



The Center School  
Parent Handbook  
2019-20

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## **Introduction**

Thirty-eight years ago, the Center School was born out of a dream for something different. Its founders set out to create a school that would reflect children's interests, teach challenging academics, and model progressive values. The students at this new school would have a say in what got taught and teach one another. Children would be encouraged to be independent and resourceful. Above all, they would be taken seriously.

The Center School's latest generation still lives the dream of its founders. Most days, at least one child can be spotted marching into school with an enormous project made for Lit or Theme dwarfing her as she proudly maneuvers it to her classroom. Students purposefully roam the halls with clipboards in hand, recording observations of their environment or surveying their learning community. There are lively debates on real issues resounding from the lunch tables. Teachers spill over into each other's classrooms to share ideas, make supportive comments, or invite another class to come visit.

While we are undeniably a warm and caring community, our program isn't for the faint of heart. Rigorous academic projects, deep critical thinking, rugged outdoor pursuits, a commitment to creativity and curiosity, and an expectation of openness to new ideas are the mainstays of a Center School education. The Center School invites all of us to investigate how we learn best and at the same time how we might make our world a better place. For years, the Center School community has succeeded in fostering in its students a balance of social consciousness and self-awareness.

## **Mission Statement**

*The Center School is a loving community that celebrates each child's unique personality, intelligence, and passion. Our school is a responsive learning environment, offering rigor and play in balanced abundance. Students emerge from our program with the skills and self-possession to be reflective, empathetic, and engaged citizens of our world.*

## **The Essentials**

The Center School:

- Embraces the natural diversity of learning styles and integrates academic, social, emotional, physical, and artistic learning.
- Collaborates with students to co-construct knowledge through exciting and open-ended processes.
- Encourages children and adults to form a vision of social justice – of equitable, compassionate communities – through active participation in their classroom, their school, and beyond.
- Invites students to approach every project and subject area with curiosity, critical thinking and a spirit of inquiry.
- Fosters a culture of connection and collaboration in which children feel truly known, valued, and motivated to learn and grow.

## **AfterSchool/Camp**

The Center School's AfterSchool program is a place where our students (K-8) can have a fulfilling, relaxing, end of day experience together with a snack and a structure attuned to their needs. The four experienced AfterSchool teachers and kids play together indoors and out, make art, build, read, and do homework.

The Center School provides a healthy snack and water for all of its students. We recommend packing an extra snack and drink marked for AfterSchool in your child's lunchbox as well.

**SCHEDULED AFTERSCHOOL USE:** Many come to AfterSchool on a regular basis. In order to ensure a spot for your child on the days you need care, please complete the online AfterSchool registration form. Your child will be signed for the days that you indicate on your registration form and will be expected to attend those days.

**CASUAL DROP IN USE:** If you wish to use a day that you have not signed up for, aka drop in, you can call the office up to 24 hours ahead and book a spot for your child. These spots are first come first serve.

**DAY CAMPS:** Day Camps are held during some vacation weeks throughout the year. The sign-up for these services is separate.

AfterSchool charges are paid ahead of time and billed by the half year. Families must either prepay or set up an automatic debit from their bank account to cover the fixed costs.

### **AfterSchool Rate Information**

#### **Prepayment Option**

- 1 day, not Wednesday- \$140
- 2 days, not including Wednesday- \$280
- 3 days, not including Wednesday- \$420
- 4 days, not including Wednesday-\$560
- 5 days- \$830
- 1 day, Wednesday- \$270
- 2 days, including Wednesday- \$410
- 3 days, including Wednesday- \$550
- 4 days, including Wednesday- \$690

#### **Monthly Payment Option**

**To sign up for the monthly payment option,  
you must set-up an automatic monthly debit for August-December.**

- 1 day, not Wednesday-  $\$140/5 = \$28/\text{month}$
- 2 days, not including Wednesday-  $\$280/5 = \$56/\text{month}$
- 3 days, not including Wednesday-  $\$420/5 = \$84/\text{month}$
- 4 days, not including Wednesday-  $\$560/5 = \$112/\text{month}$
- 5 days-  $\$830/5 = \$166/\text{month}$
- 1 day, Wednesday-  $\$270/5 = \$54/\text{month}$
- 2 days, including Wednesday-  $\$410/5 = \$82/\text{month}$
- 3 days, including Wednesday-  $\$550/5 = \$110/\text{month}$
- 4 days, including Wednesday-  $\$690/5 = \$138/\text{month}$

Our AfterSchool program strives to be exceptionally accommodating for children and families. On rare occasions, a student might find the prolonged day and loose structure of AfterSchool challenging. We mention this because the teachers and Head of School would notify you if your child were struggling to participate positively in the program. In keeping with the Center School policy on behavior, students who regularly disrupt the peaceful, playful tone of the AfterSchool program may be asked to take a break from the program for an amount of time stipulated by the Head of School.

## **All Gender Bathrooms**

In 2013, the school community read a book called *Raising My Rainbow*. In it, the author describes raising her gender non-conforming child, CJ. She shares a heartbreaking story that CJ, for all of kindergarten and first grade, didn't use the bathroom at school, because he didn't feel safe trying to use the boys room or the girls room. He would be bursting by the end of the day. This story and the reality of our own students, teachers, and community members, made us reevaluate.

During the same school year, we had an adult visitor to the school's Finer Building who asked to use the bathroom. Their gender was not easily apparent. There was a very awkward moment when the Center School guide had to sheepishly point in the general direction of the boys and girls rooms and it was clear the person was uncomfortable being forced to decide between the gendered bathrooms in front of others.

At the Center School, we strive to be social justice leaders among elementary schools, in this case by supporting our transgender and gender non-conforming students, teachers, parents, and community members. Therefore, we have changed over to all-gender bathrooms in both buildings, and on all floors of the School. We see this as an opportunity to create better bathroom experiences for all people, by being more mindful of how to be a respectful and caring member of a community.

Here are answers to some of the questions you may have:

### **Will my child have privacy?**

Stalls have been renovated to have no gaps between partitions to peek through accidentally or on purpose. There are locks on all bathroom entry doors for people who need total privacy.

### **Will boys and girls be using a bathroom at the same time?**

Yes. People who are comfortable using the bathroom stalls next to others using bathroom stalls will do so.

### **What if my child is uncomfortable using the bathroom with a person of another gender?**

Any person can use a bathroom totally privately by locking the main door.

### **What if a student is in a locked bathroom and needs assistance?**

Every teacher/staff has a passkey to open bathroom locks in an emergency.

## All School

Once a week, the entire school joins together for an assembly, called All School. This meeting lasts between forty-five minutes and one hour, and is held in the Finer Building, in the All School room (the large assembly room in the very front of the building, off the main entrance). Typically, All School is run by a small group of children, with support from classroom teachers. Each month, a different class is in charge of the weekly All School meeting; every child gets a chance to learn to speak in front of the group and share what they are learning. Many classes enjoy choosing All School themes (farm day, pajama day, crazy hair day, robot day, and so on), dressing up and choosing songs to accompany the theme. The All School routine is as follows:

- *Coming-In Song*: This is a song sung at the beginning of the assembly. If an All School has a theme, the songs are often related to it.
- *Lighting the Peace Candle*: The children leading the meeting will share a message in the form of a short story, thought or poem. A candle is lit and the positive message is “sent into the world.”
- *Sharing*: This is the major portion of the program. Classes in whole or small groups share works-in-progress or projects completed. Afterwards, sharers take questions and comments from the community.
- *Birthdays*: All community members who have a birthday that week are welcome to come up and tell the school how old they’ll be and the entire school sings to them.
- *Announcements*: This is an opportunity for individuals to announce a school or larger community event.
- *Going Out Song*: This song is sung as classes recess from the building.

Parents, family members and friends are always welcome to attend All School meetings for whatever amount of time they can spare, and most especially when their child or child’s class is leading or doing a sharing.

We ask that children stay with their class groupings during the program. If you are attending and want to sit with your child, please join them. They should not leave the group to sit in visitor chairs.

Some parents find getting the time to come to All School challenging. This is understandable. You are always welcome, but should feel no pressure from the school to attend. In certain situations, if your child wants to have a visitor and you cannot attend yourself, you may wish to send along a family member or friend.

Though All School is a friendly, sociable, engaging time for the school to come together and have each class share what they are discovering, as a general note: **PLEASE REFRAIN FROM CHATTING WITH THOSE AROUND YOU OR USING AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE DURING ALL SCHOOL- IT IS DISTRACTING TO THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.**

## Annual Fund

The Annual Fund is the cornerstone of our fundraising efforts. Annual Fund gifts are tax-deductible, unrestricted support that, by providing current use dollars has an immediate impact on the day-to-day vibrancy of our School—supporting competitive faculty salaries to financial aid, books to computers, language programs to staff development. It offsets the difference between the income collected and the operational expenses of the School. Each year we ask the staff, Board and parents to make a gift to help keep up with the increased level of needs; every gift is important because it is a gift of participation which signals community support and helps in asking for charitable support from philanthropic organizations. You can give online at [centerschool.net](http://centerschool.net).

## **Attendance**

Regular attendance according to the school calendar ensures your child's gaining the greatest possible benefit from the Center School program. If your child will miss any length of school due to unusual travel or vacation plans, please bring this to the attention of the teacher as soon as possible and send in a note to the office. This is important in order that it be recorded as an "excused absence", and that the teacher can prepare work for your child to complete while they are away. The latter will ensure that the transition back into the classroom is as smooth as possible.

If your child will be absent from school for illness or any other reason, please call the school office (773-1700 Ext.1) before school starts if possible. If we do not hear from you, the office will contact you to learn of your child's whereabouts. We follow this policy for the safety of all children in the home-to-school transfer.

If your child is chronically late or absent, you may receive a gentle check-in letter from the Head of School requesting a meeting to discuss how we might support your family to facilitate more consistent school attendance. We are here to help, and want our students to get the most out of each day of the school year! It is the student and parent team who are responsible for keeping up with schoolwork and homework assignments. If a child falls too far behind, they may require tutoring, vacation work, or summer work in order to move up to the next grade.

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## Cellphones: Student Use

Cellphones may not be used at school (some exceptions may come up such as times when talk to text, Spotify, or a camera on the phone is being used specifically for supervised, sanctioned school work.) A student willfully ignoring the no cellphone use at school rule will have their device taken away by a teacher and it will be given back at dismissal time. If this happens a lot, the child's parent/s will be notified and other consequences will be established. **Parents should not text or call children during the school day.**

## Classroom Size and Structure

Typically, there are up to 23 children in a classroom. The ratio of teachers to students is approximately 8:1, with support teachers where needed. Often, students spend two years with the same teaching team in a group with a two-year developmental span. A child's chronological age does not always correspond with their developmental placement. We use the Early Screen Assessment as well as other formal and/or informal assessments to determine the best placement for each child. Our classroom groupings from the youngest to the oldest are called the Littles Green, Littles Blue, Kindergarten, First Grade, Mups, Middles, and Uppers.

## Coming to School on Time

**School begins at 8:00, class starts at 8:15.  
School doors open at 8:00.  
Please do not leave your child  
unattended outside the school before 8:00.**

We appreciate your cooperation! Children who are late have a more difficult start; they don't have time to get their minds and belongings together before they tackle the day, not to mention how disruptive it is for everyone else in the class.

Morning arrival is anytime between 8:00-8:14 each day, and classes start at 8:15 promptly. Children who arrive after 8:15 will be marked late.

**Parking:** Uppers parents can park in the lot across from the Finer Building or along the road. Parents of children whose classrooms are in the Brick Building should park in the lot to the side of the Brick Building or along the road.

## Concussion Protocol

In the event that a student sustains a head injury during the school day, no matter how minor, the student will be escorted to the school office by a teacher or staff member to be evaluated. Office personnel will call home to notify parents of the injury. If symptoms of a concussion are present, parents will be asked to pick up their child and take them to their doctor for further medical care. If no symptoms are present after a short rest and evaluation, the child may return to class and participate in all activities. All teachers who work with the student will be notified of the head injury and will keep an eye out for concussion symptoms. If a child begins to display symptoms after returning to class, they will return to the school office, where their parents will be called and student will be sent home.

## Device Usage Guidelines for Families

We are often asked how to determine when a child is ready for a cellphone or other device. We appreciate that families have a wide range of values and beliefs influencing their decision-making. So, we found this article has helpful advice that can apply to a range of families. You can access it by going to this address online: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/article-when-should-you-get-kid-cell-phone.html>

If your child does have a device that has texting/messaging capability we recommend the following guidelines. We ask that you review these with your children as soon as possible (if you haven't done that already) so they can be mindful members of this interconnected community that we all value and support:

1. Parents supervise, screen, and talk with your child re texts, messages, Instagram, and emails etc.
2. Take your child's phone/iPad/device at bedtime: this prevents late night texting, gaming etc. If kid says they need it for AUDIBLE or morning ALARM, figure out a way around that. For instance, you could let them listen but with the door open, and take once they fall asleep. Get them an alarm clock. Stand firm.
3. No texting/messaging at meal times or other designated family/social times.
4. No texting/messaging at school. Parents this includes you :)
5. No arguing or angry messages by text/messenger. Save complicated conversations to have in person, or on phone.
6. No naked texts/messages. Possession of those images is illegal.
7. No gossip by texts/message.
8. Do not text/chat with people you don't know firsthand.
9. Be aware that texts, messages and posts can be saved by other parties. So, be mindful of what messages and images you are putting into the world, because it may come back to you.

### Dismissal Procedure

**School ends at 3:15 Mon., Tues., Thurs. and Fri. and 12:30 on Wed. The dismissal process takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes, ending officially at 3:30 Mon., Tues., Thurs. and Fri. and 12:40 on Wed.**

**UPPERS NEED A FEW EXTRA MINUTES TO GET THEIR HOMEWORK PACKED. THEY ARE NOT READY UNTIL 3:20.**

### Picking up:

**For Uppers**—Park in Finer Building lot and go to your child's classroom to retrieve them.

**For Brick Building**—Park in Brick Building lot or on either side of the drive and go to your child's classroom to retrieve your child. Please wait outside the classroom for your child to come out, unless the door is open.

**Car Line**- You can use the car line if you are picking up a student in grades 2-5. Join the car line, which runs parallel to the school in one line and wait for a teacher with walkie-talkie to radio for your student/s. If you have a carpool with a combination of Uppers and Brick Building kids, please park in the Finer lot and go to classrooms to retrieve the children in your carpool.

## **Dog Policy**

- 1) A dog visiting the Center School campus must be on a leash and accompanied by its ADULT owner/guardian at all times.
- 2) Dogs may only visit classrooms with prior arrangement with the teachers. That arrangement must happen at least 24 hours ahead.
- 3) Dogs may not be in classrooms at drop off and/or pick up.
- 4) Dogs left in cars should be left with windows adequately ventilated.
- 5) Please only walk dogs across the street from the school buildings, near the baseball field, and pick up feces. Please do not let dogs defecate (pee, poop, vomit) anywhere on our playgrounds or pathways.
- 6) Please do not bring dogs to All School or to school events. There are children and adults who are frightened of them.

## **Evaluation of Students**

Children's learning and growth is assessed on an on-going basis by the teachers' directed observations, recorded during or at the conclusion of the school day. The way children explore and use materials, solve problems, handle conflicts, follow through on tasks, and apply their skills is best perceived in the context of work situations. Thus, teachers continually assess the resources, competencies and strategies the child brings to bear on a task. Formal developmental and academic screenings are used to help determine placement on admission and as needed.

Progress is charted by subject area along a developmental continuum. We believe that subject areas overlap and that from year to year there is continuous, deliberate progression. Our academic assessment is not geared toward a one-dimensional "lock-step" system. Students do not go from 1 to 8 and on up a ladder. Conceptual foundations are reinforced repeatedly in various contexts with application of known/familiar skills to new events. Learning has lateral as well as vertical movement.

Reporting and accountability will assume four basic forms:

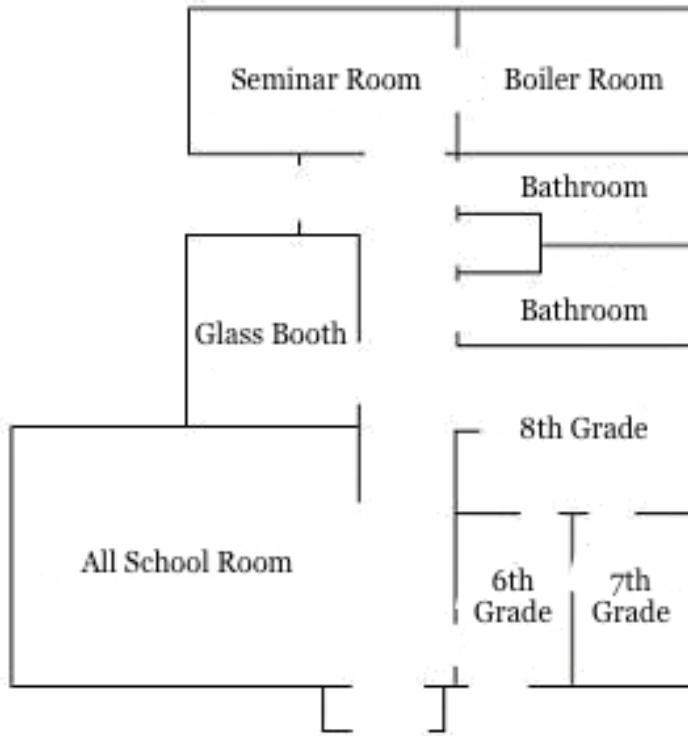
- Regular Parent Conferences are held three times a year: before school begins mid-year and in the spring (You sign up for the pre-school conference, which includes your child, by calling the school office in August. Uppers teachers typically involve students in all three yearly conferences, Brick Building teachers reserve second and third for parents only). Additional meetings may be scheduled by parents and teachers to reflect particular needs or circumstances.
- Reports consisting of narratives and checklists will be given three times a year. Reports will reflect both the student's evaluation of objectives and progress and the teacher's evaluation.
- Standardized Achievement Tests will be given each year, beginning in the sixth grade, in order to provide grade standings based on local and national norms.
- A Student Portfolio follows children through their Center School experience. The portfolio contains representative samples of student work in various areas together with student reflections on each piece.

## **Financial Aid**

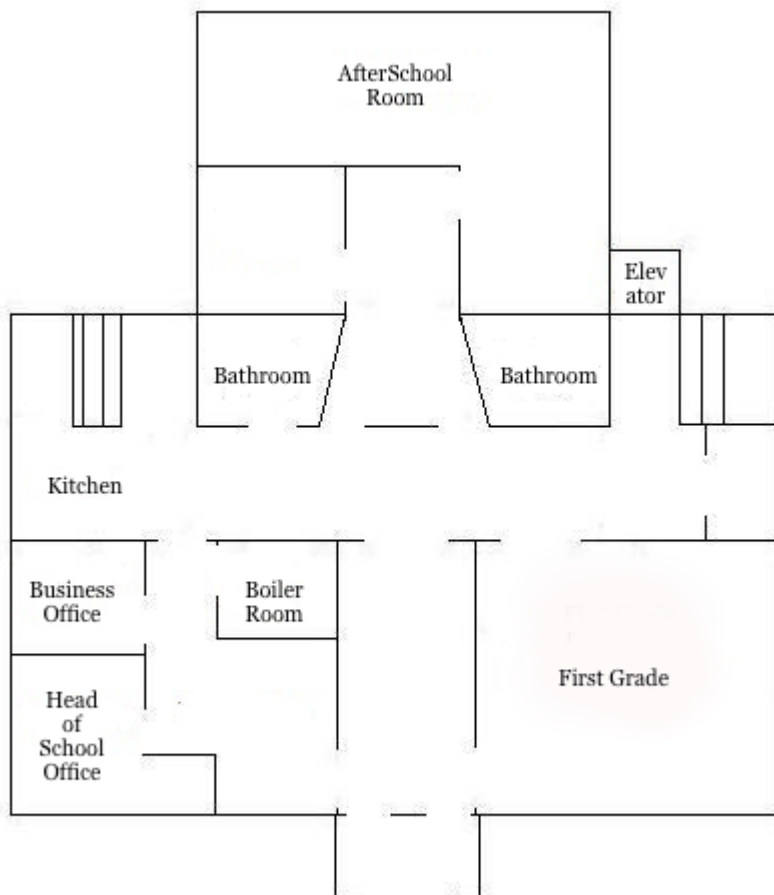
The Center School offers financial aid to as many families as is possible. Many levels of financial assistance are awarded, but all families are expected to contribute to tuition. Admissions decisions are made without regard to financial need, however, our total aid amount per year is limited and we work to spread the funding to as many families as possible. Therefore, we are sometimes unable to offer as much aid as a family may hope for.

The methodology used to determine the parental contribution considers many items, including assets, liabilities, family size and the number of students in tuition-charging schools. As the Committee looks at financial aid applications, it differentiates between necessary expenses and money spent for lifestyle choices. With respect to the latter, beyond a certain point, we will not provide aid to offset "lifestyle" expenditures that could have been directed to education.

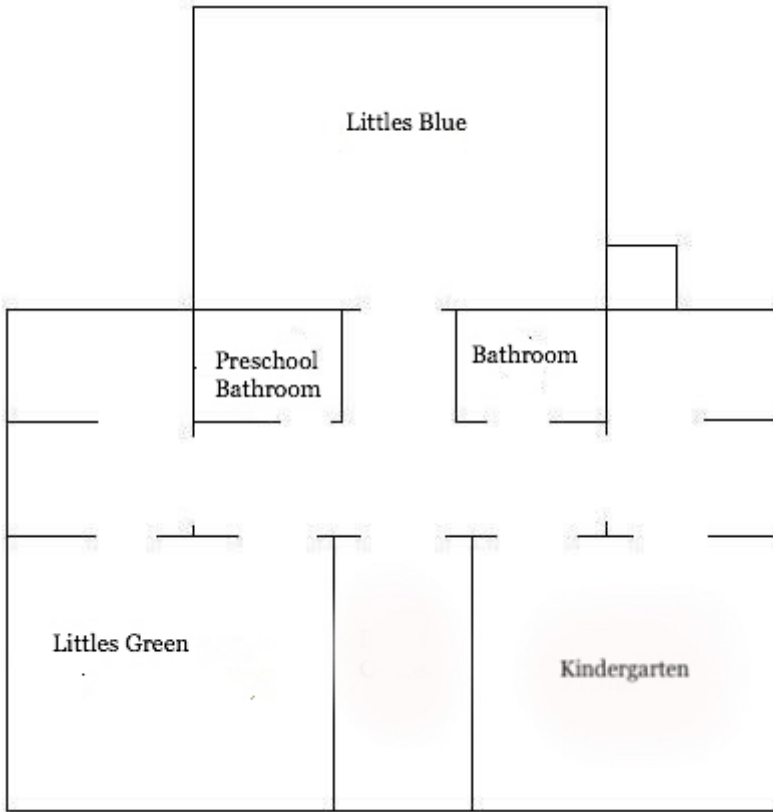
## Guide to the School Buildings



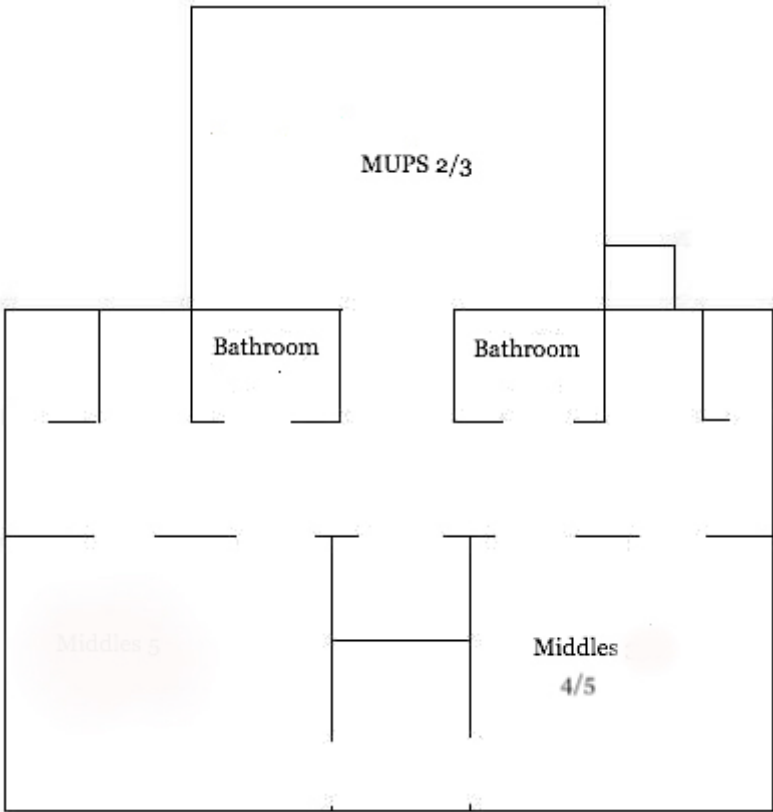
The Finer Building



Brick Building – First Floor



Brick Building – Second Floor



Brick Building – Third Floor

## Holiday Closures

The Center School will be closed for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents Day
- Patriots Day
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Yom Kippur
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

## Homework Assignments

Center School teachers believe that all children need down time, away from school and schoolwork, to follow their own creative paths and individual rhythms. Research shows (Peter Gray, *American Journal of Play* Vol 5, #3) that children need unstructured play time to develop their brains.

However, we also believe a modest amount of homework time each night is important. Center School teachers assign homework to help students:

- Practice and reinforce skills recently introduced in class, for instance math facts, spelling, or Spanish vocabulary words. These are best practiced independently for 10-15 minutes per night.
- Develop routines and habits that build their independence, responsibility, and time management: packing up a backpack, organizing materials, planning, etc.
- Envision, design, and create projects at their own pace, free from the time constraints of the school day.
- Connect with their parents about what they are learning in school and provide a jumping off point for fertile family discussions.

Center School teachers follow the Harris Cooper research recommendation (Cooper, 1989; Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006) of 20-30 minutes in MUPS, 40-50 minutes in Middles, 1-1.5 hours of homework per day in Uppers. In Kindergarten, children will get their feet wet with home assignments designed to involve their families in classroom traditions and explorations.

Just as they do with in-school assignments, Center School teachers take students' specific needs and desires into consideration when assigning homework. If a student or their family is looking for something different from homework time, teachers can develop an individual homework plan for that student.

Parents can help their child by:

- Ensuring a regular time for homework.

- Establishing a quiet workspace.
- Writing a note to your child's teacher if your child has spent excessive amounts of time and/or is struggling too much with assignments.

In their fall communications to parents and students, the teachers of each class will expand on their specific homework protocols and standards.

### **Internet: Student Use**

Children may not surf the Internet outside of teacher supervision. Use of sites such as YouTube and Google need to be CLOSELY monitored by teachers, if they are to be allowed at all. Social networks like Facebook, etc. are not allowed to be used at school. A student found using such sites or surfing without supervision, or on the Internet at a time when they are not supposed to be, will be sent to talk to the Head of School and/or will have privileges suspended by the teaching team (all teachers who work with the student should be informed). Under no circumstances should children be watching videos or looking at image sites on the Internet without prior approval from a teacher.

### **Justice, Equity and Diversity**

The Justice, Equity, and Diversity (JED) Committee formed in September 2016 to develop a Five-Year Plan for the school around these issues. As well, JED serves as a drawing board to instill ever more opportunities for growth and involvement for the entire school community. We are an active committee and welcome new members. Through study and discussion, we have a willingness to uncover and address our prejudices and advantages. We are bent on action and push to fortify our community in this regard. As well, we venture toward the horizon of complex and threshold endeavors to embolden and activate our school. We want the Center School to be a beacon. We are welcoming. We are always learning. We are always striving. If you are interested in becoming involved with this work, there is always much to do. Please email Sharon Gralnick, our chair, at sgralnick-ub@nmhschool.org or Charlie Spencer, Head of School at charlie@centerschool.net.

Here are some of JED's recent actions:

A Social Justice Framework for teachers was developed. We felt that if the School was going to have social justice as a tenet of its mission, we need to give teachers resources and support in finding material, updating projects, vetting literature, and doing research on what's considered up to the minute best practice in an ever unfolding landscape of social justice in education. The team put together a first draft of the framework, which we see as a sort of filter through which all current and developing curriculum could be explored.

JED created an Interrupting Microaggressions Protocol for the Staff to use.

### **Late Pick-ups**

Being late regularly is stressful for you, your child, and the school. Please do everything you can to pick up your child on time: Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri no later than 3:30pm. Wed no later than 12:40.

If the person picking your child is late, your child will be sent to the Main Office to wait for them. You will be charged \$5 per five minutes of this time.



Your child will not be sent to AfterSchool if you are late. We no longer have room to accommodate unexpected guests. However, if you call ahead because you will be late and ask for your child to go to AfterSchool, we can do that as long as there is space.

## Lice Policy

After several decades of treating lice in school age children one way (sending kids home, chemical treatment, and obsessive house cleaning) there has been a radical shift in treatment. Recently a comprehensive study by Harvard School of Public Health was published that made everyone take a step back and put pediculosis into perspective.

While it is true that head lice are spread by head-to-head contact and, somewhat, by the sharing of hats, combs and hair accessories it is not as easy to contract as we have thought. It is far less contagious than the common cold. In fact, head lice rarely, if ever, can cause direct harm and should not be treated as a public health or medical problem. As of November 2008, Greenfield Center School and an increasing number of schools around the world have cancelled their “no nits” policy. If children are found to have active lice and/or nits we will inform parents that day but will not send children home or do whole class lice checks.

It seems that as a result of how we have dealt with and treated head lice some people have felt stigmatized when they found out that they or their children were infected. We need to change that perception and are hoping that people can begin to see head lice as more of an inconvenience than an embarrassment. Let’s all take a deep breath, and we will explain what choices families have when a child/adult becomes infected.

Treatment should only be considered when active lice or viable eggs are found. This isn’t always easy. If you have never seen these before and are unsure about what you are finding on the scalp or hair shaft you can tape a specimen to a form from the Harvard School of Public Health study. Go to <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html> and you will find information about it.

An infected person usually will have only about a dozen active lice but will have many more eggs. Without a microscope, it is quite difficult to tell if the egg (nit) is viable, newly hatched or old. Any eggs that are more than 1/2 inch away from the scalp are most likely hatched.

There are many, many differing voices about what works best. At this point we are recommending:

1. Buy a lice comb and comb hair as thoroughly as possible. There are many different styles of lice combs but they all have fine teeth that trap louse and eggs. You can go to the local drugstores (most are \$10) or check some online products such as LiceMeister (about \$10) or Nisska (about \$24). *This process takes time but can be the most effective way to eliminate the lice.* Use a hair conditioner to lubricate the hair and comb. (The conditioner should be thick and white.) Start at the scalp, section the hair into widths the size of the comb and comb up and away from the scalp. Wipe the comb on a white paper towel so you can see what you are collecting. Mature lice are about the size of sesame seeds and the nits and nymphs are the size of a grain of sand. Afterwards rinse the conditioner out and repeat this process until no live lice are discovered for about 1-1/2 weeks. It is not necessary to remove all the eggs.
2. If the hair is very thick and/or curly combing can be rather problematic. You might want to go right to treating it chemically with an over the counter pediculide categorized as pyrethrins such as Rid. Some people prefer to use Licefree, which is a non-toxic lice treatment. Follow the instructions carefully and DO NOT OVERTREAT. If lice still persist after 9-10 days then a second

application might be necessary. There is a concern about resistance to chemical treatments so it's important to only use for an active infestation. Keep in mind that the pyrethrins kill the lice but not the eggs.

3. There are as many other home remedies that families have tried and believe are efficacious. We have learned about Cetaphil shampoo, Hairclean 1-2-3, essential oils, salad dressing and many other household agents that 'suffocate' the lice. At this point, there is no hard-scientific data about these. However, lots of families have tried them and consider them to be successful. Again, building resistance is something to keep in mind and only treat accordingly. Even natural home remedies are plant made chemicals and overuse of anything can lead to resistance.
4. Meanwhile launder bed linens, pajamas, towels, recently worn clothes and stuffed animals. It is NOT necessary to take your house apart and launder everything. The heat from the dryer will eliminate most of the problem. The lice can live only briefly on furniture or bedding. Wash hair accessories (combs, brushes, hats and barrettes) every day in hot water. The heat from the hair dryer will also kill lice if it is aimed directly at the scalp.
5. Keep in mind that lice cannot live more than 24hrs (most likely less) without human blood. As a way of bypassing the laundry chore we have told people in the past to put clothes and stuffed animals in a plastic bag for up to two weeks. However, the scientists suggest that a few days in a bag is enough to kill lice and eggs. The eggs need warmth and humidity to stay viable and in a bag placed into a cool dry place the eggs will dehydrate and become less able to hatch. Even if one does hatch it needs to find a healthy mate to reproduce and the likelihood of finding one away from a human is nearly impossible.
6. Daily brushing of hair is one way to prevent lice from proliferating. We now know that brushing and combing out hair while still wet can cause damage to the lice.

Please feel free to call school to talk with us about this. We understand this is a lot of information and is considerably different that what has been touted for the past 2-3 decades. Here are some web sites that have lots of information for you to read.

Center for Communicable Diseases	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/lice">www.cdc.gov/lice</a>
American Association of Pediatrics	<a href="http://www.aap.org">www.aap.org</a>
National Association of School Nurses	<a href="http://www.nasn.org">www.nasn.org</a>

## **Life-Threatening Food Allergy Policy**

When a child in the school has been identified with a life-threatening food allergy, we will:

- Keep a list of those students who have been prescribed with epinephrine. An emergency treatment sheet with the child's name, recent photograph, specific allergies, symptoms, and doctor-approved protocol for response will be distributed to all faculty and staff. This plan will be posted in the child's classroom, in a location accessible to only teachers.
- Train all staff (once per year) on use of Epi-pens, and review the list of children that have life-threatening food allergies and their emergency plans.
- Store Epi-pens in an unlocked area accessible to the entire staff. Epinephrine and other appropriate medications will be brought on field trips off school grounds.
- Immediately call 911 for all children who have been given epinephrine. Emergency personnel will be given access to the treatment sheet referred to above. In the absence of a parent, a Center School staff member will accompany a child to the emergency room, if possible.
- Ask that all home-cooked food for school wide events be accompanied by a list of ingredients.
- The school may restrict other ingredients (e.g. dairy), depending on other allergies in the student population at the time.
- Encourage parents of children with life-threatening food allergies to provide alternative, safe food items for their children and to keep an extra supply of alternative, safe food items at school for unexpected events.
- Communicate with families in classrooms with a child with life-threatening food allergies at the start of the year to raise awareness and outline expectations for the classmate's parents, including any classroom-wide restrictions.
- Work to create a reduced-risk classroom environment, depending on the specific allergy and age of the child, by providing either an allergen-free table or an allergen-free classroom.
- Work to create a reduced risk environment by ensuring protocol for hand washing and table cleaning in the classrooms of children with allergies.
- Implement a no-trade or share rule for food and utensils in our classes.
- Consider alternatives to school birthday rituals that include food in classrooms with children with life-threatening food allergies.
- Remind parents of children with life-threatening food allergies that the school will work to minimize the risk of exposure to a specific allergen, but that the school can never guarantee that cross-contamination or mistakes will not happen.

## **Lunch and Snacks**

Your child will need to bring a hearty, healthy snack (or 2) and lunch, each and every day. Because we are asking children to work and play hard, these meals should include plenty of protein, carbs, fruit/veg, healthy fats, and also, a water bottle for hydration. To make the most out of the square inches of your child's lunchbox, empty calories such as commercial candies and sodas with added sugar are strongly discouraged. There is no cold storage available. Some classes have limited microwave usage determined by the classroom teachers. If your child forgets their lunch, we will try to call home to see if it is convenient for someone to drop off a lunch, but if not the school will provide a simple option for your child.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parents are welcome in our classrooms to visit, to observe, or to share their skills and time with us. Here are some of the ways that parents typically become involved in the life of the Center School:

- Volunteering. Parents come in to teach a special skill like knitting, origami, or cooking; parents often help with the typing or book-binding portion of our book publishing process; parents join their children's class on a field trip; parents do special presentations on topics of interest.
- Parents also help in many ways to maintain and support the school including grounds maintenance work or joining the Board or Board committees.
- Annual Fund (see pg. 6)

## **Parent-Teacher Communication**

We strive for honest and direct communication between parents and teachers. Parent observations and insights are an important source of information for teachers. During the school day, teachers may be reached by e-mail or by calling the office and asking that a written message be put in the teacher's mailbox. Teachers will respond to non-emergency email and phone messages within 48 hours.

Because teachers are busy with students please do not try to engage them in an involved conversation at drop-off or pick-up time. A *very* brief check-in is usually okay. If you call the school during the school day, you will not be transferred to a classroom teacher or to talk directly to your child. If it's urgent you speak with someone, office staff will arrange to locate your child or the teacher and have them get back to you as quickly as possible. If you have a concern that cannot be communicated well by email or phone, you should schedule a meeting with your child's teacher/s.

## **Parent Union**

The Center School has many traditions and careful ways of introducing children to their classrooms, to games, and to one another. The first several weeks of the school year are designed to help your child develop a strong sense of comfort and belonging.

For the adults in the community, connections grow through the children, the classrooms, and school-wide activities. The steward of the Parent Union (the Center School version of a PTO) focuses on community building, and helping people direct their energy and resources to support the school.

The Parent Union is not a subset of people. It's all of us. Every parent helps in myriad ways to accomplish wonderful things each year. The three areas of commitment that each of us has to balance are, in order of importance: supporting our children as students, supporting the teachers, and supporting the school overall.

The Parent Union is mainly concerned with that third piece. The ultimate goal for our Parent Union is for every one of us to have fun together and to help the school thrive by using our many and varied talents in the best ways possible.

How can you get involved? Good question! Join the Parent Union Committee (PUC); a group of parents who meet once a month and help get information out to other parents in their child's class about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and fundraisers. Read the weekly Bulletin and the letters from classroom teachers. There are always calls for volunteers. Keep an eye out for signs in the driveway, signs in the office, signs in your child's backpack. Check your email for special messages and notes from teachers. Make it a habit to check the board in the school office for signups at least once a week or so. And if you notice a need, or if you have a special skill or interest, let us know so we can try to figure out how best to apply that gift. Contact the front office if you'd like to get involved.

### **Physical Education**

The goals of our physical education program are for children to learn to play cooperatively, handle competition in a positive spirit, build athletic skills, exercise their bodies, and have fun. Classroom teachers supervise daily outdoor game times, which offer a balance of structured and unstructured activities. Once a week in the fall and spring, children join a mixed-age group for All School Games. During the winter months, the younger children ice skate together at a public rink and the older children participate in a ski program. In all of our physical education programs, there is an expectation that everyone participates, whether we're playing Kick the Can, taking ski lessons or playing soccer. The focus is on building skills, team cooperation, and a positive experience of competition.

### **Play-dates and Birthdays**

#### **Play-dates**

We encourage you to arrange a wide range of play-dates in the school year, and to trade off childcare with other parents. However, in order to avoid hurt feelings and distractions during the school day, children should not coordinate play-dates in school and will not be allowed to call home to arrange same-day play-dates.

#### **Birthday Parties**

Please either:

Invite your child's whole class, space and sanity permitting. (Party invitations are not distributed in school, unless they are for everyone).

OR

Invite a small group of children and teach them to protect other children's feelings by keeping discussions of the small affair out of school conversations. Send invitations outside of school. This is an important lesson in empathy.

#### **In school Birthday Celebrations**

Children are welcome to bring in a treat to share on, or near, their birthday. Summer birthdays can be celebrated by marking the half birthday. Please arrange ahead of time with their teachers.

## **Reading at Home**

Kindergartners-8th grade students are expected to read, or be read to, for at least 1/2 hour per day, 7 days a week. This is in order to develop a variety of language arts skills from vocabulary, to comprehension, to perspective-taking. Homeroom and Student Support teachers can help with recommendations. (Picture books with words, audio books and graphic novels count.)

## **Resolving Out of School Conflicts**

Despite our rigorous social emotional curriculum, your child may come home at some point and share a challenging thing that happened with a peer at school. We ask that you listen attentively, offer support, and let the teachers know if something that happened in school could use their follow up. If you wait until bedtime to listen to your child's worries/complaints, keep in mind that they (and you) are very likely tired and more emotional than you might be after a good night's sleep and a fresh perspective. Dinner time or mornings are better choices for quality check-ins if it is possible to time the conversation.

If something occurs on a playdate between your child and another Center School student, we ask that you manage that dynamic with sensitivity, without accusation, and directly with the other child's parents-- if it is something that warrants a follow up. While your child's teachers want to be helpful, outside of school conflicts are opportunities for families to work together toward greater understanding; teachers strongly prefer to stay out of the middle of home-based conflicts.

Sometimes there's a grey area where a social dynamic is crossing the home-school line. In that case, err on the side working from the home front directly with other parents and giving your child's teachers a heads up so that they can be monitoring the relationship at school.

## Rules and Logical Consequences

The underlying purpose of our approach to discipline is to instill in students the power of self-control and a sense of responsibility to their community. The way we manage behavior at the Center School is intended to help children feel safe, secure and respected. When a child's behavior is not respectful or is out of control, teachers help by providing consequences that assist in bringing behavior back within safe limits. Consequences may include 'breaks', or a 'reset', followed by problem-solving with individuals, whole groups and/or parents; behavior contracts; in-class meetings; and/or conflict resolution.

We believe that good teacher language is critical to classroom discipline. We strive to be clear, positive, and firm when necessary. We work for a consistent tone and peace in our hallways. The kind of community we seek to build pays attention to the individual personalities and behaviors of each person, while not hampering the needs of the group within which that individual works and learns. We intend to be caring and careful in our discipline. A break is not considered punitive nor is it reserved for just "naughty" behavior. Rather, it is a break from the problematic behavior and it keeps the behavior from escalating. It is to be expected that all children will need a "break" from time to time.

The Center School operates in a way that is ethical and relational. The Golden Rule is our guiding star: ***Treat others as you would like to be treated.*** This binding principle encompasses the reciprocity of human relationships, self-respect, respect of others, and the responsibility of belonging to a community. It is understood that, at the Center School, parents are partners in their children's education. It is expected that they will be part of the process of learning self-awareness and control. Children need to know that if they can't stop themselves from intentionally disrupting the classroom flow or harming themselves or others, the adults will be expected to stop them.

- Children are taught to use words to express feelings, to learn problem-solving strategies, and mediation skills.
- Children are occasionally asked to take a "break" in their classroom or in another classroom when they cannot control their behavior.
- Children who continue to demonstrate that they cannot control themselves will be removed from the classroom to the office. After a cooling off period, they will return to the classroom. They will be given the time and support needed to problem-solve what can be done next time and how to repair any hurt feelings.
- If a child continues to be disruptive after this point, they will be removed to the office again. Parents may be called to come get their child.
- Physical violence or harmful contact such as, but not limited to, hitting, forceful shoving, biting etc., are "going home" behaviors.
- A conference between the parents, the child, the teacher, and the head of school will occur before and/or after any suspension (in school, or home suspension included). Suspension may occur more than once, in which case parents and teachers will meet to determine an appropriate course of action to follow.
- Continued excessive disruptive behavior may result in permanent dismissal from the Center School.

## **Screen Time Advice**

The School recommends that parents and caregivers monitor and limit screen time. From The American Academy of Pediatrics:

- For children ages 2 to 5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
- For children ages 6 and older, place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.
- Designate media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms.
- Have ongoing communication about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline.

## **Sleep Guidelines**

We encourage a regular bedtime and enough sleep. The Sleep Foundation says:

- Preschoolers (3-5): 10-13 hours
- School age children (6-13): 9-11 hours
- Teenagers (14-17): 8-10 hours

## **Snow Day/ Delay Procedure**

1) Center School subscribes to One Call Now, an Emergency Notifications Service created especially for schools. For school cancellations due to weather or any kind of emergency, we can reach you quickly on your home or cell phones (using numbers that you provide us), via phone call or text message. The notification method is a recorded message that begins when connected to a live voice response or to an answering machine. Remember to say "hello" if you pick up your phone so that you can hear the message. It will leave a message if you don't pick up. Most of the time, you will get the call between 5:30 and 6:15am, this is to accommodate our families who travel from far away. If this is too early for you and you want to check for closings when you wake up, please consider turning your phone's ringer down or subscribing to text messages instead of phone calls.

2) You can also check our website's home page ([www.centerschool.net](http://www.centerschool.net)) for school closures or delays. Click the link to the school's Google calendar, found on the right side of the home page. You will be brought to the calendar page, which will be updated to read "Snow Day" or "Two Hour Delay" on the current day if we will be closed or have a delayed opening.

3) You can check local ABC (Channel 40), NBC (Channel 22), CBS TV (Channel 3) stations (Springfield) for our closings and delays.

How the school decides when to close: Head of School and makes her decision based on information provided by highway authority, regional and local superintendents, and other resources. If other area schools are delayed on a Wednesday, we will also delay, opening at 10am. We realize a two-and-a-half-hour school day may be difficult for some families to manage. Please call the office if this is the case for your family, and your child's absence will be excused. On a rare occasion, there will be warning of a big storm the night before. If the Head of School knows before 9pm that we will be



closed the next day-- she will deploy the systems above. If school is open, but you cannot make it in-- please let us know and your child will receive an excused absence.

## Staff

Charlie Spencer .....	Head of School
Jane Stephenson .....	Director of Admissions
Veronica Phaneuf .....	Business Manager
Amanda Richard .....	Assistant to the Head
Jon Bander .....	Caretaker
About-Face .....	Tech Consultant
Dave Cole.....	School Counselor
Susan Miller-King .....	Student Support Services
Kim Hake.....	Student Support Services
Kathleen Gorke.....	Student Support Services
Kiah Tinkham.....	Preschool Director
Synphany Bates-Zale.....	Preschool
Katie Moffett .....	Preschool
Kelsey Abramson.....	Preschool
Ariel Taylor.....	Preschool
Randi Wyngowski.....	Preschool
Amy Jackson.....	Kindergarten
Sandy Browne.....	Kindergarten
Kathryn Greenwood Swanson.....	First Grade
Sara Johnson.....	Mups 2/3
Sarah Noble-Dziura.....	Mups 2/3
Oliver Brown .....	Middles 4/5
Emily Cross .....	Middles 4/5
Alison Ryan .....	Uppers
Fynn Crooks.....	Uppers
Chris Sanborn .....	Uppers
Rebecca Golden.....	Uppers
Andy Charlton .....	Uppers
Josie Dulles.....	Uppers
Ann Percival .....	Music
Hannah Brookman.....	After School Teacher
Omeed Goodarzi.....	After School Teacher

## **Student Support Services Program**

By providing small group instruction in academics our classrooms can accommodate a number of children with mild learning differences. We can also accommodate some children who are physically challenged by making reasonable modifications within the regular classroom program. Our classroom buildings are accessible to all.

### **Tuition**

*2019-2020 Tuition*

Grades K-4: \$16,701

Grades 5-8: \$18,891

Center School's board of directors sets the tuition in December or January for the following year. Typically, tuition increases between 3-7% each year.

### **Visitors**

All visitors (anyone other than Center School staff or students) must check in with the Main Office in the Brick building to sign in and receive a visitor pass. Visitors must wear their pass while on the Center School grounds and return it to the office and sign out when they are leaving. The exception to this rule is during drop-off and pick-up, when parents may go to classrooms without stopping by the office first.

### **When to Keep Children Home from School**

Early in the morning it is often difficult to make a decision about whether your child is sick enough to stay home from school. With minor symptoms, you often cannot tell if they will get better or worse during the course of the day.

#### **The main reasons for keeping your children home are:**

- if they are too sick to be comfortable at school or participate in educational activities
- if they might spread a contagious disease to other children

#### **As a rule of thumb, a child should stay home if there is:**

- fever of 100F or higher
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- frequent cough
- persistent pain
- widespread rash

Most of these problems need to be discussed with your child's pediatrician to determine if an office visit is needed.

#### **The following guidelines may help in your decision process:**

• A **Runny nose** is the way many children respond to pollen, dust or a cold virus. Minor cold or allergy symptoms should not be a reason to miss school. Many healthy children have as many as six colds per year, especially in the early school years as their immune systems learn to handle the many

new other people in their immediate environment. A child should stay home if he is too uncomfortable to complete his work and participate in other school activities.

- **Coughing**, especially if it is persistent during the day, can indicate a worsening of cold or allergy symptoms. It may be a sign of a secondary infection, which may require medical treatment. It may also indicate mild asthma. If your child's cough is worse than you might expect with a common cold, you need to consult your child's doctor. You should do so immediately if the child is not acting normal, has a fever, or has any difficulty breathing.

- **Diarrhea and vomiting** make children uncomfortable. It can be very uncomfortable and embarrassing for your child to have another episode while in school. **A child should be symptom-free for 24 hours and be able to hold down food and fluids before returning to school.**

- A **Fever** of 100F or higher is an important symptom, especially when it occurs along with a sore throat, nausea, or a rash. Your child could have a contagious illness, which could be passed to classmates and teachers. While you can treat the fever, and usually make the child feel better temporarily, the cause of the fever (and the risk of passing it to others) is still there. **Children with fever should stay home until there is no fever for 24 hours.**

- A **Sore throat** can mean many things. You should consult your child's physician for advice regarding diagnosis and treatment. A child should stay home if he is too uncomfortable to complete his work and participate in other school activities. **If diagnosed with strep throat, a child may NOT return to school until they are fever-free, and it is 24-48 hours after the first dose of antibiotics was given.**

- **Pinkeye, or conjunctivitis**, can be caused by a virus, bacteria or allergy. The first two are very contagious. The eye will be reddened and a cloudy or yellow discharge is usually present. The eye may be also sensitive to light. Consult with your child's doctor to see if antibiotic eye drops are needed. Again, **the child should stay home until symptoms subside and they have been on antibiotic eye drops at least 24 hours** or until the doctor recommends the child return to school.

- **Middle ear infections** can cause great discomfort and often fever, but are not contagious to others. The child should see his doctor for diagnosis and treatment and **should stay at home if they have fever or pain.**

- The **Flu** is a contagious virus that usually occurs in the winter months. Symptoms include body aches, high fever, chills, congestion, sore throat, and in some children, vomiting. **The child should stay home until these symptoms improve, usually five to seven days.** Consult your child's doctor for treatment suggestions to make your child more comfortable.

- **Skin Infections** can be caused by staph or strep that creates a red, oozing, blister-like area that can appear anywhere on the body. It can be passed to others by direct contact. Consult your child's doctor for treatment and length of time the child should remain out of school, especially if the area cannot be covered.

## Appendix A

### **The Language of Gender GenderSpectrum.org**

The power of language to shape our perceptions of other people is immense. Precise use of terms in regards to gender can have a significant impact on demystifying many of the misperceptions associated with gender. However, the vocabulary of gender continues to evolve and there is not universal agreement about the definitions of many terms. Nonetheless, here is some working language and examples of frequently used (and misused) terms. We offer them as a starting place for dialogue and understanding, which begins by clarifying how we are using various terms, rather than asserting that they represent the final or only definition of the various terms.

**Affirmed gender-** An individual's gender self-identification, rather than the gender that was assumed based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Agender-** A person who sees themselves as not having a gender. Some agender-identified people see themselves as being gender neutral, rather than not having any gender, but in any case, do not identify with a gender.

**Cisgender-** Refers to people whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (cis- from Latin, meaning, "on this side [of]." In contrast to trans, from the Latin root meaning "across", "beyond", or "on the opposite side [of]").

**Dimensions of gender-** Our body, expression, and identity are three distinct, but interrelated components that comprise a person's gender. Each of these dimensions can vary greatly across a range of possibilities. A person's comfort in their gender is related to the degree to which these three dimensions feel in harmony.

**FtM-** A person who was assigned a female sex at birth and whose gender identity is boy/man.

**Gender binary-** A system that constructs gender according to two discrete and opposite categories: boy/man and girl/woman. It is important to recognize that both cisgender and transgender people can have a gender identity that is binary.

**Gender expression-** This is our "public" gender. How we present our gender in the world and how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Gender expression is also related to gender roles and how society uses those roles to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.

**Gender fluid-** People who have a gender or genders that change. Gender fluid people move between genders, experiencing their gender as something dynamic and changing, rather than static.

**Gender identity-** A person's innermost core concept of self which can include boy/man, girl/woman, a blend of both, neither, and many more. Gender identity is how each person perceives themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be consistent with, or different than, their sex assigned at birth. The language a person uses to communicate their gender identity can evolve and shift over time, especially as someone gets older and has access to a broader gender

vocabulary.

**Gender role-** The set of functions, activities, and behaviors commonly expected of boys/men and girls/women by society.

**Gender-expansive-** An umbrella term used for individuals that broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms. Gender-expansive individuals include those with transgender and non-binary identities, as well as those whose gender in some way is seen to be stretching society's notions of gender.

**Genderqueer-** Is an umbrella term to describe someone who doesn't identify with conventional gender identities, roles, expression and/or expectations. For some, genderqueer is a non-binary identification, and for others it is not.

**Intersex-** Also referred to as Disorders/Differences of Sexual Development. About 1% of children are born with chromosomes, hormones, genitalia and/or other sex characteristics that are not exclusively male or female as defined by the medical establishment in our society. In most cases, these children are at no medical risk, but most are assigned a binary sex identity (male or female) by their doctors and/or families.

**MtF-** A person who was assigned a male sex at birth and whose gender identity is girl/woman.

**Non-binary-** An umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively either boy/man, or girl/woman.

**Sex-** Used to label a person as "male" or "female" at birth, this term refers to a person external genitalia and internal reproductive organs. When a person's sex is assigned a particular sex at birth, it is often mistakenly assumed that this will equate with their gender; it might, but it might not.

**Sexual orientation-**Our sexual orientation and our gender are separate, though related parts of our overall identity. Gender is personal (how we each see ourselves), while sexual orientation is interpersonal (which people we are physically, emotionally and/or romantically attracted to).

## Appendix B

### **White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack** **Peggy McIntosh**

Through work to bring materials from Women's Studies into the rest of the curriculum, I have often noticed men's unwillingness to grant that they are over-privileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged. They may say they will work to improve women's status, in the society, the university, or the curriculum, but they can't or won't support the idea of lessening men's. Denials which amount to taboos surround the subject of advantages which men gain from women's disadvantages. These denials protect male privilege from being fully acknowledged, lessened or ended.

Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege that was similarly denied and protected. As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.

Describing white privilege makes one newly accountable. As we in Women's Studies work to reveal male privilege and ask men to give up some of their power, so one who writes about white privilege must ask, "Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?"

After I realized the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of color that white women whom they encounter are oppressive.

I began to understand why we are justly seen as oppressive, even when we don't see ourselves that way. I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence.

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow "them" to be more like "us."

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions which I think in my case *attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege* than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other

factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can see, my African American co-workers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and line of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
10. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
12. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
14. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
15. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
17. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
18. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
19. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.



20. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
21. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
23. I can choose public accommodations without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
24. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
25. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
26. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

I repeatedly forgot each of the realizations on this list until I wrote it down. For me, white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own.

In unpacking this invisible knapsack of white privilege, I have listed conditions of daily experience that I once took for granted. Nor did I think of any of these perquisites as bad for the holder. I now think that we need a more finely differentiated taxonomy of privilege, for some of these varieties are only what one would want for everyone in a just society, and others give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant and destructive.

I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege, a pattern of assumptions that were passed on to me as a white person. There was one main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turf, and I was among those who could control the turf. *My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make.* I could think of myself as belonging in major ways and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely.

In proportion as my racial group was being made confident, comfortable, and oblivious, other groups were likely being made inconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated. Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress and violence, which I was being subtly trained to visit, in turn, upon people of color.

For this reason, the word "privilege" now seems to me misleading. We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Yet some of the conditions I have described here work systematically to overempower certain groups. Such privilege simply *confers dominance* because of one's race or sex.

I want, then, to distinguish between earned strength and unearned power conferred systemically. Power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to

dominate. But not all of the privileges on my list are inevitably damaging. Some, like the expectation that neighbors will be decent to you, or that your race will not count against you in court, should be the norm in a just society. Others, like the privilege to ignore less powerful people, distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups.

We might at least start by distinguishing between positive advantages, which we can work to spread, and negative types of advantage, which unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchies. For example, the feeling that one belongs within the human circle, as Native Americans say, should not be seen as privilege for a few. Ideally it is an *unearned entitlement*. At present, since only a few have it, it is an *unearned advantage* for them. This paper results from a process of coming to see that some of the power that I originally saw as attendant on being a human being in the United States consisted in unearned advantage and conferred dominance.

I have met very few men who are truly distressed about systemic, unearned male advantage and conferred dominance. And so one question for me and others like me is whether we will be like them, or whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance, and, if so, what will we do to lessen them. In any case, we need to do more work in identifying how they actually affect our daily lives. Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the U.S. think that racism doesn't affect them because they are not people of color, they do not see "whiteness" as a racial identity. In addition, since race and sex are not the only advantaging systems at work, we need similarly to examine the daily experience of having age advantage, or ethnic advantage, or physical ability, or advantage related to nationality, religion, or sexual orientation.

Difficulties and dangers surrounding the task of finding parallels are many. Since racism, sexism, and heterosexism are not the same, the advantages associated with them should not be seen as the same. In addition, it is hard to disentangle aspects of unearned advantage which rest more on social class, economic class, race, religion, sex, and ethnic identity than on other factors. Still, all of the oppressions are interlocking, as the Combahee River Collective Statement of 1977 continues to remind us eloquently.

One factor seems clear about all of the interlocking oppressions. They take both active forms, which we can see, and embedded forms, which as a member of the dominant group one is taught not to see. In my class and place, I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth.

Disapproving of the systems won't be enough to change them. I was taught to think that racism could end if white individuals changed their attitudes. But a "white" skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us. Individual acts can palliate, but cannot end, these problems.

To redesign social systems, we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these taboo subjects. Most talk by whites about equal opportunity seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that *systems* of dominance exist.

It seems to me that obliviousness about white advantage, like obliviousness about male advantage, is kept strongly inculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all. Keeping most people unaware that freedom of confident action is there for just a small number of people props up those in power and serves to keep power in the hands of the same groups that have most of it already.

Although systemic change takes many decades, there are pressing questions for me and I imagine for some others like me if we raise our daily consciousness on the perquisites of being light-skinned. What will we do with such knowledge? As we know from watching men, it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base.

\*This is an authorized excerpt of McIntosh's original white privilege article, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," Working Paper 189 (1988), Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, MA, 02481.