoption issues
- *Developmental delays*
speech and language
learning difficulties
sensory/motor issues

When Would Family Services Call You?

At Mandala, we believe in working in partnership with parents. Anne might suggest a meeting with you if:

- The teacher or child care provider has a concern about your child.
- You have expressed a worry about your child to a teacher or child care provider.
- Your family is going through a major transition (i.e.: divorce) and child guidance information could be helpful.
- A joint problem-solving session would help us to meet your child's needs.

How To Contact Family Services

Anne is in the Mandala office from **8:30 to 4:00, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays**. You may come in, call her, or leave a confidential message at Mandala at **251-8633 x20**. You may talk with her over the phone or set up a time to meet with her privately in her office. She also has a Private Practice and her confidential voicemail is 259-3163.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Purpose of the Board of Directors

The purpose of the Board of Directors is to set goals and general policies that reflect the philosophy of Mandala Children's House. This includes insuring that program personnel are effectively facilitating a high quality school and child care program serving the diverse needs of Mandala's families and children.

Specifically, it is the role of the Board to:

- Vote on decisions regarding the direction and policies of the total school program
- Model the school philosophy
- Hold school personnel accountable for modeling and implementing its stated philosophy in all areas
- Hire and terminate employees, based on administrative recommendations
- Vote on Independent Contractor Contracts with Child Care Providers, based on the recommendation of the Child Care Director
- Review budgets and hold the school to financial accountability
- Act as grievance board for staff and parents
- Keep the overview of the entire program
- Provide ongoing support, feedback and input to the administrative staff
- Elect new board members and officers

Liability

As elected members of the Board of a non-profit organization, Board members are not held liable in the event of litigation against the organization unless a Board member has acted contrary to Board policy or outside of his/her role as a Board member.

Membership

The membership of the Board consists of 6 to 9 members, at least fifty percent of whom must be parent-users, including advocates for the preschool and the child care parents.

Meetings

A three-hour evening meeting is held on a monthly basis at the school.

Criteria for Candidates

The Board searches for candidates who are qualified and willing to agree to the following conditions of service:

- To support the philosophy, goals, values, and policies of the school
- To accept the "team" concept of the Board structure, understanding that this calls for flexibility, effective communication, and consensus decision-making
- To accept all aspects of confidentiality, during and after terms of office
- To be willing and able to devote the time necessary to Board activities, understanding that this is a "working board," not a figure-head board
- To avoid engaging in activities which constitute a conflict of interest and to abstain from voting on issues in which the Board determines that a conflict of interest exists
- To refrain from representing himself or herself as a spokesperson of the Board without the express authorization of the Board
- To make a commitment for a two-year term of office

Vacancies

Each spring, Mandala Board members openly recruit new members to fill any vacancies. Information is sent out through the newsletter and flyers. We encourage all interested parents and community members to apply.

