

Children's Community School

Student/Parent Handbook



Updated: July 1, 2008

Children's Community School
Student/Parent Handbook

OUR MISSION

Children’s Community School believes that every child can and will succeed in ways that reflect his or her own aptitudes and interests. Our mission is to use the Basic School education program to provide an optimum environment for learning in which: (1) teachers and parents work together to create an inclusive community of learning, (2) students are intrinsically motivated as lifelong learners through hands-on teaching and an integrated curriculum, and (3) teachers are empowered and encouraged to teach to the needs of each individual student as they remain with the same class for two years in elementary school and for their entire three years in middle school.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Children’s Community School has adopted as its educational program “The Basic School,” a comprehensive plan for elementary schooling developed by Dr. Ernest Boyer through The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning. The Basic School emphasizes four priorities as the essential building blocks of the school: community, curriculum, climate and character. In the Basic School, an effective school connects people to create community; an effective school connects the curriculum to achieve coherence; an effective school connects classrooms and resources to enrich the learning climate; and an effective school connects learning to life to build character.

The most distinctive feature of the Basic School is its curriculum. In the Basic School, the curriculum is organized around eight integrative themes called core commonalities. The core commonalities are (1) The Life Cycle, (2) The Use of Symbols, (3) Membership in Groups, (4) A Sense of Time and Space, (5) Response to the Aesthetic, (6) Connections to Nature, (7) Producing and Consuming, and (8) Living with Purpose. These eight commonalities, based on shared human experiences, integrate traditional subjects and help students relate what they learn to life.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

Registration/Admission

All students who submit a registration for admission to Children’s Community School prior to the annual enrollment deadline will be admitted, unless the number of applicants for a grade level exceeds the number of openings at that grade level. The lottery is held in early February and families are notified immediately as to their admission or wait list status. See the “Children’s Community School Registration and Admissions Policy,” available at the school, for a detailed description of the registration and admission process. Once your child is admitted into CCS, he/she has a permanent slot in subsequent years so long as he/she is continuously enrolled.

Age Requirements

For the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school year, a child must be five years old on or before Oct. 16 to enroll in Kindergarten. For the 2009-2010 school year, the NC State Legislature has

changed this requirement. For the 2009-2010 school year, a child must be five year old on or before Aug. 31, 2009 to enroll. Valid birth certificates are required.

Nondiscrimination

Children's Community School will not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender or disability, and the school will not limit admission to students on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry.

Immunization/Physical Examination Requirements

Kindergartners must have completed their immunizations and must have a physical examination by the first day of the school year. A health assessment form for the child is available at the school. Those who do not have both the immunizations and examination completed by the thirtieth day of school will be suspended from school until they have been completed unless the child is exempted by North Carolina law.

Medication

School employees are allowed to administer medications prescribed by a doctor upon written request of the student's parent or guardian. The medication used at the school must be in its original container with the child's name, the dosage information, the drug, and the physician's name printed on it.

If medication must be administered by school personnel, the parent must provide a doctor's signed authorization with the prescribed medicine in its original container. In addition, the student's parent or guardian must provide written directions with the student's name, the name of the medicine, the time and method of administration, the dosage, a summary of possible side effects, and the termination date for administering the medicine. For safety reasons, the school will not accept telephoned permission.

You, the parent/guardian, are responsible for supplying and retrieving the medication.

As parent/guardian, you may pick up a form on which to record the information for administration of medication from the school office. The school retains the right to reject the request for administration of medicine.

School Day

The elementary school day is from 8:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. A child must be in attendance one-half of the school day to constitute being present for school. In order to get credit for a half day, 11:30 a.m. is considered the half-day point. It is very important for your child to be on time every day! Class instruction begins promptly at 8:45 am. Children who are tardy miss part of the instructional day, and this tardiness has an impact on what is learned. Students are tardy after 8:45 am.

The school day for middle school is from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. In order to get attendance credit for the day, 11:30 is considered the half-day point. Just as in the elementary school, it is very

important for students to be on time every day! Class instruction begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. Students arriving after 8:30 are considered tardy and therefore must sign in at the front desk.

Student Attendance

The Compulsory Attendance Law (NC General Statute 115C-378), states that a student under sixteen must attend school regularly while school is in session. The school will report unlawful absences to proper authorities.

When a student misses class or parts of class, he or she does not have the benefit of discussions, demonstrations, experiments, or instruction which have a tremendous bearing on learning and grades. Repeated absence defeats the purpose of school and jeopardizes the student's progress and chances of promotion. It is the responsibility of the family (parent and child) to make sure the student attends school unless the child must be absent for one of the following reasons:

- (1) Illness or Injury - when the absence results from illness or injury which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school.
- (2) Quarantine - when isolation of the student is ordered by the local health officer or by the State Board of Health.
- (3) Death in the Immediate Family - when the absence results from the death of a member of the immediate family of the student.
- (4) Medical or Dental Appointment - when the absence results from a medical or dental appointment for a student.
- (5) Court or Administrative Proceedings - when the absence results from the attendance of a student at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.
- (6) Religious Observance - if the tenets of a religion to which a student or his/her parent adheres require or suggest observance of a religious event. The approval of such absences is within the discretion of Board of Directors of the school, but approval should be granted unless the religious observance, or the cumulative effect of religious observance is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the student.
- (7) Educational Opportunity - when it is demonstrated that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity such as travel. Approval for such an absence must be granted by the director or designee **prior** to the absence.

All other absences are unexcused. After three unexcused absences, the required state procedure will be followed.

Absences and Tardiness

Students must have a written excuse from a parent/guardian for any and all absences from school. The excuse note must be given to the teacher no later than two days after the child returns to school following an absence, or the absence will be reported as unexcused. A student must be in attendance for at least half of the school day in order to be counted present for the

day. Children's Community School expects that students will be at school on time. When your child arrives late, the teacher is taken away from the rest of the class. It is unfair and inappropriate for an entire class to be impacted by continuous tardiness.

Family Trips

Before a student may be excused from school for a family trip, the parent must make written arrangements with the Director/Assistant Director three days prior to the trip. Students will be excused for up to 5 days per year for family travel that is considered an educational opportunity. All students who leave school for an extended trip will be coded in the following manner: excused the first five days and all additional absences are unexcused. The student is responsible for obtaining and completing all class work. Multiple family trips during a school year are discouraged as it greatly impacts the learning of your child. Avoid absences during End of Grade testing at all costs!

Dress Code

Students should attend school in appropriate clothes (not too revealing) and shoes. In elementary school, we request tennis/play shoes to be worn every day with no exceptions. Our students will participate in many messy activities and should come dressed for those experiences. We ask that parents send an extra change of clothes to be kept at school for emergencies. Please make sure these are clearly marked with your child's name.

In middle school, students should also attend school in appropriate clothes (not too revealing) and shoes. Students may want to have an extra change of clothes, with their names clearly identified, to keep in their lockers for emergencies. Spaghetti straps or halter tops are not allowed and shirts must cover the entire abdominal area. Shorts should be at least finger-tip length with arms extended down the side.

Teachers and administrators will encourage students to comply with the dress code with reminders and consequences that develop good habits of self-discipline, respect for school norms and respect for self. Students who come to school wearing inappropriate clothing will be given an item from the clothes closet to wear for the day with the expectation that the problem will be resolved with support from parents at home prior to the next day.

Field Trips

Parents are asked to sign a blanket permission slip for all school field trips. You will receive a calendar of events listing all field trips, dates and times. The Children's Community School bus will be used for all field trips unless specific need of a chartered bus is determined. A licensed bus driver will drive for all field trips.

Visitors and Volunteers

We welcome visitors to Children's Community School. Whenever a visitor comes into the building, he or she should first check in at the school office and let the administrative assistant know the purpose of the visit. All visitors should wear a Visitor Badge.

Children's Community School requires the commitment and involvement of parents. Parents establish the foundation for educational achievement when they show an interest in their child's education and establish high standards and expectations. Research shows that student performance is likely to improve if parents are meaningfully involved in their child's schooling. Parents are especially encouraged to volunteer, to share their experiences and expertise that fit within the broad goals of the school. Parents interested in being a volunteer at our school are required to attend one of our volunteer training sessions prior to volunteering. Volunteering will not begin until the classroom teacher has established routines and procedures within the class community and he/she will let parents know when volunteering will begin.

Lunch

Students bring a bag lunch each day and lunch is eaten in the classrooms. An optional hot lunch will be offered for 1-2 days per week. All students will receive forms for their parents to apply for free lunch. If during the school year you feel you may qualify for this program, contact the school office and request an application.

Middle school students will be able to eat lunch with their Exploratory Electives classes on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the students will eat with their Advisory teams. Students may have supervised free choice as to where to eat on Flexible Fridays.

Birthdays

Parents may send invitations to school to be passed out if the whole class is invited or all boys/all girls. Birthdays may be celebrated with a small treat for the class, a donation to the classroom, or the Birthday Book Club. We do not have birthday parties at school. **Please do not plan to open presents at school or send treat bags.** Please check with the lead teacher in reference to food allergies.

Lockers

Middle school students will be assigned a locker and coat hook for the purpose of storing personal belongings needed for the school day. Because of the high level of trust that exists among our school community members, locks will not be used on lockers. Lockers are shared school property so they must be kept in good condition. Students may create displays in their lockers so long as they create no permanent changes to the locker and they uphold the values of our community. Items left outside of lockers in common spaces are subject to confiscation and removal to the Lost & Found.

Carpool

(see carpool document)

Gifted Education

Children's Community School believes that every child can and will succeed in ways that reflect his or her own aptitudes and interests. According to our mission, all children will learn to their greatest potential through an inclusive model. This model works for gifted children and all other children under the following conditions:

- Students are appropriately grouped in clusters
- Teachers match their instructional strategies to the specific learning needs of the students
- Students receive an appropriately individualized curriculum to meet their needs

The goal of this program is to meet the instructional needs of gifted students in a regular classroom while creating a learning environment in which these students can fully develop their abilities and interests without losing their sense of membership as part of the class.

At CCS, we are concerned with the development of the total child including the cognitive, social, emotional and physical areas. We believe that a balanced educational program will assist children in becoming happy, well balanced and successful individuals. Although a child might excel in one of these areas, we are committed to a well rounded plan for each child that includes goals in all areas.

Parent Advisory Committee

This committee is open to all parents. We meet at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every month during the school year, September through May, except for December.

Inclement Weather

The primary concern when inclement weather strikes is the safety of students, parents and staff. In the event of inclement weather, parents are advised to check our website and listen to area television stations (WSOC -9, WBTV-3, NBC-6) for information regarding closings.

If no announcement of delay or cancellation of school is heard, you should assume school is scheduled as normal.

In some cases, school may be canceled after students arrive. This will also be announced on the same television stations and posted on the web. You need to make arrangements beforehand concerning where your child is to go if school is dismissed. Make sure your child knows your “emergency bad weather plan” before inclement weather arrives!

ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

Report Cards

Report cards are issued in October, February and May. Measurement of academic growth and development are based on periodic assessment using various methods and strategies.

Conferences.

Parent/Teacher Covenant conference – August
Parent/Teacher Conference – October
Parent/Teacher Conference - February
Parent/Teacher Conference – May

Please schedule time to talk with a teacher during her/his planning time or after school, so as not to disrupt the teaching environment.

For middle school students, the Parent/Teacher Covenant conference will take place in August. During the October and February conferences, the student will lead the parent conferences. A final parent/teacher conference will take place in May. Instructions on how to facilitate a student-led conference will take place for the students during Advisory.

Communication to Parents

To serve you, our students and parents, we strive to maintain good communication. Therefore, every elementary classroom teacher will send home weekly newsletters describing class activities, sharing helpful hints for parents, and containing reminders of upcoming events and activities. Middle school teacher teams will also send regular newsletters.

The director will send home monthly newsletters. We also send mass emails on a regular basis. Please check email frequently and notify us of any changes. If you do not have access to email, please let us know so we can provide additional support.

Our school has an extensive web site and we invite you to visit it regularly for information regarding our school: www.ccsch.org

If you need to reach your child's middle school teachers, contact them at school or via email to arrange a time to set up an appointment to discuss your child so you can receive the full attention that you deserve. Your first point of contact with any issues will always be the teacher or staff member who is closest to the particular situation. Please refrain from calling teachers at home as they need to spend time with their own families in the evenings.

Parent Training

We conduct several parent training sessions each year. We primarily offer fall and spring sessions. These sessions are listed on the web and are free to all parents. They are also open to the public. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities so that you can better understand our curriculum and instruction as well as better assist your child.

Parent Committees

We have many opportunities for parents to participate in committee work that improves and enriches our total school program for our students. Please note the parent volunteer opportunities at your open house session and visit the website for additional parent committee opportunities.

Special Area Classes/Connect Classes

Your elementary school child will attend music, physical education, art, and Spanish with our Connect Specialists each week.

Middle School students will attend three required electives (Spanish, Physical Education, Technology) twice per week and two focus electives (choice of two: art, drama, dance, band, music) twice per week. They will also have the opportunity to try one exploratory elective (choices vary from trimester to trimester based on volunteers and staff choices) twice per week each trimester. This is an excellent opportunity for parent volunteers to share their passions!

Class Assignments

The Director, Assistant Directors and teachers work carefully to create balanced class lists each year. We do not accept teacher requests but you are welcome to specify any specific needs your child has at your spring conference that might impact placement. This information will assist us as we make class placements for the following year. Our students loop at CCS which means that they remain with the same class and same teachers (if possible) for two years (three years in middle school). Although we cannot control all variables (i.e. teacher moving away), we do our best to keep this loop intact.

As you know, we take great care and consideration when creating our class lists. This is a task that we revisit all summer as it is very important to us that we do it well. We do not accept teacher requests so please do not ask us to do so. We have an amazing group of teachers who work together so that all of our children get the benefit of many teachers. We never want a destructive practice such as teacher requests to alter the harmony and teamwork that is evident on our staff.

Peanut/Other Allergy-Free Classrooms

In some instances there may be a child with a certain allergy to a particular substance. Due to serious illness or life/death situations, we may need to restrict the substance from a particular classroom. We request that you show compassion, understanding and flexibility if this is the case for your child's class.

State Proficiency Guidelines

Students scoring below state proficiency guidelines during gateway years receive remedial interventions and/or are retained in the same grade. If a student with a disability is being considered for retention, the Director makes the decision in consultation with the Student Services Team. If the student is making satisfactory progress toward the achievement of the educational goals in the IEP, the student can be promoted. If the student is retained, the student's IEP will include a notation indicating the reason for retention and changes in the IEP.

Homework

Children's Community School greatly values the time a child is at home with his family. The most important homework that every child has is to read at home daily. Every attempt is made to ensure that all additional homework activities are meaningful, purposeful and interactive with parents. We prefer that a child has time to complete homework that reflects his best work,

therefore if you need to take an extra night to complete the assignment, please feel free to do so and communicate with your teacher. If your child is struggling with homework, again, please share this with your teacher so that adjustments can be made.

Middle School students have the potential for many different homework sources. This requires a well-coordinated effort on everyone's part! To assist with this endeavor, each middle school student works from an Agenda, which will serve as a primary means of communication between home and school. In addition to containing a "by the week" homework calendar, it contains a monthly organizer for posting all other assignments and project due dates. The response to your middle school learner when he/she says "I don't have any homework" is "Let's take a look at your agenda to make sure..."

Units of Study

Parents may visit the school website at ccsch.org to view the units of study for each grade level.

Formal assessments

NC Writing Assessment for Grade 4, 7

NC EOG Test for Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

NC Computer Skills Test for Grade 8

End of Grade (EOG) Testing is one important factor in determining how much a child has progressed during the year. It is imperative that your child be in attendance for the testing during the last 3 weeks of school. Third grade students will participate in the EOG pretest during the first 3 weeks of school. Again, it is imperative that your child be present. Fourth and seventh grade writing test is usually held in March.

CHARACTER ISSUES

Children's Community School has a strong character education focus. We believe that students learn about character from their role models, curriculum and through the opportunity for service learning activities. Therefore, every class will participate in community outreach programs such as visiting the area nursing homes. We embrace the core virtues described by Dr. Ernest Boyer which include the following; respect, honesty, perseverance, compassion, giving, responsibility, self-discipline. These core virtues are taught by both word and deed and we believe they promote excellence in living as well as learning.

Behavior and Discipline

Children's Community School uses positive discipline. We believe that our first responsibility in regard to student behavior is to create a classroom that is engaging to the students and to individualize instruction in a way that allows students to be appropriately challenged. We anticipate that this first step will help to avoid many discipline issues.

We adamantly disagree with extrinsic reward systems and do not employ these systems (classroom behavior charts, Friday treat boxes, etc.) at our school. We focus on nurturing intrinsic motivation within our students.

General Rules of Conduct

CCS students are expected to be respectful and considerate to other students, CCS staff, and CCS visitors. CCS students also are expected to respect the property of CCS and of other students and staff. No student shall in any way bully or exhibit inappropriate or disrespectful behavior toward other students, staff or any other person. Prohibited bullying can take many forms and can include any of the following:

- (a) physical bullying, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, pulling hair, scratching, and tripping;
- (b) verbal bullying, such as teasing, name-calling, starting rumors, taunting and threatening;
- (c) emotional bullying, such as rejecting, excluding, defaming, humiliating, isolating, and ostracizing;
- (d) sexual bullying, such as exhibitionism, propositioning, and sexual touching;
- (e) cyber-bullying, which is defined as using technology to intimidate, embarrass, stalk, or coerce and
- (f) discrimination, such as harassment of a person based on race, color, gender, religion or ethnic origin.

The Basic School curriculum, which provides the framework for curriculum at CCS, emphasizes character development and respect toward others. CCS teachers will include character education and activities in their lesson plans. Classroom discipline will emphasize talking out problems and conflict avoidance.

As members of our middle school community, students will pledge to:

- Be responsible for their actions
- Always do their best as individuals and as a part of a team
- Respect the uniqueness and gifts of others
- Practice kindness and consideration
- Not lie, cheat or steal

Computer Network and Internet Use

Our middle school offers students access to our computer network for academic purposes. We expect students to make responsible use of this service in compliance with our Student Code of Conduct. To gain access to network applications and the Internet, all students must obtain

parental permission as verified by the signatures on the Acceptable Use Policy form. Should a parent prefer that a student not have Internet access, use of the computers is still possible for more traditional purposes such as word processing.

Discipline

The CCS Elementary and Middle School Board of Directors has adopted a student behavior policy that includes parameters for discipline. The policy is not intended to set forth a rigid scale of discipline for students involved in bullying incidents or other inappropriate behavior, because it is not feasible to define all possible circumstances and actions in advance. Discipline is determined on a case by case basis, subject to certain parameters. This section will define certain levels of offense to provide general guidance as to the level of discipline that can be expected. For purposes of the student behavior policy, the level of offense will be determined by the Director or Assistant Director.

Level One Offenses

Level One Offenses are relatively minor incidents of bullying or similar actions, such as open defiance of a teacher's request, intentional or repeated disruption of class, use of inappropriate or obscene language, lying to a teacher or staff member, or an isolated, minor incident of verbal bullying.

Discipline for Level One Offenses will generally be handled by the classroom teacher, and the discipline will generally be determined at the discretion of the teacher.

Level Two Offenses

Level Two Offenses are more significant incidents of bullying or inappropriate behavior, such as physical bullying, sexual bullying, or repeated or severe incidents of verbal or emotional bullying.

Level Two Offenses should be reported to the Director or Assistant Director. Discipline will be determined by the Director or Assistant Director in consultation with the classroom teacher. Discipline may range from temporary detention (or in-school suspension) to suspension from school for one to three days.

Level Three Offenses

Level Three Offenses are severe incidents or repeated incidents of bullying or inappropriate behavior.

Level Three Offenses shall be reported to the Director or Assistant Director. Discipline will be determined by the Director or Assistant Director in consultation with the classroom teacher. Discipline may range from suspension from school for one day to exclusion.

CCS policies and procedures for discipline of students (including students with disabilities) shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations. The CCS student discipline policy sets parameters for addressing inappropriate student behavior. Nothing in the policy is intended to

nor does it in any way impose any additional liabilities, requirements or obligations on the Board or the school beyond those liabilities, requirements and obligations imposed by applicable law.

Weapons and Dangerous Instruments

No student shall knowingly possess, handle, or transmit on school property any weapon as defined by North Carolina law. Violation of this rule results in immediate suspension for at least the remainder of the school year.

Prohibited Substances

The possession, use, sale, exchange, or distribution of any prohibited substance on educational property will not be tolerated. "Prohibited Substances" include, but are not limited to, the following: tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and controlled substances or over-the-counter pharmaceuticals.

Cell Phones, MP3 Players, and Electronic Games

These devices are NOT to be in the possession of students while on the campus OR while attending Community Middle School events off campus. Exceptions will be made only with explicit permission from the Director or one of the Assistant Directors. These items become a distraction and contribute little or nothing to our learning environment or community. Phones are available to our students for communication. Group access to music is provided by other means. If a student brings one of these items to school, the equipment will be confiscated for the day. On a second offense, a parent will need to retrieve the item.

Asbestos Inspections

In compliance with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), in the fall of 2004, we performed an inspection of our school building for asbestos-containing building materials. No asbestos-containing materials were found during the inspection but we continue to inspect every 6 months. A complete inspection is performed by a licensed inspector every 3 years and these inspections are reviewed by an accredited management planner who recommends actions we should take at our school. A copy of the inspection findings and the asbestos management plan is on file in the administrative offices of our school and everyone is welcome to view these during normal school hours.