

The Morris School Integrated Preschool

Question and Answer Book



2011-2012

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What is the Mission Statement of the Morris School?

The Morris School is committed to providing a wide continuum of opportunities which value individuals, maximize both skills and knowledge, enhance self-esteem, produce responsible and life-long learners, and are responsive to the needs of a diverse student, parent, and community population.

What is the Philosophy of the Preschool?

The Morris Integrated Preschool Program is designed to provide developmentally age-appropriate experiences in a safe and nurturing environment. We believe that these experiences promote physical, emotional, social and cognitive development within curricular activities of typical and special needs children. Implementation of these areas follow an integrated model centered on the children's interests while engaged in play. Our program seeks to enable children to reach their potential, enhancing their abilities. Special needs and typical preschoolers serve as role models for one another.

What are the goals of the Preschool Program?

- ❖ To provide a curriculum for each preschool child based on individual differences and abilities.
- ❖ To provide experiences that meet each child's needs that will stimulate learning in all developmental areas (physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and aesthetic awareness) and curricular areas (speech, language arts, social studies, mathematics, physical education, health, nutrition, science, and fine arts).
- ❖ To provide opportunities to participate in relationships, interactions and activities which are designed to develop children's self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning and each other.
- ❖ To provide opportunities for the preschool children to participate in individual and small and large group activities to the fullest of their abilities.
- ❖ To provide opportunities in all areas of language development - listening, speaking, reading readiness, writing, thinking, and expressing their ideas in a variety of ways.
- ❖ To provide experiences in gross motor (running, skipping, balancing, climbing, etc.) as well as fine motor activities (writing, cutting, finger plays, coloring etc.).
- ❖ To provide daily opportunities for experiencing a wide range of art, music, and movement activities.
- ❖ To make each child's school experience positive.
- ❖ To stimulate each child's thinking and reasoning skills through language-rich play experiences.

- ❖ To develop each child's ability to solve problems and make decisions and choices independently.
- ❖ To help each child recognize the rights, feelings and property of others and themselves.
- ❖ To encourage sharing and cooperation.
- ❖ To help parents become active participants and advocates in their child's education through participation in on-going play and discussion groups.
- ❖ To promote a sense of belonging in the peer group and school community, as well as in the family.
- ❖ To prepare children for a successful transition to kindergarten and a life-long desire to learn.

How does my child become a part of the preschool program?

The Special Needs Department operates two half-day Pre-school programs at the Morris School for children ages three and four. The AM program serves children who are 3 by September 1st and the PM program serves children who are 4 by September 1st. Both programs are integrated; that is, they serve both children who have been identified as having special needs as well as "typical" peer role models. Children identified as having special needs may have services delivered within the program or scheduled directly with the appropriate service provider. There are a limited number of openings available for typical peers each year.

Children are identified for the Morris School Integrated Preschool through a referral process or through the annual Preschool Screening in March. Children who require special education services are referred to the preschool team for observation and assessment. Children who are identified as having two or more areas of developmental needs are recommended for program placement. There is an orientation meeting held before the Preschool Screening for parents to meet the staff involved.

What is Preschool Screening?

Parent(s) may request a screening for their child at any time during the school year if they have any concern about a possible special need for their child. However, a formal preschool screening takes place every spring, typically at the end of March. Student assessment is done by the preschool team, which includes the Preschool Teacher, Speech and Language Pathologist, School Adjustment Counselor, the Physical Therapist and/or the Occupational Therapist. They use several instruments: The Brigance Early Childhood Developmental Screen, as well as anecdotal records, observations, and samples of children's work. Results of any assessments are available to parents.

What is the Lottery and how does it work?

Children who are being considered as typical peers are placed on a list sorted by gender and age; children are placed on the list through a lottery system. An equal number of typical peers are selected to match the special needs students in the program. We try to achieve a gender and age balance. The Morris School Integrated Preschool is non-discriminating and accepting of children of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds. Children in the 3 year old program are given first choice to re-enroll when advancing to the 4 year old class. They are not a part of the lottery again.

What does it cost to send my child to the preschool?

The Morris School Integrated Preschool Program is offered free of charge for children who are identified as needing specialized education and have an Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.). The Morris School Integrated Preschool Program is open to typically developing peers for a fee of \$985 (AM class) or \$1,640 (PM class) for the 2011-2012 school year. Tuition payments are mailed to: *Director of Business Services, Office of the Superintendent, 6 Walker Street, Lenox, MA 01240*. Tuition waivers are available based on family income.

All forms must be returned before the start date of your child as required by state law prior to children's participation in program. Medical forms MUST be returned within 30 days of a child's entrance or the child may need to be excluded from the program until such time as the medical forms are returned. Appropriate signatures from physicians MUST be secured in order for the medical form to be valid. Medical forms are only valid for the period of one calendar year.

Who Teaches the Preschool Class?

Each classroom consists of a special education preschool teacher and a paraprofessional. For children identified as needing special education services, there are related service providers to provide the appropriate services, including an occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, physical therapist, and a School Adjustment Counselor. The Principal and Director of Student Services for the Lenox Public Schools oversee the Integrated Preschool.

What is the Curriculum for the Preschool?

The curriculum at the Morris Integrated Preschool is developmental in nature and child-centered in focus. The purpose of the program is to work with parents and early childhood professionals to provide an individualized curriculum that recognizes each child's strengths as well as weaknesses. The important learning tools for preschool-age children include puzzles, building blocks, creative art materials, music and movement tools, and materials for dramatic play. The curriculum centers on the content areas of

language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, physical education, health and nutrition, and fine arts. In preschool these areas are integrated into the classroom activities, and they center on children's interests and interactions while they are engaged in play. We encourage you to ask your child's preschool teacher about the evolving curriculum based on the Creative Curriculum model.

How will my child be introduced to the Preschool Program?

During the first 2 days of the school year there is an opportunity to "learn the ropes" and get those last-minute questions answered just before the children head off to start preschool. This is done through a "Pick Your Cubby" time for each child to come to school with his/her family for about 20 minutes to pick their cubby and visit in the class.

This is followed by two days when half the class attends. This makes for a nice start of the year with a smaller number of children getting to meet and be comfortable in the school. Once this brief orientation time is complete, we begin regular programming following the Preschool Calendar. A letter is sent home in August with dates and times for these visits and beginning days.

What is a day at the preschool like?

Meet and Greet:

The children are greeted by the staff, and encouraged to put their own belongings into their cubbies. They proceed with the schedule of the day. We welcome each other; discuss the weather, calendar, and any news the children would like to share.

Gross Motor Activities:

The children have opportunities to participate in activities to help develop and strengthen their large motor skills in the gym. Indoor gross motor play may include utilizing the motor materials available, such as scooter boards, parachutes, and balls.

Circle Time:

The children gather together in a group to have discussions and dialogues about various topics. They may also sing songs, participate in movement activities and listen to stories.

Free Choice Activities:

The children are able to work in a variety of areas in the classroom. The areas may include Art, Easel, Sensory Table (i.e. water, sand), Table Toys (i.e. puzzles, and manipulatives), Book Area, Writing, Computer, Block Corner, Dramatic Play, and Discovery/Science Area. The play of the children is an important vehicle for learning and is facilitated by the teachers, assistants, and therapists.

Snack:

The 3 year olds have snack as a group. The 4 year olds have snack as an activity during free choice. Both ways provide opportunities for self-help skills and social interaction.

The school provides a healthy snack.

Clean Up:

When children have completed their play activities and following a signal, they are encouraged to clean up the classroom by putting toys and materials back into their appropriate places.

Closing Circle:

There is a short meeting before we get ready to go home to talk about our day.

Dismissal:

The children are encouraged to dress themselves and gather their own belongings to get ready to go home. Weather permitting, we go play outside on the playground and on a variety of equipment for the final 15 minutes of the day. We ask parents to dress their children in appropriate clothing for changes in weather conditions, but we have additional hats, mittens and other clothing for those in need. We use a temperature of 15 degrees(F) (either ambient or wind chill temperature) as the determinant as to whether recess will be held outdoors. Children are dismissed at the end of the instructional day at the playground gate, if the children are outside. In inclement weather, they are dismissed from the classroom using the drop off entrance.

Specials:

There are regularly scheduled language and motor activities with the speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist and physical therapist. The children participate in classes that are provided by Community Partnerships for Children. A variety of field trip experiences are provided to the children throughout the year with transportation provided by the preschool bus.

Classes are taken on field trips when it is felt that such an experience would benefit the class and enrich the instruction. Your classroom teacher will contact you to provide information on upcoming trips. Permission slips will be sent home prior to the trip. Without your written permission, your child will not be able to participate.

Do the children cook as part of the program?

If your child has any food allergies, please let us know so that we can plan our cooking activities accordingly. Donations for cooking activities are welcomed. We do have peanut allergies in the class, so *no peanut products* will be served or prepared. Sometimes cooking will be part of our unit. When the oven is turned on, it is announced, "We all need to be safe. The oven is hot". When the oven is turned off, it is announced to the class. The burners are only used as needed. The food is all labeled and dated at opening time. There is a weekly check of the contents of the refrigerator. The tables are disinfected prior to and after eating.

How will my child get to school?

Bus transportation is provided for those students who have been identified with a special need; typical children must be driven to school. A paraprofessional will ride the bus with the children in the preschool to ensure safety and to monitor appropriate bus behavior. One of our most important considerations is the safe and orderly transportation of children to and from school. Therefore, we would appreciate all parents discussing with their children appropriate behavior while riding the bus. (We will do the same with the children here at school.) It should be stressed that children are expected to remain seated while the bus is in motion and that soft voices should be used on the bus.

As a safety precaution for preschoolers, parents or guardians need to be at the bus stop before the bus driver can let the students off the bus. If a parent is not there, we will attempt to call you from the bus. If there is no answer we will return your child to school. You will need to come pick them up there.

If transportation issues arise, we urge you to consult with the Preschool teacher and/or the Director of Student Services who will assist you in contacting the transportation department to resolve issues.

When parents provide transportation for their child, we recommend that all children arrive and depart within 5 minutes of the beginning and end of the day. Our preschool day is carefully balanced to provide a rich variety of opportunities to our young children. We liken arrival and departure to embarking on an airplane. If we are a few minutes early, we are able to adjust and calm ourselves to prepare for the flight. If we are too late in our arrival, we often are rushing to try to "catch up". On the departure end, if we are more than a few minutes late, our children often feel like they've been "left at the gate".

Due to the business of the morning drop off, if you are late arriving please park your car beyond the yellow drop off lines as not to interfere with the rest of the school's routine. You can then walk your child into the preschool for the start of their day.

We respect that arrival and dismissal times are especially delicate for some young children. Please feel free to schedule a meeting to discuss and plan with your child's teacher if your child needs extra adult attention at this time. It is our intention to offer each child a warm greeting and welcome to school each day, and to provide the same loving exchange at the end of the day.

What will my child need for school?

We have found it very helpful if your child uses a backpack to carry papers, communications, projects, etc. back and forth to school. In addition, we suggest:

- ❖ A COMPLETE CHANGE OF CLOTHES should be left at school. Please mark each item with your child's name and place them in a zip-lock bag. Be sure to include shirt, pants or dress, underwear, socks, and a sweater or sweatshirt. We will keep these

clothes in your child's cubby to be prepared in case of an accident, spilled drinks, spilled paint, encounters with puddles, etc. We will do our best to keep your child covered by a smock during messy activities. However, we believe that our most important goal is to provide your child with meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences, not to keep him/her spotless. As you know it is sometimes impossible to accomplish both goals with young children. Please keep this in mind when you are dressing your child for school. If your child is not toilet trained, please send in diapers, training pants, wipes, etc. These will be kept in your child's cubby for their use only.

- ❖ PLAY CLOTHES & SNEAKERS are a must for our preschoolers. Besides outdoor play, our daily routine includes planned gross motor activities in the gym. Please send your child to school in play clothes that are comfortable for sitting, running and climbing and can be easily cleaned. We discourage open-toed shoes and dressy shoes as they can be dangerous when running or climbing, and may limit your child's performance with her/his group.
- ❖ Please dress your child for the weather. We go outside to play even in the winter. One of the best ways to keep your child healthy is to make sure they dress appropriately for the weather and temperature. During the winter months, providing an extra pair of sneakers to wear in the classroom is advised.

Does my child need a physical examination and immunizations before starting school?

According to Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations as outlined in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Law, physical examinations and immunization records are **required upon entering preschool**.

Before admission, all students must submit proof of immunization to be reviewed by the school nurse who will authorize admission. Except as specifically provided for by law, children who are not successfully immunized will be excluded from school in accordance with Chapter 76, Section 15 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The school nurse will make recommendations for exclusion to the Elementary Principal.

What if my child is sick?

School is for students who are well. Please do not send your child to school if he or she has any sign of illness. Please let the school nurse know if your child is ill. If possible, also include information about the diagnosis and expected period of absence from school.

In general, a child who has remained fever free for 24 hours may be ready to attend school. Every member of the school staff is expected to institute emergency care in case of an accident. No member of the staff, however, is expected to provide treatment for an ill child.

Children who have indications of communicable diseases should remain at home until fully recovered. The family physician should issue a note stating that the child may return to school. To keep health records up-to-date, it is important that the nature of the illness be stated.

In case of illness, the school makes necessary arrangements for the sick child to return home. The school cannot provide transportation for students who are ill or injured. Please identify on the Emergency Information Card the person(s) who will call for your child if he/she is ill or has had an accident. We require the emergency information cards so that we have on file the directions you want followed in the event your child has to return home due to illness or accident during the school day.

School Health Services promote the health of students through prevention, case-finding, early intervention and remediation of specific problems, provision of direct services for students with special needs, and provision of health counseling to promote an optimal level of wellness for students and staff.

Full-time nursing services at the Morris School are available to provide the following services: Care of students/staff when they are ill or injured; mandatory screenings which include vision and hearing, height and weight, and postural screening (5th grade); periodic all-school head lice screenings, conducted as needed; communicable disease control; immunization control; maintenance of health records; physical assessment and physical examinations; medication administration; health counseling; collaboration regarding pertinent health issues with faculty, staff and other health professionals; environmental health; health agency referrals; specialized health care plans for children with special health care needs.

What if my child needs medication at school?

During school hours, the form **Authorization for Medications To Be Taken** is required in order for students to receive medications at school. This applies to non-prescription as well as prescription medications. Both a parent's signature and the prescribing physician's signature are required. Please contact the School Nurse if your child needs medications. *Only the School Nurse will administer medications.* The medication must be sent in a prescription bottle and should not be sent to school with the child. The parent should bring it personally to the School Nurse.

When do I need a note from our doctor?

When a child has been ill or injured and has returned to school, we expect the child to participate fully in school activities both in and out of the classroom. Exceptions to this policy may only be made with a specific dated medical note giving the reason why the child should not take part and giving the specific length of time the note should be in effect. The parent, guardian, or physician should write all notes. We expect children to go out for all recesses unless excused by a specific medical note.

What is the school's hand washing policy?

To reduce the risk of spreading disease, it is imperative that all visitors and participants in the pre school classroom follow this hand washing routine.

Adults:

- Wash hands on arrival
- Wash hands before preparing food, eating or feeding a child
- Wash hands after
 - Toileting self or child
 - Handling bodily secretions (e.g. changing diapers, cleaning up after a child who has vomited, wiping a child's nose, handling soiled clothing or contaminated items)

How to Wash Hands:

- Moisten hands with water and apply a lather of liquid soap.
- Wash well under running water for at least 10 seconds.
- Pay particular attention to the areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails and backs of hands.
- Rinse well under running water until free of dirt and soap. Hold hands so that water flows from wrists to the fingertips.
- Dry hands with paper towel.
- Use paper towel to turn off faucet, then discard towel.
- Use hand lotion if desired.

Children:

- Use soap and water at a sink whenever possible
 - Squirt a drop of liquid soap or have the child do it onto their hand.
 - Wash and rinse their hands in running water, directing flow from wrists to Fingertips.
 - Dry hands with a paper towel.
 - Turn off faucet with paper towel and discard.
- Teach older children how to carry out this sequence on their own, supervise younger children and assist them in carrying out the procedure on their own.

What if there is an emergency at school and who is authorized to pick up my child from school?

All children must have a list of phone numbers on file with the school to use in case of an emergency. These should include work and home phones as well as a second or third person to contact should neither parent be available. If you change your place of employment or wish to change the emergency contact person, please call Jill Barnoski at the Morris School Office (637-5522 x8) or Sue Hanson (637-5571) in the Student Services Office. It is important that we have the correct numbers in case we need to reach parents or guardians during the day.

We need to know who is authorized to pick up your child if there is any change in regular plans. Please make sure you complete the form authorizing other adults to pick up your child. We will keep this form on file. If you need to change this at anytime during the year, please contact the office.

Are there any days when school has an early release or cleaning days?

Periodically throughout the year, we have release days for In-Service Workshops. On these days we follow the school wide calendar and if a half-day In-Service is scheduled, there will be no afternoon preschool session. We have parent conference days usually in December, and April. On cleaning days the classroom is closed and the children have a holiday. The School Calendar includes these days.

What happens if there is no school or a delayed opening?

The Superintendent of Schools shall determine the necessity for emergency closing or delayed opening of schools due to weather conditions or other emergencies. **We use our automated notification system to call all parents.** Announcements concerning such closings are also made over local radio stations WBRK (1340 AM, 101.7 FM), WUHN/WUPE (1110 AM, 95.9 FM), WSBS (860 AM) and WBEC (1420 AM, 105.5 FM). "No School" announcements also appear on some of the Springfield and Albany television stations (channels 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14).

What are some ways to be involved with my child as they start school?

The Morris School Integrated Preschool welcomes families to become involved in their children's preschool experience as much as possible. There are many ways to become involved! Field trip chaperone, cooking with children; sharing photographs; sharing your talents such as music, crafts, and gardening, just to name a few. The list is endless, and you can be creative in how you are involved. There are several family events in which parents, siblings, and grandparents are encouraged to participate – these usually include a Thanksgiving Celebration, a December Family event and an end-of-the-year family celebration.

How do I communicate with my child's teacher?

Children should bring a note written by parents:

- For early dismissal - to be released only to identified authorized persons at the Principal's Office
- For going home other than in the usual manner
- For excusing child for absence from school for any reason
- For change of location for drop-off or pickup by the Preschool Bus
- For requesting special treatment

- For allowing someone other than the parent to be temporarily responsible for the child
- For changing of residence necessitating leaving the school (Time is needed to prepare transfer records. Parents must sign a release of information form before records are forwarded to the new school).
- For going on field trips during class time
- We ask that requests for students to stay in at recess be limited to medical situations in which a physician has made the specific request.

If you have any concerns about your child's learning or social experiences at school, please contact us. Please share any changes at home that you feel comfortable sharing that may affect your child's school performance. The best way to reach the teacher is to call the office and have a message sent. Messages are checked at the beginning of the day, lunch break and the end of the day. If it is an emergency, please tell the office. There is also communication with e-mail. The teacher will get back to you and return your call as soon as possible.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are formally held twice a year, once in December and then in March or April. These conferences offer a time to share information about your child's progress in the program. We welcome any helpful information you have to share about your child, such as health need or problems, interests, feelings about school, relationships with siblings. A parent may ask for a conference at any time during the school year.

Are there more ways for communicating with families?

There is a bulletin board outside the classroom that will have postings of interest to parents. If you feel the need, a daily communication journal is available. These consist of small blue books in which parent, teachers, and specialists can communicate the daily activities and/or responses of your child. There is a weekly report on what the class did and a monthly calendar from the preschool.

The Principal publishes a Newsletter every 6 weeks. It highlights upcoming events, recognizes out-standing performance, and pays tribute to those who have helped contribute to our students' education. If you have a contribution to the newsletter, please provide it to the Principal's secretary.

What is the Special Needs Parent Advisory Council?

There is Special Needs Parent Advisory Council (PAC). You are welcome to join or attend these meetings. Please call the Student Services Office or see the website for dates of upcoming meetings. In addition, families are asked to assist the yearly evaluation of the program; we greatly welcome your input.

Do you offer home visits?

Families of students with identified needs will be offered the option of having home visits at the start of the school year and throughout the school year. The purpose of the home visits is to get to know your child and/or work with you to help your child accomplish specific goals. The home visit gives you an opportunity to have an open, informal discussion about your child. It is an opportunity to discuss the wonderful things your child is doing as well as to discuss any concerns you may have and what types of interventions you may implement at home.

Are there parent resources available?

There are many parent resources -- reference books, videos, and other media -- of interest to parents in both the preschool classroom and in the Parent Resource Center in the Morris School Library.

Please refer to the Morris School Handbook for additional information, rules and regulations