

# Handbook

For Parents, Families, Visitors, Volunteers & Friends of  
Young Children



Colorado Mountain College

Early Learners' Center

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## Welcome to the Early Learners' Center at CMC!

**T**hank you for choosing the Early Learners' Center as your child's first school experience. We are so excited to get to know your child and family as a part of our classroom community. We have created this handbook so that you can better understand our mission and philosophy, as well how we implement curriculum, assess and document student development and learning, and collaborate to build meaningful relationships within our learning environment. It includes the following information:

- ◆ AUTHORITY
- ◆ MISSION
- ◆ PHILOSOPHY, PROGRAM AND PURPOSE
- ◆ STAFF
- ◆ ENROLLMENT/ADMISSION PROCEDURES
- ◆ HOURS OF OPERATION
- ◆ TUITION, PAYMENT OF FEES AND LATE FEES
- ◆ WITHDRAWAL/TERMINATION
- ◆ ATTENDANCE
- ◆ HEALTH/ILLNESS
- ◆ NUTRITION
- ◆ CLOTHING/PERSONAL BELONGINGS
- ◆ FIELD TRIPS
- ◆ EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
- ◆ REPORTING SUSPICION OF ABUSE/NEGLECT
- ◆ DISCIPLINE
- ◆ FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

We welcome any and all feedback regarding the information contained in this document; if you have questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at your convenience. We are looking forward to learning with you!

- Jayme Goscha, Director ELC

## AUTHORITY

As a CMC program, the Early Learners' Center is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered in the State of Colorado and carries all the privileges of a non-taxable institution. It is licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services and is required by statute to meet all standards set by the Department. A copy of the license is posted on the parent bulletin board and licensing regulations are available for review. The license is renewed periodically to assure quality standards continue to be met. The ELC prides itself on exceeding the minimum standards.

## MISSION

*To foster joyful curiosity and to develop independence, creativity, self-motivation, and resilience through engaging, integrated learning experiences with others in authentic and responsive environments.*



## PHILOSOPHY, PROGRAM & PURPOSE

**T**he Early Learners' Center believes that all children are natural, curious learners who use exploration and play to make sense of the world around them. We also believe that children cannot succeed outside the context of supportive and encouraging relationships with the adults in their lives. We practice a Reggio-Inspired approach by adopting the core values of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. These guiding principles allow us to focus on the whole child, empowering their thoughts, questions, interests, and in turn hopefully **fostering a lifelong love of learning.**



### **The guiding principles of The ELC are as follows:**

- **The Image of the Child:** The primary tenant of the philosophy is that all children are competent, curious, creative, and capable. Exploring their curiosities and interests can lead to a greater understanding and a greater desire to learn. Teachers are aware of each child's potential, and it is their responsibility to help support and guide children throughout the journey of learning.
- **Emergent Curriculum:** Emergent curriculum is a style of teaching and learning that is dependent on the teacher introducing questions and listening to the children's ideas and discussions. Through careful observation of the

classroom, teachers can introduce learning explorations, and develop long-term projects. In this sense, the curriculum ‘emerges’ from the students, allowing the learning process to become a spiraling progression rather than a linear process.

- **Project Work:** Through emergent curriculum, teachers can facilitate project work that will allow children to explore their areas of interest in detail.

Teachers introduce materials, concepts, and mediums that allow children to express their ideas and interests. Children develop an enthusiasm for knowledge that is enhanced by the ability to experience the many facets of project work in detail. Projects can last anywhere from a few days to several months at a time.

- **The Role of the Teacher:** In a Reggio Emilia-inspired curriculum, teachers are viewed as more than just a partner in education. They play several different roles, in addition to that of a teacher. They are the guides that take children through the journey of learning. They are the scribes who listen, record and display classroom experiences. They are advocates for the

children, and they work closely with colleagues and parents to foster an inviting, interesting, community-based learning environment.

- **The Role of the Environment:** The environment of the school, classrooms, and common spaces play a critical role in the Reggio-Inspired approach. The **environment is viewed as the “third teacher”** and should be considered a reflection of not just the



children, teachers, or parents but a reflection of the image of the child. The classrooms in a Reggio-inspired school should be viewed as a living organism and are thoughtfully arranged to foster creative exploration while encouraging interaction and communication. Reggio-Inspired classrooms are often open, inviting spaces filled with natural furnishings, real-life materials, mirrors, windows, and natural lighting. Classrooms should display project work, both completed and in-progress, to tell the story of those that share the space.

- **Parent/Family Engagement:** Through the Reggio-Inspired approach, learning doesn't just take place within the school but also at home and in the community. Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's education and daily life at school, and to extend and reinforce learning opportunities at home. Parent/Family engagement and involvement is critical to the successful growth and development of young children.

**T**he Early Learners' Center staff documents and records each child's developmental progress using Colorado's online progress reporting tool, Teaching Strategies Gold. Assessment in each area of development is documented and shared with parents at conferences which are held in the fall and in the spring. Documentation may come in a variety of different forms, including photography, videos, conversation





transcripts, painting, drawing or other visual mediums like clay and wire. Documentation (in both online and physical portfolios) then serves to communicate learning, development, ideas, and interests and supports the next steps in the children’s educational journey.

## STAFF

Because the Early Learners’ Center is located on campus at CMC Rifle, the center is considered a “teaching center”, a learning environment where ECE students can engage in deeper learning of the theories and best practices taught in the classroom. The ELC staff consists of a highly qualified teaching director, as well as one or more qualified lead teachers. In addition to these positions, ECE students are in our classrooms observing, teaching, and learning on a regular basis as teachers’ assistants. The ELC also values parent and community engagement in our classroom and welcomes volunteers and guests regularly to aide in our emergent curriculum and project-based learning activities.



## ENROLLMENT/ADMISSION PROCEDURES

**C**olorado Mountain College Campus Early Learners' Center is available to all current preschool children (ages 2 years 6 months – 7 years) regardless of race, creed, color, gender, national origin, or religion. All enrolled students must be toilet trained and not yet eligible to enroll in kindergarten. Enrollment in full- or half-day programs are filled on a first come, first served basis. A \$20 enrollment fee will be charged when paperwork is complete in order to secure your child's spot in our program.



The ELC is an inclusive program, meaning that we value diversity and want all children to feel safe and included in all areas of our program. We work closely with our partners to make sure all students are receiving the supports and services they need to be successful in our program and beyond. If your child demonstrates a concern of delay in one or more areas of development, we will work with the parent and the Child Find Coordinator to determine if the child is eligible to receive additional supports and services in our community.

### HOURS OF OPERATION

The CMC Early Learners' Center is located in room 171 on the Rifle CMC Campus, 3695 Airport Road, Rifle, CO. The Early Learning Center at CMC will have



classes Monday – Thursday from 8:30am – 3:30pm. Half day classes will be Monday – Thursday from 8:30 – 11:30am. We will not have classes during scheduled CMC breaks/holidays and will not have regular classes in the summer months.

Dates of operation, holidays, and closures due to weather conditions follow the discretion of the Campus Dean. However, we will use both the RE-2 calendar along with the CMC calendar to determine school closures for holidays and vacations (see calendar in parent packet). In case of inclement and excessively hot weather, please call the campus at 970.625.6916 to verify school closure.

### **TUITION & PAYMENT OF FEES**

There are four options for enrollment at the ELC:

- **4 Half-days:** *Students attend school from 8:30-11:30am Monday - Thursday (\$450/month)*
- **2 Full-days:** *Students attend school Mondays & Tuesdays from 8:30am – 3:30pm (\$450/month)*
- **2 Full-days:** *Students attend school Wednesdays & Thursdays from 8:30am – 3:30pm (\$450/month)*
- **4 Full-days:** *Students attend school Mondays – Thursdays from 8:30am – 3:30pm (\$900/month)*



Students who qualify for Universal Preschool (UPK) funding will have the choice to attend 4 half days or 2 full days, as UPK covers the cost of 10-15 hours per

week of preschool. If your child qualifies for CPP and you'd like them to come 4 full days per week, you will be responsible to pay the difference (\$400/month). We also accept funding from the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) for tuition for those families who qualify.

## PAYMENT METHODS

**Cash**

**Money order**

**Check\***

\*If a check is returned for insufficient funds, we will no longer accept a personal check and check will be turned into the collections agency.

\* All payments must be received by the first week of each month. If tuition has not been received by the date given, your child may not attend until payment is made.

## WITHDRAWAL/TERMINATION of SERVICES

**A** **minimum of two weeks' notice is required for withdrawal of a child.** This gives the school time to find a replacement. Because we keep tuition rates low, it is essential that we keep enrollment filled at all times. The school reserves the right to terminate services for a child when there



is serious delinquency in payment of tuition or when there is evidence that the child is not contributing to or gaining from the experience or when there is failure of a child and/or parent to adjust to the school's philosophy, policies, or procedures.

Whenever a child leaves the school, an exit interview (either formal or informal) with the Director may be held to ensure that the school has the benefit of any comments the family wishes to make.

### **ATTENDANCE**

At the Early Learners' Center, parents are encouraged to bring their child to school on a consistent basis. We will accommodate any family or medical emergency, as well as any illness of your child. If your child will not be attending school, we do ask that you call the center immediately and inform a teacher of your child's illness so they may be excused. Upon return, please plan on providing the director with a note from your doctor excusing your child from school. If your child is absent from school on a consistent basis, meaning, that your child has more than 4 unexcused absences per month, for at least two months, you will be asked to give up your spot to another child that is on the center's wait list.



For security purposes, a sign-in/sign-out sheet for parents-guardians and visitors is maintained daily. **No child shall be dropped off without a parent or guardian signing in and out, nor shall a child be picked up by an unauthorized person, parent, or guardian.**

### **HEALTH**

Upon enrollment, you must submit a statement of your child's current health

status signed and dated by a health care professional who has seen the child within the last 12 months. The statement of health status must be obtained at the time of admission or within 30 days after admission.

If your child has an identified health condition or developmental concern including, but not limited to, seizures, asthma, diabetes, allergies, heart or respiratory conditions, and physical disabilities, information and instruction on care of the child must be included on the statement of health status signed by the physician. The center has the right to refuse to admit a child if a statement from an approved health care professional is not submitted. Children with special medical needs must have the statement from a health care professional.

If you wish an exemption from the requirement for immunizations due to religious or personal beliefs, you must sign and submit a written statement stating the reason for such an exemption and that the child is in good health. The center has the right to refuse to admit the child if a statement from an approved health care professional or a waiver from CDPHE is not submitted. You will be notified in writing prior to the child's enrollment in the center if non-immunized children are admitted to the program.

## **ILLNESS**

The Early Learners' Center recognizes that most common childhood illnesses are annoying, but relatively harmless. Most families in our program have working parents, thus it is impractical to keep children home from school during all of their common illnesses. We recognize that the complete prevention of spread of common illnesses is impossible in a preschool setting and thus, children with underlying medical conditions who may be at a higher risk for infection may need additional consultation with medical providers to determine whether or not attending preschool is in the best interest of the child. The great majority of children,

however, can be safely cared for in school if we observe the following guidelines provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

## Common Sicknesses in Child Care:

The viruses responsible for colds or the flu cause the most common sicknesses in child care facilities. Even though your child has had immunizations, he or she can still get viruses causing colds, sore throats, coughs, vomiting, and diarrhea.

**Children of any age will experience a lot of infection in their first year of group child care. However, if a first year of child care is during infancy, a child may have as many as 8 to 12 colds more than a child would have if cared for at home without exposure to siblings or other children. During the second year of child care attendance, the number of respiratory illnesses begins to decrease because exposure to so many germs causes rapid development of the immune system. Diarrhea occurs once or twice a year in the typical child.**

## AAP Child Care Recommendations for Exclusion:

The primary reasons for exclusion from child care or school are that the condition:

- Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities
- Results in a need for care that is greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children
- Poses a risk of spread of harmful disease to others (*see list of these conditions below*)

Any child with respiratory symptoms (cough, runny nose, or sore throat) and fever should be excluded from their child care program. The child can return after the fever associated with these symptoms has resolved (without the use of **fever-reducing medicine**).

To reduce the risk of becoming sick with the flu, child care providers and all the children being cared for must receive all recommended immunizations, including the **flu vaccine**. The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year. This critically important approach puts the health and safety of everyone in the child care setting first. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older, including child care staff.

*Note: Children 6 months through 8 years of age may need two doses spaced one month apart to get the full benefit. These children should receive their first dose as soon as the vaccine is on hand in their community.*

## Conditions that require exclusion include:

- When the child appears to be severely ill, is not responsive, irritable, persistently crying, having difficulty breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash.
- Fever (temperature above 101°F [38.3°C] by any method) and behavior change or other signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, or diarrhea). For infants less than

2 months of age, an unexplained fever should be evaluated by a health professional. For these infants younger than 2 months of age, get urgent medical advice for temperature above 100.4°F [38.0°C], whether or not other symptoms are present.

- Diarrhea—Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet-trained children if the diarrhea is causing "accidents," and for children whose stool frequency exceeds 2 stools above normal per 24-hours for that child while the child is in the program or whose stool contains more than a drop of blood or mucus. Diarrhea is defined by stool which is occurring more frequently and/or is less formed in consistency than usual in the child, and not associated with changes of diet.
- Vomiting 2 or more times in the previous 24 hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a non-communicable/non-infectious condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- Abdominal pain that continues for more than 2 hours or intermittent abdominal pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms.
- Mouth sores with drooling that the child cannot control unless the child's primary health care provider or local health department authority states that the child is noninfectious.
- Rash with fever or behavioral changes, until a primary care provider has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease.
- Skin sores that are weeping fluid and are on an exposed body surface that cannot be covered with a waterproof dressing.

### Other conditions with specific diagnoses as follows:

- Streptococcal pharyngitis (i.e., strep throat or other streptococcal infection), until the child has had two doses of a course of an appropriate antibiotic 12 hours apart.
- Head lice, scabies, ringworm until after the first treatment (Exclusion is not necessary before the end of the program day.) Treatment may occur between the end of the program day and beginning of the next day—not requiring any exclusion.
- Chickenpox (varicella) until all lesions have dried or crusted (usually 6 days after onset of rash) and no new lesions have showed for at least 24 hours.
- Rubella, until 7 days after the rash appears
- Pertussis, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment (21 days if untreated)
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash



- Hepatitis A virus infection, until 1 week after onset of illness or jaundice or as directed by the health department

## ***How COVID-19 Has Changed Safety Guidelines***

The coronavirus can present itself in many ways. Most children have mild cold-like symptoms that resemble colds, strep throat, or allergies, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Some kids are completely asymptomatic, while others have severe cases that led to hospitalization or death (although this is rare). That said, you certainly don't want your child passing on a dangerous virus to others, so it's best to keep them home if they experience any signs of COVID-19.

[According to the CDC](#), coronavirus symptoms in children include:

- Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Body aches
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Poor feeding in babies

## Make Sure You Are Reachable at All Times:

In our program, children are allowed to continue the regular program as long as they can take part in most activities and do not have a condition that requires exclusion. It is imperative to the health and safety of our students that we have a way to reach you at all times—and that you are available to pick your child up from school within 30 minutes of receiving a phone call alerting you to their illness.

## Excluding Staff

**The person in charge of staff is responsible for observing the staff for signs of illness throughout the day. Staff members have the responsibility of reporting, to the person in charge, any signs of infection or illness that may pose a hazard to the health of children and other staff. If a staff member is not well enough to work, they may return based on the requirements in How Sick is Too Sick, the Infectious Disease Guide, or as directed by their health care provider or public health professional.**

## NUTRITION

**N**utrition is an important part of healthy development, which is why we encourage our students to learn healthy habits at a young age. At the ELC, parents will provide morning snack for the whole class once per month. A monthly snack calendar will be provided to parents upon enrollment, along with some ideas for what types of healthy snacks to bring when it is your turn. If your child is enrolled in our full-day program, parents are also required to pack a healthy lunch each day. Because we don't have a large refrigerator, we ask that all lunch bags be insulated and have an ice pack to keep food items cool. We have a microwave in the classroom, and are happy to heat up any items that may need it at lunch time. The ELC will provide afternoon snack each day.

When packing lunches, please include healthy items for your child, and minimize sugary items and desserts. We do not allow soda at school, but you are welcome to pack a juice box or milk in their lunch if you so desire. Teachers bring their own lunches and sit and eat with the children daily. We hope you can join us if your schedule permits as well!

## **CLOTHING/PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

Young children should wear comfortable, washable clothing, free of complicated fasteners. Self-help clothing encourages children to develop independence. Each child's cubby should have an extra set of clothes, labeled with her/his name in case of the occasional accident or water/messy play or projects. Children are also encouraged to bring a water bottle with their name on it that they can fill and have access to as needed throughout the day.

Bringing expensive or complicated toys to school is discouraged because of the possibility of breakage or loss. It is also difficult for young children to share their possessions. Preschoolers are encouraged to bring a toy to show and tell on scheduled days, as well as bringing that special, soft toy to sleep with. Choosing a toy each day together can be a great way to get excited about the school day ahead. Toys from home are stored in your child's cubby during the day. Weapons or other toys that encourage violent play are not allowed at the ELC.

## **FIELD TRIPS AND WALKS**

We do leave the campus from time to time under the supervision of staff members for walks and field trips. You are requested to sign the field trip permission slip during the registration process which allows us to walk around the Colorado Mountain College facility. Occasionally, we will plan a field trip that will help deepen our understanding of a specific project we are investigating. Weekly lesson plans and a monthly newsletter will provide parents with the dates and times of upcoming field trips. We could always use extra help on field trips, and parents are always welcome to volunteer to come with us on scheduled trips away from campus.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

**I**n case of an emergency illness or accident, every effort will be made to contact one or both parents/guardians and/or notify the physician or emergency contact person you have listed. If necessary, we will call an ambulance and go with your child to the nearest emergency facility. A staff person trained in first aid will be in charge of your child until your arrival. Parents or Legal Guardians will be responsible for payments due to accidents or emergencies.



If the ELC has to be evacuated for any reason, parents will be notified by phone and email. We will follow CMC's evacuation procedure and go to the designated meeting point, which is the lower parking lot adjacent to Airport Road. Staff will remain with your children until either a parent picks up or proper authorities take over the situation.

## **REPORTING OF LICENSING COMPLAINTS**

**T**o report any suspected licensing violations, send written notification to

Colorado Department of Human Services  
Division of Child Care  
1575 Sherman St., 1<sup>st</sup> floor  
Denver, CO 80203  
Tel: 303.866.5700

### **REPORTING SUSPICION OF ABUSE/NEGLECT**

**A**s required by law, all suspicion of child abuse or neglect will be reported to the proper authorities.

Any staff member who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect will immediately report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the county department of social services or local law enforcement agency.

### **DISCIPLINE**

**A**t the Early Learners' Center, we believe that children use their behavior to communicate. Adults provide structure and support as children navigate how to communicate with each other in prosocial, positive ways. For that to be accomplished, adults need to be consistent, friendly, firm, patient, and above all else, establish clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for young children. Physical or emotional discipline will not be used at

any time. Instead, logical, natural consequences, redirection, or, if necessary for safety reasons, removal from the situation will be used. We believe a teacher's role is to support children in conflict resolution by helping them express their feelings in positive ways and through mutual problem solving. We believe in giving children "time in" rather than "time out" by giving them many opportunities to learn and practice positive behaviors in the classroom.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

**A**t the Early Learners' Center, we honor the families that we serve and view you as your child's first and most important teachers. We want your child's first school experience to be both memorable and meaningful, and we know we can't do that without a

strong relationship with the child's family. We will provide many opportunities for families to engage with us throughout your child's time at school; from hosting home visits, attending celebrations, assisting with projects, providing snacks, attending parent circles/conferences, and volunteering your special talents in and out of the classroom. Your engagement in your child's learning experiences is key for their success in school, and we look forward to learning more about and working in partnership with your family this year. We strive to build positive relationships





with families through effective and frequent communication, and we want families to know how valued and important you are to your child's success. Thank you for trusting us with your precious children!