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**The Children's School | Parent Handbook 2021-2022**

## OUR MISSION

**Our mission is to nurture students' innate curiosity and love of learning through democratic practice, emergent curriculum, and hands-on projects, helping students become lifelong problem-solvers and engaged citizens. (2015)**

### Our Philosophy (Core Beliefs):

**Learning:** We believe that learning should be joyful, active, open-ended, project-based, and collaborative in order to foster children's independence, accountability, intrinsic motivation, and intellectual curiosity.

**Engaging:** We believe in cultivating a community of civically active learners, where everyone's voice can be heard as decisions are democratically determined through discourse.

**Unfolding:** We believe in allowing the time, patience, and unpressured environment necessary to support the individualized developmental unfolding of each child - academically, socially, and emotionally.

### Our Vision

We are known to be a progressive, justice-oriented school that embraces diversity, honors childhood, and helps students access their own intrinsic motivation through play, critical thought, and action. We have a full class (~15 students) of highly engaged students in each grade.

- Our philosophy and curriculum honor each student's full humanity and actively support her or his intellectual, social, and emotional growth.
- Our collaborative faculty comprises outstanding progressive educators who are valued and engaged.
- Our authentic assessment approach provides high quality data, artifacts, and evidence of student progress without the use of high-stakes standardized testing.
- Students, parents and alumni are confident, committed ambassadors for the school.
- Well-established administrative and instructional systems support teachers, families, and students.
- Resources are stable, enabling us to remain an accessible school of choice for a wide range of families.
- We are thought leaders in the broader educational context and a top choice school for parents and students. (2015)

### Non-Discrimination Policy

The Children's School admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, hiring policies, admissions policies, financial aid program, or any other school-administered programs. (2017)

# Welcome to The Children's School!

The Children's School (TCS) is a community that places its focus on learning via the child's activities and curiosity. The Children's School uses play and projects for students to examine their world, achieve a fuller understanding of themselves, and gather skills and concepts in formal areas of study. We are committed to seeing the philosophy of progressive education live on a daily basis in our school. Through discourse, hands-on projects, and age-appropriate curriculum, children's innate love of learning thrives. This means that young people are actively engaged in play-based, problem-based, and project-oriented work each day.

The progressive education movement is often associated with John Dewey, who established the University of Chicago Laboratory School in 1896. Progressive education is a form of education that emphasizes preparing children academically, socially, and emotionally to be active participants in a global, democratic society. Progressive education focuses on meaningful activities carried out in the context of the child's world. Students are asked to participate in their own learning and to engage in democratic processes in the classroom and the larger community. We are committed to justice-oriented teaching and learning, helping children grow into active, engaged citizens who are critical thinkers about themselves and about the world we live in.

The Children's School was founded in 2004 in Oak Park, Illinois, by Daniel P. Ryan, Ed.D. It is a small, independent school that embraces the philosophy of progressive education as defined by John Dewey and other educators/philosophers. It began with 13 children sharing a Kindergarten/first grade classroom in the upstairs of Gale House next to Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple. In 2006 the school moved to St. Mary of Celle in Berwyn to allow space for more students and project-based learning. In 2008, The Children's School hosted a conference for the Regional Progressive Education Network and has since become a voice in both regional and national conversations on progressive education. In 2018, the school moved once again to its current location in the St. Edmund's school building in Oak Park.

This handbook is designed to familiarize you with the school's programs, policies, and procedures. Please take time to read this handbook and become familiar with the day-to-day organization of The Children's School. This handbook is intended as an overview and we ask that you direct any questions you have to your child's teacher or to school administrators.

To the extent that there are any discrepancies, the [TCS COVID Protocols 2021-22](#) supersedes the information contained in this handbook. Both documents will be updated as needed throughout the school year.

***“The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education.”***

*John Dewey*

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# The Children's School Staff and Teachers

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**Art**

**nmartinez@tcsconnect.org**

**Tracy Litsey**  
**Communications Coordinator**

**tlitsey@tcsconnect.org**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>Sandi Carr, President</b>	<b>sanguar@gmail.com</b>
<b>Emily Lorentzen, Vice President</b>	<b>emily.lorentzen@gmail.com</b>
<b>Jennifer Hamilton, Treasurer</b>	<b>Hamilton-Jennifer@norc.org</b>
<b>Dola Ahmed, Member at Large</b>	<b>dola30@gmail.com</b>
<b>Mary Quest, Member at Large</b>	<b>mmarylaporte@aol.com</b>
<b>Michael McGuire, Member at Large</b>	<b>mmcguire@fedex.com</b>
<b>Julia Huff, Alumni Member at Large</b>	<b>huffjulia@aol.com</b>
<b>Haj Herbert, Community Representative</b>	<b>haj@magicalmindsstudio.com</b>
<b>Christina Martin, DCI</b>	<b>cmartin@tcsconnect.org</b>
<b>Lucy Coria, Faculty Representative</b>	<b>lcoria@tcsconnect.org</b>
<b>Daniel Ryan Founder and Emeritus Member</b>	<b>dprenticer@gmail.com</b>
<b>BJ Richards Honorary Member</b>	<b>bjdandara@gmail.com</b>
<b>Pamela Freese Assistant to the Board</b>	<b>pfreese@tcsconnect.org</b>

**Regular Board meetings are open to any member of the TCS community who wishes to attend. The Children's School is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by an elected Board of four officers and seven other members. The Board's responsibilities include fiscal oversight, institutional policy-making, long-range vision and planning, and hiring and evaluation of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Director of Administration. Please direct questions on these topics to Board members in their official capacities.**

THE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL | 2021-2022 CALENDAR; as of 8/20/2021

<p><b>16-20</b> – Curriculum planning week for faculty  <b>19</b>-Board Meeting-7 pm  <b>24</b>-COVID Safety Protocols Parent/Guardian Meeting (Virtual)- 7 pm  <b>26</b>-K-2 Open House 10:30-1:30  <b>31</b>-Mandatory Parent Orientation (Virtual) 7 pm</p>	<p><b>AUGUST '21</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td></tr> <tr><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr> <tr><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					<p><b>FEBRUARY '22</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28						<p><b>4</b>-Open House (Virtual) 9 am  <b>16</b>-Conferences 12 pm dismissal  <b>17</b>-No School-Conferences  <b>18</b>-No School-Presidents' Day weekend  <b>21</b>-No School-Presidents' Day  <b>24</b>-Board meeting-7 pm  <b>25</b>-Open House (Virtual) 12 pm</p>							
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<p><b>1</b>-First Day of School; 12 pm dismissal for all students  <b>2-3</b>-12pm dismissal for K  <b>3</b>-Open House (Virtual) 9 am  <b>6</b> – No School-Labor Day  <b>9</b>-K-2 Curric. Night 6-9 pm  <b>10</b>-First Woods Day for K-8  <b>22</b>-6-8 Curric. Night 6-9 pm  <b>23</b>-3-5 Curric. Night 6-9 pm  <b>23</b>-Board meeting-7 pm  <b>24</b> – No School Institute Day</p>	<p><b>SEPTEMBER '21</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			<p><b>MARCH '22</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			<p><b>4</b>-Open House (Virtual) 9 am  <b>18</b>-Open House (Virtual) 12 pm  <b>24</b>-Board meeting-7 pm  <b>28-31</b>-No School-Spring Break</p>							
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<p><b>1</b>-Open House (Virtual) 9 am  <b>11</b>-Indigenous Peoples Day-  <b>School in Session</b>  <b>15</b>- Open House (Virtual) 12 pm  <b>22</b>-No School-Conferences  <b>28</b>-Board meeting-7 pm</p>	<p><b>OCTOBER '21</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	<p><b>APRIL '22</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>Th</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	<p><b>1</b>-No School-Spring Break  <b>15</b> -Open House (Virtual) 12 pm  <b>22</b>-No School-Institute Day  <b>28</b>-Board Meeting-7 pm  <b>29</b>-Open House (Virtual) 12 pm</p>							
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## SCHOOL TRADITIONS AND EVENTS

Since our founding in 2004, many activities and events have become school traditions. These have been suspended or modified due to COVID restrictions, but we look forward to returning to them as soon as we are able to do so safely. Some of these are listed below:

- ***Morning Group Gathering:*** Each morning the entire school gathers in the gym to be led by a student in welcome activities. Family volunteers are introduced, birthdays are announced, and day-to-day updates are provided. Group Gathering provides an opportunity for community building and connection for all participants of the school, as well as for students to take some ownership of the school routines.
- ***Publishing Parties:*** These occur at the very end of the school year and serve as a way to celebrate the wonderful writing each student has accomplished during the school year. After a full year of writing at their grade level, each student selects their most treasured piece and transfers it to a hardcover edition to be read aloud at the publishing party. Family and friends are invited to listen and celebrate.
- ***Arts Celebrations:*** We are fortunate to have a rich music and fine arts program led by one music teacher and one art teacher and supplemented by visiting artists in various fields. In a typical year we have two music performances per year, a choral concert in February and an informal “collage” concert in May. For Middle Level students, music and art classes have included a variety of opportunities for students to showcase their work, including student-written musical productions, recording studio sessions, and a drum circle featuring ceramic drums made by students.
- ***Housing Forward Lunches/Dinner:*** Each classroom is assigned one date during the school year to make 60 brown bag lunches for the Housing Forward (formerly PADS) shelter at St. Edmund’s. In addition, parents, older children, and alumni gather 3-4 times per year to cook and serve dinner at the shelter. Working with Housing Forward provides an opportunity for civic engagement for all grade levels.
- ***Field Trips:*** Our students participate in many field trips to enhance understanding of topics studied. Field trip destinations may include museums or cultural attractions, forest preserves or other outdoor education sites, concerts or performances, and a range of other possibilities. Eighth grade students are responsible for planning their own overnight trip in May.
- ***Tours:*** On the first and third Friday of each month from September to May between 9:00 and 10:30 a.m. on days when school is in session, TCS hosts a virtual open house for both prospective and current families. Hosted by the school’s directors, these sessions offer an opportunity to ask questions, meet other parents, and tour the school.
- ***Hootenanny:*** Each year students in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades organize a school-wide social event in order to raise money for someone in need. In past years, profits have gone to help the victims of the earthquakes in Haiti and Japan and to support local efforts such as The Night Ministry. This allows children a chance to participate in a civic engagement activity of their own design.

- **Multi-Age Groupings:** Through Group Gathering, Town Hall Meeting, Recess, All-School Lunch and Choice, and special events such as Field Day, The Children’s School encourages students of all ages to spend time together and build relationships with each other.

## **FAMILY VOLUNTEERING**

Parent participation is a unique and important component of life at The Children’s School. Research indicates that parent involvement in school is directly correlated with student success. Therefore we welcome parents into the school and celebrate their ability to bring an added dimension to the learning process. Our parents have been wonderful partners during the course of each school year. The overall experience of having parents, children, and faculty work together as a team creates a powerful message for all.

We ask each family to provide a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer time during each school year. Volunteer hours can be fulfilled inside the classroom or out, within regular school hours or at other times—everything from assisting with a project in the classroom or chaperoning a field trip to serving on the Board of Directors or working on a school-wide committee.

### **Confidentiality**

In order to be effective, our family volunteer system requires parents to maintain strict confidentiality when discussing their time in the classroom. Each parent is asked to sign a confidentiality agreement each year, and to share only general information about the school day with others, rather than information about the specific learning needs or behavior of individual students. If you have questions about anything you see or hear in the classroom, please ask the classroom teacher to help you understand what occurred and why. If you experience a breach of confidentiality, please immediately inform your classroom teacher or one of the school’s directors.

Parents/guardians are asked to read and sign our [Confidentiality](#) and [Sexual Harassment](#) policies.

### **Classroom Support - Temporarily suspended during COVID**

In non-COVID times, we love to have parents join us in our classrooms! We encourage you to come and spend a half day or full day joining in all the activities and discussions of the classroom community in order to understand what your child’s experience is like.

When parents are in the classroom, it requires a relationship of trust and mutual respect. The teacher may or may not have specific tasks for volunteers. We ask parents to model excitement about learning by participating enthusiastically in the life of the classroom. We also ask that you refrain from using your cell phone while with students; please step away if you must call or text.

Please note that all classroom volunteers work at the teacher’s discretion and that there may be times when a teacher needs to limit the number and/or frequency of parent volunteers due to the developmental needs of the classroom community. Family volunteers are there to help all children in the classroom. Together we help children understand that sharing a parent during volunteer days is healthy and enriching.

### **Field Trips**

On all field trips, safety of the students is our primary concern. Thus when parents are helping to chaperone, we ask that you adhere to the schedule and activities as set by the teacher. Please remain with the whole group unless directed otherwise by the teacher. We ask that you avoid using your phone while with students. If you take photos, please do not share them on social media without first getting permission from the parents of each student pictured. Please follow the lead of the teacher with any questions regarding student behavior. Avoid giving special treats (e.g., an extra snack or purchased item) to only the children in your group. Please do not allow children to watch TV while riding in your car. Except in case of emergency such as illness, please do not cancel or ask to join a field trip the morning of the trip.

### **Outdoor Field Trips**

For field trips to the woods or other natural settings, family volunteers are asked to read and sign a [Family Volunteer Outdoor Safety Agreement](#). This Agreement outlines the responsibilities of family volunteers and helps ensure that students are safe while also exploring and enjoying nature.

### **Schoolwide Support**

Hours spent serving on the Board of Directors and doing committee work, as well as other tasks or activities undertaken in support of TCS, all count towards your family's volunteer commitment.

To learn more about individual committees for the 2021-22 school year, please contact Board president Sandi Carr.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We believe that building a strong community requires good communication. Our goal is to maintain respectful, good-faith communication throughout the entire school community—teachers, students, administrators, parents, Board members. We value parents' input and want to partner with parents to provide a wonderful educational experience for students. To that end we ask parents to respect the communication protocol as outlined below for raising concerns, asking questions, or making suggestions.

Email is a convenient vehicle for efficiently dispensing information. However, it is not ideal for nuanced, in-depth discussions between individuals or large groups. If an issue is raised by email that teachers or administrators feel warrants a more in-depth discussion, we will ask parents to set up an in-person or phone meeting to talk further.

#### **Communication Protocol:**

- If your concern or question pertains to billing or another business issue, please contact the Director of Administration (DA) Pamela Freese.
- If your concern or question pertains to fiscal policy or other policy matters, or long-range planning and vision for the school, please contact a Board member or Director.
- If your concern or question pertains to the classroom, please begin by talking with your classroom teacher. After two or three conversations with your classroom teacher, if you are

not satisfied with the outcome or need more information, please contact the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) Christina Martin.

- When bringing forth a concern or question, please be mindful of your timing. Teachers are not able to engage in an in-depth conversation with you at drop-off or pick-up or in the middle of the school day because of their responsibilities in the classroom. However, they will be happy to schedule a time for a longer conversation.
- If a teacher gives you their personal cell phone number, please respect that and use it appropriately (e.g., to coordinate on a field trip or in case of emergency).
- If you reach out to contact your teacher, you can expect to hear back from them within 24 hours (except on weekends), probably by email. Teachers will not respond immediately to calls or texts after school hours. Do not expect that teachers will be able to respond to texts, phone calls, or emails during the school day. If your inquiry requires a response during the school day, please call the school office at 708.484.8033 or school cell at 708.692.2767.

Because parents are passionate advocates for their children, speaking with teachers and administrators who are also passionate advocates for children, conversations can sometimes get heated or intense. Please know that as teachers and administrators—even though we may at times disagree with you—we always want what is best for your child and for the school community, and we respect and value your insights and expertise about your child.

Our TCS website ([www.thechildrenschool.info](http://www.thechildrenschool.info)) contains information about TCS history, curriculum, and progressive practice. It also has a “Parents” section where current parents can find this Handbook, calendar, directory, and other information. We ask that everyone respect the privacy of others (addresses, contact information) by not sharing the log on information with anyone outside the TCS community. **To log on to the student directory in the Parents section, password is: 20directory21.**

The best way to learn about classroom and school activities is to take advantage of the following communication opportunities:

Email communication from TCS\*:

- Administrative News You Can Use (weekly)
- Emergency Announcements: health alerts, school closings, etc. (as needed)
- Director’s Letters: curriculum and pedagogy (monthly)
- Teachers’ Newsletters: classroom news (monthly)
- Kite and Leaf - upbeat, happy news highlighting school programs (monthly)

\*Please let Pamela Freese ([pfreese@tcsconnect.org](mailto:pfreese@tcsconnect.org)) know if you are not receiving emails from TCS at least once each week.

Opportunities for in-person communication with faculty and administrators:

- **Parent Orientation--virtual** (Aug. 31, 2021)
- **Curriculum Night:** overview by DCI plus time in classrooms with teachers (Sept. 14-16, 2021)
- **Conferences** with classroom teacher (and DCI if requested)
  - Goal-setting (October 2021)

- Learning Experience Report (February 2022)
- End-of-Year (May 2022)
- Others as requested by parent, teacher, or student
- **Fireside Chats/Guest Speakers/Panels:** topics TBD (periodic)
- **Coffee, Curriculum, and Conversation:** Friday mornings with DCI on curricular topics
- **Office Hours** with DCI (day/time TBD)
- **Other** scheduled meetings as needed

## **THE SCHOOL DAY**

### **Drop-Off (8:45 a.m.) and Pick-Up (3:15 p.m.)**

School starts at 8:45 a.m each day and our doors will be open from 8:40 - 9:00 a.m. Arriving on time helps children transition smoothly into the school day and limits disruption to classroom routines.

Please enter one at a time and maintain 6 feet distance while entering or waiting to enter.

- Students in grades K, 1, 2 (Pond) will enter through the Courtyard gate on Oak Park Ave
- Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 (Lake) will enter through the Alley Door (off of Pleasant Avenue)
- Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 (Ocean) will enter through the Pleasant Ave door

Parents will not enter with children but will say goodbye at the door.

Dismissal will be at 3:15.

- Parents of students in Kindergarten should pick up at the northwest Oak Park Ave door
- Parents of students in grades 1 and 2 should pick up at the Pleasant Ave door
- Parents of students in grades 3 pick up at southwest Oak Park Ave door
- Students in grades 4-8 will exit through the alley door or the Pleasant Ave door

On Fridays students in grades K-5 will be dropped off at Thatcher Woods (8030 Chicago Ave.) at 8:45 a.m. and picked up at 12:00 p.m. Students in grades 6-8 will be dropped off at Jerome Huppert Woods (536 N. Harlem Ave). at 9:00 a.m. and picked up at either 12:00 or 2:00 p.m. Students staying at TCS for Extended Day on Friday afternoons will come back to school in teacher or parent cars for supervised remote and independent learning in the afternoons.

Teachers/Administrators will hold signout sheets and mark each child signed out as the child exits the building and joins their parent/guardian or designated alternative.

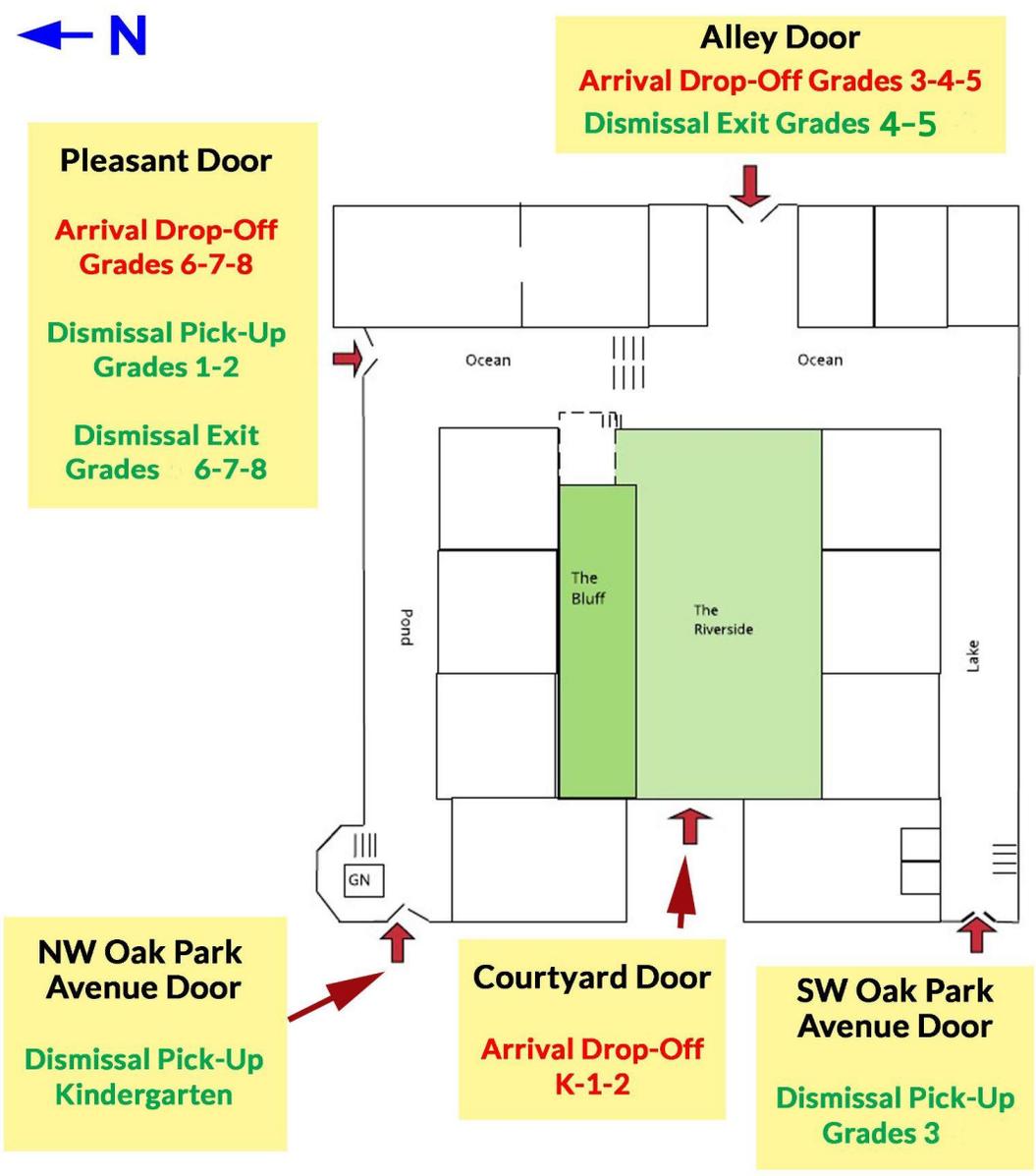
All students grades 4-8 will sign themselves out and exit through either the alley or the Pleasant Ave. door, maintaining 3-6 feet distance from others while doing so.

You may park in the south half of the church parking lot while dropping off, picking up, or volunteering in the school. When you cross Pleasant Street to get to the school building, please do so at either corner (Pleasant and Oak Park Ave or Pleasant and Euclid) rather than crossing in the

middle of the street. If you do not park in the lot, please note the parking restrictions on neighboring streets.

# Arrivals and Dismissals

Arrival from 8:40 - 9:00 Pick-Up M-TH 3:15pm



Please note that before the school day begins, and once they are signed out to you at the end of the day, you are fully responsible for the children in your care. We cannot monitor the sidewalks, courtyard area, or parking lot, and we depend upon parents and caregivers to help keep children safe. Please respect our neighbors and do not allow children to climb the trees, railings, or fences. Please

drive slowly in the parking lot, refrain from cell phone use, cross the street at the corners only, and walk with children through the lot so that they can be seen. Each family is responsible for communicating these guidelines to other adults who may be picking up their child.

### **Food, Health, and Nutrition**

We embrace a culture of physical health at TCS and work to embed a philosophy of good nutrition and exercise into each day. We kindly ask for your support. We request that any food brought to the school be healthy and that sugary treats be limited or avoided. We wish to provide students with models of healthy eating and ways to enjoy food that is natural and nourishing. Because of individual dietary restrictions, we do not allow students to share food with each other.

Please note that all food brought to school should be nut-free.

We talk with students both in the classroom and in physical wellness class about the importance of exercise. Please make sure your student has a pair of gym shoes at school at all times.

We ask that each student bring proper attire to enable them to play outdoors in all types of weather. We will go outside for Recess most days. During winter months, please have your child bring boots, snowpants, hats, and mittens to school each day. Younger students should keep an extra set of clothing at school, and all students should have a pair of dry shoes or slippers for use inside the school building when outdoor shoes/boots are wet or muddy.

### **Water Bottles**

Please send your child each day with a full water bottle labeled with their name. Water will be available throughout the day to refill water bottles.

### **Snack**

We appreciate that around mid-morning, some children get hungry, and thus students may bring a small sack item for the day. Please have it be a small amount of food that is easy to manage. We ask that all snacks be appropriate in portion, easy to eat and not messy, and nut-free.

### **Lunch**

We view the lunch period as a time for social interaction in an intimate setting. Therefore we eat lunch each day as a class, either outdoors or in the classroom. We have elected to do this so that the atmosphere is calm and supportive of casual conversations between students that may include the teacher as well. We feel classroom lunches allow for an increased sense of class community and the building of interactive skills that come with “breaking bread” together. We ask that each child have a lunch that does not involve the teacher or other adult to prepare or heat up. We would like children to bring what lunch items they can handle, such as a healthy sandwich, thermos, or other simple foods and containers. As often as possible we encourage reusable lunch containers to support our goal of keeping the school as green as possible.

### **Nut Free Policy**

Because of the importance of maintaining a safe environment for children with nut allergies, we ask that all snacks, lunch items, and other food items sent to school be nut-free. This includes all-school events such as movie nights and concerts.

### **Birthdays**

We wish to honor all birthdays within the context of the regular school day in a manner that is low-key and equitable. Classroom teachers will work with students to create their own developmentally appropriate ritual around birthday celebrations.

When celebrating a birthday at school, consider donating a new or used book to your child's classroom. A bookplate honoring your child will be affixed to the inside cover of the book.

### **Bringing Toys From Home**

We respectfully ask that children not bring toys, games, or electronics from home to school. Our goal is to have play be fair, fun, safe, and inclusive. During any period of play, we want children to engage in activities that do not exclude. This can be difficult to accomplish when some children have personal toys or games at their disposal. If for some reason your child feels a strong need to bring a toy or personal belonging to school, please check with the classroom teacher first. Books and other school materials should not leave the school premises except by permission of a teacher or administrator.

### **Friday Extended Day Care, 12:00-3:15 p.m.**

On Fridays, we are asking all parents who are able to pick up their K-5 student(s) at Thatcher Woods at 12:00. However, if your work or other circumstances make this impossible, we are offering care between 12:00 and 3:15 p.m. Students will be grouped by cohort (Pond or Lake) and will be supervised by a teacher or staff member to participate in their classroom's remote or independent learning activities.

## ADMINISTRATION

The Children's School Administrative Staff consists of Director of Administration (Pamela Freese) and Director of Curriculum and Instruction (Christina Martin), with support from Communications Coordinator (Tracy Litsey) and Bookkeeper (Vesna Nikolic). The running of the school is split between the two Director positions. Please feel free to ask questions or bring concerns to either Director; we will steer you to the other Director if that is a better place for your topic.

### Absences

Please note that more detailed information on monitoring COVID symptoms, when to notify the school, and criteria for returning to school is found in our [TCS COVID Protocols 2021-22](#).

All families are required to sign the [Family Safety Agreement](#) for 2021-22.

It is important that the school be notified prior to 9:00 a.m. on the day of a child's absence from school for any reason. Please call the office at 708.484.8033. Children who are ill in the morning should not return to school in the afternoon. Call the school any time your child has a contagious disease, no matter when it occurs. Whenever your child has any of the following please keep them home:

- Fever in last 24 hours;
- Vomiting or diarrhea in last 24 hours;
- Flu-like or COVID-19 symptoms;
- Diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, strep throat, pink eye, or other contagious illness.

When parents are out of town, it is helpful for the school to be informed and to know when and where they can be reached. Also, it is necessary for parents to provide information regarding who is caring for your child while you are away.

If your child has an appointment during school hours, we ask that you notify your child's teacher as much as possible ahead of time. Anyone picking up a child will be asked to sign the child out when leaving the school.

Please note that because of the emergent, project-based nature of instruction at TCS, it is often not possible for a student to "make up" work missed during absences. If you are taking a family trip, your classroom teacher may ask your child to keep a travel journal and report back to the class, but there may not be a separate list of assignments to be completed while gone.

### Emergencies

**Students:** In case of emergency, a call will be placed to the phone numbers provided to the school. If at any point during the year there are changes to a student's emergency form, please notify the office as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the emergency, paramedics may be called.

**School Closings:** Because some in the TCS community travel longer distances to and from school, for safety reasons we may elect to close school even when local schools are open. Parents will be

contacted via email should there be an emergency closing. All efforts will be made to do so in a timely fashion. Extra days may be added to the school calendar if necessary to meet Illinois attendance requirements.

**School Drills:** During the course of the school year we conduct fire and safety drills to meet Illinois requirements. We are careful to describe all aspects of such drills in developmentally appropriate ways so that children understand their purpose and importance.

### **Medication**

Parents are asked to give medication at home, before or after school, whenever possible. Prior written authorization (including dosage and frequency) from a licensed prescriber and the parent must be submitted to the school for any prescription medicine to be given at school. Prior written authorization (including dosage and frequency) from a parent must be submitted to the school for any non-prescription medicine to be given at school. In both instances, a parent will be notified by phone or voicemail when we administer a dosage. Parents are responsible for ensuring that medications kept at school are not expired.

If your child requires an epi-pen, we ask that you provide two for school use. One will be kept in the classroom and one in the school office.

Any students who require the use of inhalers for symptoms of asthma or other prescribed uses during the course of the school day are asked to bring and leave at school an ‘extra’ inhaler, clearly labeled with their name. The school will store these inhalers safely within the student’s classroom in a container that is out of reach of other students. Children old enough to self-administer their inhalers are asked to notify their teacher of the need to use their inhaler.

### **Vaccination Policy**

The Children’s School follows all State of Illinois guidelines requiring health examinations and immunizations. State law allows exceptions to required immunizations only for religious objection or medical exemption, which must be documented in writing in the child’s school file.

### **Student Acceptance, Transfer and Records**

Students will be accepted into The Children’s School upon meeting the basic requirements necessary for admission. These include:

- Submission of all application materials, contract, fees, and tuition deposit;
- Acceptance by the Admissions Committee;
- Submission of all required medical, dental, and emergency forms.

Student records will be kept on file in the school and subject to confidentiality policies. These records may be inspected at any time at a parent’s or guardian’s request. We request 48 hours’ notice to allow time to copy and prepare the requested documents. Students may request school records upon attaining the age of eighteen. All official records contain: basic identifying information, academic reports, attendance records, health and accident reports, and a record of release of permanent record information.

Transfer of student records occurs when parents or guardians give written approval to send such records to a given school. No records will be released until all outstanding financial obligations are met.

It is the obligation of the student's parents to notify the school and provide documentation of any divorce or parenting agreements that affect the student's academic work or records distribution.

### **Promotion**

Faculty work very hard to assure that each child is able to grow at developmentally appropriate levels. Because of the intense nature of on-going communication between faculty and parents, there is usually a shared understanding of a child's growth. Should a faculty member be concerned about whether a child will be ready for the next grade, he or she will notify parents of such concerns by the January parent/teacher conference. Any decision to retain a child in their current grade will be made, when possible, by May 1 of the preceding year.

### **Social Work Program**

The school social worker (Parvaneh Shidnia-Smith) is available for consultation by students, teachers, and families as needed. When social-emotional concerns arise, a determination may be made that a student would benefit from regular one-on-one or small group sessions with the social worker. Parental permission is required for any such services exceeding 3 meetings. The onset, continuation, and termination of social work services are at the sole discretion of TCS.

### **Use of Consultants at School**

The following steps help ensure that the school is best able to support outside consultant services sought by parents for their child:

- Parents/guardians should give written permission for consultants to communicate with faculty and school administration as needed;
- Should an observation be requested, we ask that the consultant contact the child's teacher at least a day in advance to arrange for a mutually convenient time. We also appreciate being appraised of the purpose of the observation so that we can provide any relevant feedback.

### **Tech Policy**

The school's information technology resources, including Internet access, are provided for educational purposes. It is the student's responsibility to use these resources in a respectful and responsible way for school-related educational purposes only. Middle Level students and their parents are required to sign the TCS [Acceptable Use of Technology](#) form (completed in TADS at time of enrollment) and [Agreement for Borrowing TCS Devices](#) (to be completed and returned to classroom teacher before bringing device home) if bringing their device home, and younger students will work with their teacher to develop a technology use policy specific to that classroom as needed. Students who bring cell phones to school must keep them in their backpacks during the school day and use them only with prior permission of a teacher or administrator.

### **Gender Diversity Guidelines**

TCS is committed to creating a safe learning space for all. Our [Gender Diversity Guidelines](#) provide direction for the TCS community in addressing issues that may arise concerning the needs of

students who are transgender, transitioning, gender questioning, or otherwise gender non-conforming.

### **Pets**

Dogs must be on a leash no longer than 8' and held by the adult owner at all times. Dogs must not be left unattended (e.g., tied to a railing). Pets must not enter the school buildings without prior approval from the classroom teacher and a Director. We instruct children never to pet or approach an animal without the permission and supervision of the owner. We encourage you to reinforce this message with your child(ren).

## **STUDENT CONDUCT**

### **The Children's School Expectations**

Parents are asked to review these expectations with their student(s).

Students are expected to:

1. Be present and on time in school every day between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m., except when absence is unavoidable (e.g., illness).
2. Participate fully in school activities and programs, including all-school classes such as physical wellness, music, library, and art.
3. Follow the instructions of teachers, administrators, and family volunteers both inside and outside of classroom and school buildings.
4. On field trips, students should follow all school rules, plus any specialized instructions.
5. Be mindful of respectfully sharing the space with each other and with the St. Edmund community (when applicable).
6. At no time should a student be in a classroom or other TCS space without a teacher, administrator, or designated adult family volunteer present. At the teacher's discretion, older students may be given more freedom (e.g., to go on their own to retrieve supplies), but should never be in a classroom or other TCS space without a teacher's or administrator's knowledge and permission.
7. Students should never open an outside door to admit any person, but instead should notify a teacher or administrator that someone is at the door.
8. Students must wear indoor shoes or slippers in school hallways or common areas. Students must wear athletic shoes (no boots, hard soled or high heeled shoes, flip flops, sandals, or loose fitting shoes) for physical wellness classes and indoor recess.

More specific rules around lining up, moving throughout the building, and use of different school spaces will be shared with students during the first days and weeks of the school year.

### **SAFETY / FAIRNESS AT RECESS:**

1. Students should never be out of sight of teachers while at Recess.
2. Students should not pick up any garbage or other foreign objects, but should instead alert a teacher.
3. No tackling games or other rough play; no "pyramids," "piggyback rides," or other games in which one child bears the weight of another except with express permission and under supervision of a teacher.

4. No assisted backbends or other assisted gymnastics moves; however, students will be allowed to perform gymnastics moves they can complete unassisted.
5. Games must be inclusive and equipment must be shared; any child who wants to join a game or activity must be included.
6. The teachers in charge are responsible for determining the safety of games and activities. Students must alter or stop their game if a teacher decides that a situation is unsafe.
7. Students should not leave the designated area to chase balls or for any other reason except with express permission of a teacher.
8. No throwing of snow, mud, sand, rocks, etc.
9. Students should help pick up, transport, and care for all Recess equipment.
10. Students should adhere to other rules for use of materials and space as established by the school community.

### **Bullying**

At The Children's School (TCS), in accordance with Illinois state law, we define bullying as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following: (1) placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property; (2) causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health; (3) substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or (4) substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school. Please click this link for the full text of our [Bullying Prevention Policy](#).

These are some things we do NOT consider bullying (unless they are part of a pattern of socially aggressive behavior designed to humiliate or intimidate):

- saying something unkind, e.g., "You're not my friend" or "I don't want to play with you;"
- excluding a child from a game or activity;
- teasing or critical remarks such as "Your hair looks funny."

Please note that bullying always includes an ongoing intent to humiliate or intimidate, so an isolated mean comment or action would not qualify. However, once a person is put on notice that their actions or words have caused hurt, failure to stop could constitute bullying. In the first instance, we encourage a child to speak up in a timely manner and make clear that another child's words or actions are hurting their feelings. In most cases, this will be enough to stop the unwanted behavior.

We ask that adults use the word "bullying" with care as it may have unintended weight when used to describe developmentally normal interactions among children.

### **Conflict Resolution**

We recognize that conflicts surface in school. Our philosophy is to guide students towards an ability to independently resolve conflicts. At developmentally appropriate levels we give children the opportunity to confront problems and work through them with their peers.

Our experience with children has led us to develop a method for addressing conflicts between students or other behavioral issues. One caveat: we do not follow this method for situations

involving safety issues. We tell students to seek adult help immediately if another student's actions cause them to feel unsafe, and teachers will step in immediately to address situations that they deem unsafe. The school has a policy against corporal punishment of any kind.

For conflicts between students not involving physical safety, these are the steps we follow:

1. If a student is bothered by something another student is doing, we first ask that the student talk to the other student, stating "I don't like it when . . .," asking the student to please stop, and listening to the other student's response. In this way students are encouraged to work through problems on their own whenever possible.
2. If this initial conversation does not solve the problem, the student should come to an adult for help. The adult will help facilitate the conversation described in #1, prompting students as needed. Teachers and our social worker help facilitate this type of conversation every day; most conflicts are resolved satisfactorily at this point. Parents will not necessarily be informed by teachers of every instance in which a conflict is resolved at this stage.
3. If the problem is still not resolved after a teacher-facilitated conversation, the student(s) and/or teacher will discuss the situation with the social worker and/or Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI). Teacher, social worker, or DCI will contact parents to inform them of this conversation.
4. For ongoing conflict or behavioral concerns, parents, teacher, social worker, and DCI will meet to discuss the situation. The student may also attend. At this meeting, a written plan may be created to specifically address the student's behaviors and delineate agreed-upon consequences.

If a student is verbally or physically aggressive at school, or unable for any reason to substantially follow regular classroom routines, they may be removed from the classroom for a period of time and/or asked to leave school for the day. If a student exhibits a pattern of aggressive behavior, or other behaviors that cannot be addressed effectively with the above steps, it may be determined that TCS is not an appropriate placement for that student.

### ***Parents' Role in Supporting Children***

To work, this approach to conflict resolution requires the support and understanding of parents. We ask that you:

- Provide a safe and loving space for your child to talk through his or her feelings and perceptions. Listen to your child.
- Keep in mind the steps of our approach to conflict resolution when talking with your child about something that happened at school. First ask your child to talk to the other child(ren) involved; then encourage your child to go to their teacher. Empower and support your child to feel comfortable talking with other children and with their teacher.
- Be OK with your child feeling uncomfortable (sad, angry, worried) as they work through a conflict. For a child, experiencing and handling discomfort is an important part of the process and not something to be quickly smoothed over by adults.

- Be careful in the way that you talk about other children and families as gossip is harmful to our whole community. It is OK for kids to ask questions and receive honest answers, but keep the language positive. Acknowledge that “everybody is working on something.”
- Remember that modeling is a powerful tool. As adults, we should hold ourselves to the same expectations for respectful conflict resolution that we would like our children to meet.
- Keep in mind that a child’s perception of events may be limited. Experience tells us there are nearly always multiple sides to any action/experience and that those involved are not always aware of each other’s perspectives. Do feel free to come and talk with us if you have questions or concerns about anything your child brings home to you.
- Understand that we will not share confidential information about your child with other people, nor will we share confidential information about another child with you. Therefore we are limited in what we can say about how a situation is being handled with another child.

**Thank you for your help in making sure that you and your student(s) understand the purpose and value of the items in this handbook. We look forward to a great year ahead!**