

Montgomery Methodist  
Children's Center  
Parent Handbook  
2015-2016

28325 Kemptown Road  
Damascus, Maryland 20872  
301-253-4884  
[mmchildrenscenter.org](http://mmchildrenscenter.org)

## PHILOSOPHY

The program at Montgomery Methodist Children's Center is based on the belief that each child is a person of sacred worth and is created in the image of God. Through participation in a variety of learning experiences in a Christian atmosphere and through the use of Bible stories and Christian songs, children are encouraged to develop Christian attitudes and behaviors.

Montgomery Methodist also provides a positive educational environment which encourages children to learn and grow emotionally, intellectually, and socially at their own pace. Through classroom interactions, our students learn to take turns, to share, to make new friends, and to respect the rights of others. We also strive to instill in our students a love of learning that will follow them throughout their lives.

Our school uses "Teaching Strategies: Creative Curriculum", a Maryland State Department of Education approved curriculum, which emphasizes exploration and discovery as a way of learning. Using a theme based approach; the Creative Curriculum enables children "to develop confidence, creativity and lifelong critical thinking skills." For additional information on the "Creative Curriculum" visit [www.teachingstrategies.com/](http://www.teachingstrategies.com/).

## PURPOSE

Montgomery Methodist Children's Center was founded in 1984 to meet the early childhood needs of the community. As an outreach ministry of Montgomery United Methodist Church, the Children's Center nurtures spiritual growth as well as provides an educational program that helps children develop socially, emotionally, mentally and physically.

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

### Website

The preschool website, [www.mmchildrenscenter.org](http://www.mmchildrenscenter.org) is a source of information about school policies, school events, and registration information. It is also updated daily to let parents know of any weather related closings or delays. A link to the director's email is also available on the website.

### Email

MMCC will send out emails to parents on occasion when information needs to be distributed. Parents are asked to keep the office updated throughout the year on any changes to their email addresses.

### Monthly Newsletter

A school newsletter is published monthly and notifies parents of school wide events and other pertinent school news. Copies of the newsletter are emailed to all MMCC families and paper copies of the newsletter are also available on the information counter outside the preschool office.

### Class Calendar

Each class has an individual class calendar that is sent home monthly. This calendar details information specific to their class, and also notes if their class is assigned snack that month. Parents are encouraged to check these calendars regularly.

## PROGRAM

The curriculum of the Children's Center is "The Creative Curriculum", which is approved by the Maryland State Department of Education, our licensing body. We also incorporate themes drawn from the Bible and the world around us. The curriculum includes:

- Language Arts – early literacy and reading readiness skills.
- Math – shape and color recognition, counting, sorting, grouping, patterning and problem solving.
- Social Studies – study of seasons, holidays, and our world.
- Science – Children have the opportunity to observe and explore the world around them. Using their own curiosity and sense of wonder they learn science through the process of inquiry – theorizing, hands on investigation and discussion.
- Daily circle time activities.
- Outdoor play, weather permitting, or indoor games involving creative movement in our church Fellowship Hall.
- Creative art projects
- Daily Bible stories, verses and songs
- Monthly chapel times
- Virtues
- Field trips
- Dramatic Play – Children are given opportunities to act out roles and feelings in the classroom learning centers and thus come to Christian understandings of their own behavior and that of others.

# LICENSING

Montgomery Methodist is licensed under the Maryland Department of Education Office of Child Care, as well as the Montgomery County Health and Human Services Licensure and Regulatory Services.

## SCHOOL POLICIES

### ADMISSION

The Children's Center does not discriminate in registering children on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin or color.

To enroll a child at Montgomery Methodist Children's Center, an application of admission must be completed in full and the registration fee paid. To place a child on the waiting list, an application must be completed and returned along with the \$75.00 registration fee. This fee will be held until the child is placed in a class. If the child is not placed in a class, the check will be returned.

First preference for enrollment will be given to:

1. Families of children already attending the Center.
2. Members of Montgomery United Methodist Church and MMCC alumni.

Applications will then be accepted for new students and a lottery will decide placement in classes.

Children enrolled in a two-year-old class must be two (2) by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year. There are no exceptions to this date.

Children enrolled in a three-year-old class must be three (3) by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year.\*

Children enrolled in a four-year-old class must be four (4) by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year.\*

\*Registration forms will be accepted on children who will be turning three or four in the month of September of the incoming school year. These children can be registered as follows:

- September birthday registration forms will not be considered until the regular registration process is completed (i.e. after all children have been registered who meet the September 1 cut-off
- After the lottery has been completed for new families, children with September 2<sup>nd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> birthdays will be considered. First, siblings of current students will be registered for any available spots, followed by alumni and church members, then new families. In each of these categories, students will be given priority based on the day of the month they were born. For example, a child with a September 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday will be considered before a child with a September 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*Parents should also note that these children, although allowed to begin preschool, will not be eligible to start kindergarten in the year they turn five in September as the cut-off date for kindergarten in Maryland is September 1. Therefore, students entering MMCC with a September 2<sup>nd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> birthday should be prepared to attend an extra year of preschool.*

All children, except those in the two year old class, must be completely toilet trained before they can attend our program. "Pull-Ups" are not allowed. For a child with medical special needs, exceptions can be made. A plan would need to be worked out with Director.

A health examination and immunizations are required by the state. The health forms should be completed by your physician. All health forms must be received in the school office prior to starting school.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS**

Montgomery Methodist Children's Center's philosophy includes the belief that each child deserves a preschool environment that meets their individual needs. MMCC staff works closely with a variety of resources including each child's parents, the Maryland Infants and Toddlers and Child Find organizations, the Maryland Resource Center, on-site therapist visits, and other resources to meet each student's needs. At the time of registration, parents are asked to identify any special needs of their child and provide any relevant information, including medical, educational, or psychological information, as well as any Individual Educational Plan (IEP) that may have been developed for them to enable the preschool to provide the best possible educational experience for each child in the center.

## **PROGRESSION OF PUPILS**

Pupils entering Montgomery Methodist Children's Center are placed in a class according to age. The children then progress with their classmates through the school's levels.

Exceptions to this policy can be made when a teacher and / or parent feels that the age appropriate class is not suitable for the child. In these situations, the Director, teacher and parent will meet to discuss and work out a viable solution. If an agreement cannot be reached, the Director will be responsible for the final decision.

The Director of Montgomery Methodist Children's Center reserves the right to decide if a child is ready to enter our program or if a child should continue in our program. The parents of a child who is having problems may be asked to pay the cost of an extra teaching assistant to aid in their child's satisfactory adjustment to the program.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

Any staff member of Montgomery Methodist Children's Center who suspects that a child is a victim of abuse is responsible for reporting this immediately to the Director of the school. The Director will: 1) Report abuse to the Department of Social Services and 2) Notify the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Necessary reports will be compiled by the Director and teachers.

## **STAFF**

Our staff is a very dedicated group of Christian, professional women who meet or exceed the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care requirements. All teachers have a degree in Early Childhood or a degree in a related field and have completed the 90 hour Early Childhood certification course. Staff members also participate in the Maryland Department of Education Division of Child Care Credentialing Program to further enhance their teaching experiences through continued training. All staff have completed a state and federal criminal background check and are CPR and First Aid Certified. The Director and several staff members have also completed Emergency Preparedness Training.

## **PUPIL RECORDS PRIVACY RIGHT**

Any pupil's record kept by Montgomery Methodist Children's Center or its teachers shall be confidential. These records will be released to other agencies only upon written approval by the pupil's parent or legal guardian.

Parents have access to these records under supervision of the Director.

Parents will receive a copy of their child's progress reports.

Children's records will be kept for one year after the child is no longer enrolled at the Center.

### **PARENT – TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Conferences will be scheduled with all parents during the school year. Parents may request a special conference with the teacher at any time. If there are any problems or special needs during the year, the teacher will contact the parent.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM EVALUATION**

At the end of the school year, the parents will be asked to complete a form evaluating specific areas of the Center's program. Any additional ideas or concerns may be included.

The Board of Directors will review these forms and discuss the findings with the staff. The Board of Directors and the Center's Director will evaluate the findings and decide if program adjustments are necessary.

### **CLASSROOM INFORMATION**

All classes are subject to adequate enrollment.

Teacher-Child Ratio is 1:6 for 2 year olds and 1:8 for 3's, Pre-K 4's and Pre-K 4/5's.

### **SCHOOL YEAR**

The school year will start in September and end in May. The exact dates will be announced each year.

### **SCHOOL CALENDAR**

A yearly calendar will be distributed to each child's parents giving dates of holidays to be observed and special events for the school year. This calendar is also available on the school website.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY POLICY**

For inclement weather and emergency closings we will follow Frederick County Public School's decision.

If Frederick County schools are closed, we will close. If Frederick County opens late, MMCC will open 1 hour late (10:00) and afternoon classes will come on a regular schedule. If Frederick County has early dismissal, our afternoon classes will not meet. The school's answering machine and website will be kept current on all school closing information.

The policy for inclement weather/emergency make up days is as follows:

a. 5-day classes will miss 5 days before a makeup day is scheduled. No more than 3 days will be made up in a school year for inclement weather/emergencies.

b. 4-day classes will miss 4 days before a makeup day is scheduled. No more than 3 days will be made up in a school year for inclement weather/emergencies.

c. 3-day classes will miss 3 days before a makeup day is scheduled. No more than 3 days will be made up in a school year for inclement weather/emergencies.

d. 2-day classes will miss 2 days before a makeup day is scheduled. No more than 2 days will be made up in a school year for inclement weather/emergencies.

e. 1-day classes will miss 1 day before a makeup day is scheduled. No more than 1 day will be made up in a school year for inclement weather/emergencies.

Any necessary make-up days will be added to the end of the school year.

Class Sessions – Morning sessions are from 9:00am – 12:00pm **or**  
9:00am – 1:00pm  
Afternoon sessions are from 12:30pm – 3:30 pm.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

1. For the safety of all children, please drive slowly and carefully in the school parking lot.
2. Parents and children should hold hands when walking to and from their car and the school. No child should exit the school doors unless accompanied by an adult.
3. When dropping children off for school, they must be escorted by an adult to their classroom door. Each child must be signed in by the parent or designated adult – this is a licensing requirement!
4. The “Stop Sign” in the hallway will indicate when it is time for children to be escorted to their classroom. Children should arrive on time to school to avoid upsetting the classroom routine.
5. If a child is to be picked up by someone other than the parent/guardian or person authorized on the Emergency Form, please notify the school office, and let the person know they may need to show identification.
6. All students must be signed out by the parent or designated adult. Pick-up is expected promptly at the end of the scheduled class time. If a child is still here 15 minutes after class is over and the parent has not notified the preschool office of a delay, the child's designated contact person will be notified.
7. Normally a 15 minute grace period (after class ends) will be given before a late fee is charged. \$5.00 will then be charged for any portion of the first 10 minutes after the grace period ends. Thereafter, the charge will increase by

\$1.00 per minute. If a parent is consistently late picking up a child, the Director has the discretion to charge a late fee before the 15 minute grace period ends.

## **SCREEN-TIME MEDIA POLICY**

Revised July 2015

The curriculum of Montgomery Methodist Children's Center does not include the regular use of television programs, videos or DVD's. MMCC agrees with the MSDE that in early care and education settings, media (television [TV], video, and DVD) viewing and computer use should not be permitted for children younger than two years. We also agree that for children two years and older in early care and early education settings, total media time should be limited to not more than thirty minutes per week of age-appropriate, educational passive technology. (Passive technology is defined as non-interactive television, videos or streaming media.) For example, short video clips may be shown to MMCC students on a school laptop to reinforce science lessons, i.e. video clip showing a volcano erupting when discussing volcanoes for the letter Vv, or a Social Studies unit. Limited use of appropriate interactive technology may support, but not replace, creative play, physical activity, hands-on experiences, social interactions or other developmentally appropriate learning activities.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

One goal of Montgomery Methodist Children's Center is to help our students develop a positive self-image. We use positive methods of discipline which encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation.

Preschoolers, due to their developmental age, are not capable of understanding the ramifications of many of their behaviors; therefore they need to be encouraged to make good choices and to be prevented from harming themselves and/or others. Also, young children are very egocentric and therefore not always capable of understanding the concepts of sharing and taking turns. Therefore, it is our responsibility to lend guidance through redirection to other activities when conflict situations occur.

Caring for young children requires a lot of patience, as they often need to be reminded about classroom rules over and over again. Each rule will be stated clearly and precisely, and then the children will be helped to follow the rules.

Below are discipline strategies used by MMCC staff;

- Maintaining realistic expectations of children.
- Providing clear and simple limits.
- Planning an environment that facilitates a caring, Christian atmosphere.
- Keeping children busy to prevent problems from occurring.
- Modeling appropriate behaviors.
- Redirecting inappropriate behaviors towards desired outcomes.

- Giving children choices between two appropriate behaviors.
- Encouraging children to work together to solve problems.
- Encouraging children to use their words to solve problems.
- Removing children from the situation until they are able to calm down and discuss the problem.

When it becomes necessary to discipline a child, the following steps will be followed:

- Talking to the child to help him/her see how he/she is behaving.
- Separating the child from the situation and redirecting them to another activity.
- Isolating the child from the group by having them sit apart from the others.
- Removing the child from the classroom and having them "visit" the Director.
- Hold a conference with the parents to discuss other strategies to resolve area of concern before it is necessary for the child to be withdrawn from the school.

We believe the best way to handle problems is to prevent them from happening in the first place. Therefore the physical environments and the programs for our preschool are designed so that as few problems as possible will occur. Our program prides itself on providing our students with a loving Christian environment where each child is treated as the special child of God that they are, and the children of MMCC respond to this environment with great behavior!

## **HEALTH**

The Center is only equipped to handle well children. If your child has a bad cold, sore throat, fever, upset stomach or diarrhea, please do not bring him/her to the Center. Children should be free of fever (without the use of medicine) for 24 hours before returning to school. Any time a child shows signs of developing an illness, parents will be notified to pick up their child as soon as possible. Please read the health policy.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Any adult who volunteers in a preschool class must have completed and turned into the director a "Screening Application for Workers with Children/Youth". After completion, forms are kept confidential in the director's office. These forms are included in each student's registration packet and additional copies are available in the preschool office. Volunteers should also read and follow the "Guidelines for Volunteers" handout presented to all parents at the beginning of the school year.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

During each school year, Montgomery Methodist provides a variety of opportunities for our parents to become involved in the day-to-day operation of our school. Outlined below are some of these opportunities:

- Becoming a member of the MMCC Board of Directors. Included in each child's new student packet is an "Expression of Interest" form where parents can let us know they are interested in becoming a member of this board, the school's governing body. Each year approximately 5 parents serve on the board, along with the Chairperson, who is a member of Montgomery United Methodist Church, the preschool's Director and Office Manager and at least one teacher representative.
- Being a volunteer. There are many ways to volunteer at MMCC. Each classroom asks for volunteers for the two classroom parties, the fall Pumpkin Party, the Thanksgiving Buffets, and the Valentine's Day Party. Teachers also ask for parent volunteers to come in the classroom and be guest readers or to help with a variety of classroom projects, such as baking cookies or gingerbread men. Parents can also volunteer to make play dough for the classrooms, bring in items for the various parties, buffets, etc. and take home cutting out that needs to be done for classroom use. \*Please note: All parents who volunteer in the classroom must have completed and turned in to the Director a "Parent Volunteer Screening Form", which included in each child's registration packet and available in the school office.
- Sharing an occupation or skill with students. Parents at MMCC are invited to let us know if they would like to share with our students about their jobs or share their talents. Examples over the years have included parents who are dentist or dental hygienist sharing with our students during Dental Health Month, parents who are Police Officers or Fire Fighters talking with students during our Community Helpers unit of study, a parent who teaches Irish Dancing giving a lesson around St. Patrick's Day, a parent who teaches science helping a class build volcanos, and a parent who did woodworking helping students build their own wooden boats.
- Helping with fundraisers. Parents at MMCC run several school fundraisers. These include the Scholastic Book Fair, the annual MMCC Christmas Shop and the Box Tops for Education collection.
- Monthly Chapel Times. Parents are always invited to attend the monthly Chapel Times held for all classes in the church sanctuary. Dates and times for Chapel Times are noted on each class's monthly calendar.
- Field trips. Whenever classes go on field trips outside of school, a parent or authorized adult must accompany their child. These trips include the fall

Pumpkin Patch trips for all classes and a variety of other trips, such as the 4's and Pre-K trip to the local Giant Food Store for a Healthy Foods Unit. The school does not provide transportation so all children are accompanied by a parent or designated adult.

- Special Events. The school hosts a variety of special events both during school and at other times that all MMCC families are invited and encouraged to attend. These include the winter Sock Hop, which is held on a Friday evening in February and the End of the Year Picnic/Ice Cream Social held on a Saturday in May. All families are also invited to attend the school's Christmas Program and reception in December and end of the year programs and receptions on the last days of school. All of these events are noted in the school's monthly newsletter and on classroom calendars.

For more information about ways to become involved at MMCC please contact the Director at 301 253-4884 or email her at [msolsen@mmchildrenscenter.org](mailto:msolsen@mmchildrenscenter.org).

## **PARTIES**

Parties for special holidays will be planned and held during each class' scheduled snack time. Parents will be asked through sign-up sheets to contribute specific things needed for celebrations. Sign-ups will be posted for special occasions several times throughout the school year.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Classes usually go on several field trips a year. To be able to participate in these trips, each student must have a signed permission slip on file in the office. Parents are required to drive and stay with their children during field trips, or arrange for another parent to do so. Staff is not allowed to provide transportation for students. Although we try to be family friendly and allow younger siblings to attend field trips, there may be trips where siblings cannot be accommodated. Please check the information provided to parents about each field trip for details. "In-house" field trips are also hosted during the year, including visits by the fire department.

## **SNACK**

A snack is provided. 100% juice, as well as a variety of peanut-free healthy snack foods, is offered. For snacks, each family will be asked to contribute. Generally, each family contributes three times during the year.

All reasonable accommodations will be made to provide appropriate snacks for children with food allergies. Specific information on how MMCC handles allergies will be sent home with parents of these children.

### **PAYMENTS**

The registration fee is \$75.00 per year. If a family has two children registering the same school year, the registration fee will be \$100.00 for the two children combined.

The last month's (May) tuition is pre-paid and due no later than May 15th. If tuition has not been received by June 1<sup>st</sup>, your place in class will be forfeited. Once paid, tuition is not refundable.

Tuition payments for preschool are as follows:

#### **2, 3 & 4 YEAR OLDS**

- Tuition is divided into 9 equal payments on the following schedule:

May 15, 2015 – May 2016 tuition due

September through April – tuition is due the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month

#### **4 YEAR OLDS THAT ARE ELIGIBLE FOR KINDERGARTEN:**

- Tuition is divided into 9 equal payments on the following schedule:

At the time of registration – September tuition is due (non-refundable)

May 15, 2015 – May 2016 tuition due

October through April – tuition is due the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month

Payments received after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month will be charged a \$10.00 late fee. This \$10.00 late fee will accumulate every month that the tuition remains unpaid (one month late a \$10.00, two months late - \$20.00)

When a check is returned to us for insufficient funds, we will wait 3 business days and redeposit the check, unless we receive a new check. There is a \$25.00 charge each time a check is returned for insufficient funds. If a check is returned twice, we will then require cash or a cashiers check within 3 business days.

Checks are payable to Montgomery Methodist Children's Center or MMCC. Credit card payments are not accepted. Financial obligation continues until the end of the term. (September through May).

The only conditions under which unused tuition will be refunded or financial obligation will be terminated are:

- 1) Transfer out of the school district.
- 2) Teacher (Director) recommends removal.
- 3) Severe illness in the home with a doctor's recommendation.
- 4) Extenuating circumstances as decided by the Board of Directors.

Thirty (30) days notice must be given to the school before withdrawing to be eligible for any tuition refund.

There will be no refunds for a child's illness due to colds or communicable diseases or due to extended travel. The expense of running the Center is continuous, and we ask your cooperation in this matter.

Limited funds are available for tuition assistance. Please talk to the Director or a member of the Board of Directors.

## **HEALTH POLICY**

MMCC strives to provide a healthy, safe environment for all children and staff. Teachers, Assistants, and office staff have completed basic first aid training and infant/child CPR training, as well as site-specific safety instruction. The following health policy is in effect for the 2015-2016 school year.

1. Any ill student will be sent to the office and the parents/guardians notified. This includes but is not limited to vomiting, fever, head lice, and excessive coughing/sneezing. In the case of communicable diseases, the office staff will post a notice on the school bulletin board listing the disease and class(es) affected. If deemed necessary by the Director, a special notice will be sent home with each child in the affected class(es).
2. Minor injuries will be treated by the teacher, assistant, and/or office staff. This includes but is limited to scrapes, bumps, and bruises. The parents will be notified by phone or in person at time of pick-up. Ice packs and / or Band-Aids may be applied by staff. Cuts will be cleaned with soap and water only. No other salves, ointments, or medications will be administered. Splinters, if the tip is outside the skin, may be removed with tweezers.
3. In the case of severe illness or injury, the teacher or assistant will begin first aid and will notify the office immediately. This includes but is not limited to broken bones, difficulty breathing, head trauma, burns and accidental poisoning. The parents/guardians will be notified immediately along with Montgomery County Fire & Rescue (911). The staff will administer first aid according to current first aid/CPR standards, and / or aid under the telephone guidance of MCFR. Upon arrival, the MCFR team may administer care as appropriate, including but not limited to oxygen, adrenaline, and syrup of ipecac.  
Parental permission is not required in life-threatening situations. MCFR, with staff and parental input, will decide if immediate transportation to the nearest hospital is needed. If not, the child may be transported to the hospital by the parents/guardians. In all cases, the best interest of the child shall prevail.
4. If a child is taken to the doctor or hospital as a result of an injury received while at school, the preschool should be notified. The preschool is then required to notify the MSDE office of Child Care, our licensing agency.
5. Staff will wear protective gloves when in contact with bodily fluids.

6. Medications: All medications, including over-the-counter medications, must have doctor's written orders. Prescription medication must be in the original container with the correct pharmacy label. Over-the-counter medications must be in their original, sealed, unopened package. All medications will be kept in the classroom, and administered by the closest staff member if needed. A child with an allergy requiring an epi-pen will not be allowed to attend class without an epi-pen in the school. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the prescription remains current. If the epi-pen expires during the school year, the child can not return until a new epi-pen has been delivered to the school.

MC Health & Human Services – for MCPS  
1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 4200  
Rockville, MD 301-217-1571  
Frederick Co. Public Schools – same (modeled after MCPS)