



PARENT HANDBOOK

Mission Statement

Mi Pequeña Academia will impact the lives of young children through meaningful experiences and loving interactions in Spanish that build healthy minds, strong bodies, and happy relationships.

MI PEQUEÑA ACADEMIA
SPANISH IMMERSION PRESCHOOL
"Exploring the World in Spanish"

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The Parent Handbook has been written to describe our program, philosophy, methodology, policies, and all the practical details that go into making each day as happy and successful as possible. Please read this handbook carefully and keep it for future reference. The staff at Mi Pequeña Academia would be glad to address any of your questions or concerns. Welcome!

Non-Discrimination Policy

Mi Pequeña Academia does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual preference or other similar characteristics and circumstances. We welcome children from all backgrounds!

"¡Bienvenidos a Mi Pequeña Academia!"

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Philosophy

We believe that the creation of strong bonds between children and their caregivers (parents, teachers, nanny), especially during the first years, allows children to experience important values that sets the foundation for a successful life-long learning.

*As parents, we share the commitment to raising mindful, respectful and compassionate children, who will grow into happy adults loving their life and impacting society in a meaningful way. This is based on our common belief that regardless of the continuous changes in society that raise the demand for people with specific knowledge and skill, the inherent human need for love and happiness has always existed. Therefore, **our simple yet fundamental philosophy of early childhood education is that children that are loved turn into adults that know how to love.***

In the first years of life, children rely on adults to help them grow and develop in a healthy and nurturing environment, where parents are the first and most important role models. As educators, we want to support families in their parenting journey, offering their children an environment that is nurturing and inspiring for learning, maintaining a balance between structure and flexibility. We support every child's unique learning process, and the inner potential and deep curiosity that drive their interest in understanding the world.

*At Mi Pequeña Academia we pay special attention to the human relationships that impact the life of each child. **We believe that a child's life is shaped by the human relationships happening around the child, and through the connections the child makes as a result of his/her interactions with other human beings.*** Therefore, we strive to make children feel loved, nurtured, respected, and positively guided, because it will ultimately determine how a child develops confidence and his/her own approach to the world. The strong bonds between caregivers and children provides emotional stability and allows children to experience important values that set the foundation for lifelong learning.

We believe that children should be accompanied in their own process of learning, providing opportunities to observe, explore, and make connections. We see the exploration of the arts as a means to identify, imagine and create multiple possibilities, putting all senses into action. We cherish play as it leads children to self-recognition and the understanding of social cues. We provide plenty of physical movement as it nurtures both the body and the mind.

We believe in full immersion and in every child's abilities to learn. Our Spanish immersion program creates a fun scenario that enriches the children's

interactions with the physical environment, their friends and teachers. We are enthusiastic about guiding the little ones in a constant “exploration of the World” in Spanish, where children discover other people, languages and cultures, which develops an essential awareness for diversity.

*We provide a safe, clean, healthy and inspiring environment, where children can witness effective communication among adults, explore their potential, strengthen their confidence, feel appreciated, and be joyful, playful and creative. **At Mi Pequeña Academia we want to impact the lives of our students and we are confident that they will likewise impact the world around them.***

Methodology

We promote the learning of important values for life, through positive interactions and meaningful experiences, in an environment that finds the right balance between structure and flexibility.

*At Mi Pequeña Academia we are committed to quality early childhood education. We understand quality education as the enlightening experience that influences the whole child physically, emotionally, and intellectually. **Therefore, our approach is child-centered, meaning that we focus our attention and intentions in supporting each child’s unique learning process.** We listen and observe carefully what children are continuously communicating to us through their bodies, words, and unique approaches to the environment. Educators then make choices of best activities and strategies to support children in exploring their interests and developing new skills.*

*We dedicate time to reflect on our daily and continuously evolving practice as parents, educators and resources, to better serve as positive guides for our children, students and families. **We believe that being aware and responsive of our own emotions, interests, abilities and limitations, allows us to be more mindful and respond more effectively to those of others. This is how we can choose the best strategies that guarantee quality education for each child.***

*Every educator at Mi Pequena Academia agrees to always do their best. **We are effective and reliable professionals, as well as mindful and compassionate human beings, all of which provides a positive image for the young children under our care.***

Children are encouraged to play, explore art materials, manipulate toys, and participate in music and movement activities that stimulate the mind-body connection. Our educators speak Spanish to children all the time and implement useful strategies to help children understand and communicate in the new

language. However, we are sensitive to our children's emotions and understand that in times of distress it may be necessary to use English to connect with them.

*In order to maintain positive interactions between children and caregivers, among children, and between adults who are involved, **we promote the understanding of three fundamental principles of human relationships, which we call Principles of Friendship (Los principios de la amistad): 1. Listen with your whole self; 2. Use kind words and voice; and 3. Be gentle to others (and the environment).***

*When solving a conflict among children, we first refer to such principles, then we encourage them to brainstorm solutions that are positive, creative and effective. **The practice of this conscious problem solving serves adults as a tool to positively redirect children's behavior.** It also instills in children a regard for self awareness; it makes them feel safe, develop critical thinking, and gain confidence.*

Curriculum

Everyday is a different yet rewarding experience at Mi Pequeña Academia.

We foster the development of each child, as well as collaborative learning through experiences that invite everyone to explore the world in Spanish, using their innate curiosity. Our curriculum emphasizes artistic expression, scientific exploration, and body movement, from which children develop the necessary skills to continue learning, recognize their own abilities and learn strategies for self-regulation.

***We aim to maintain a balance between prepared themes specific for each developmental stage, and emerging themes that respond to both children's unique and common interests.** In both cases, we listen to children's questions and stories and use their creativity and imagination to inspire them with activities that lead to deeper learning, sometimes resulting in more elaborate classroom projects.*

Our already established themes encourage the "exploration of the world", responding to questions about the universe, our planet; its inhabitants, animals, nature, community, family, and more.

Teaching Purpose

Based on the premise that "A loved child turns into an adult that knows how to love", we have a common teaching purpose at Mi Pequeña Academia (MPA).

All educators at MPA share the joy and passion for our work with young children. We construct ourselves as human beings and professionals in our daily practice as teachers, in our communication with the children's families, and through our team work. Our healthy interactions with the children, the families and our colleagues, allow us to plant in children *the seed of love* that germinates into integrity, kindness, respect, patience, and compassion, so children grow as happy and confident human beings who can likewise influence the world in positive ways.

Goals

1. Impact the lives of children building strong relationships with them in Spanish.
2. Offer quality education that develops the child physically, emotionally, and intellectually, with mindful educators that are positive guides for children.
3. Help each child become bilingual, learning Spanish in day-to-day situations that make lasting memories.
4. Support families in their parenting journey, serving as positive and effective resources.
5. Promote diversity awareness among the Melrose community, and nearby towns, by providing, sponsoring or supporting cultural activities and events.

Spanish Immersion Program

We are passionate about sharing our language and culture with children and their families. We are also committed to sharing our expertise in teaching a second language to young children. You and your family are about to start an exciting journey witnessing your child grow and his/her language develop in both English and Spanish. She/he will begin to understand words, phrases, and then sentences. Your child will also begin to answer simple questions, speak in short sentences and engage in simple conversations. Your child will start to identify people with languages, which will help develop an awareness of diversity. We are thrilled you chose us to support you in this journey to raise your child bilingual. "¡Gracias!"

Why Spanish?

Spanish is the official language of 20 countries in the World: Spain and most of the countries in South and Central America. In addition to these countries, Spanish is also spoken in other territories like Andorra, Gibraltar, Western Sahara, Belize, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Many people are unaware that Spanish is the fourth most widely spoken language in the World, with about 400 million speakers. English, Chinese Mandarin and Hindi occupy first, second and third places respectively. Spanish is the second largest

language in the United States, with about 43 million speakers. Let's keep increasing that number!

Why is it important to learn a second language?

- Being bilingual enables you to gain important insights about two languages and cultures.
- Learning a second language exercises the memory, helping the brain stay healthy.
- Becoming bilingual helps improve your confidence.
- It would enable you to gain a more profound understanding of your own language and culture.
- You would become a more open-minded and understanding individual.
- Speaking a second language and understanding its culture would allow you to meet new people and develop strong relationships for life.
- Speaking a second language provides a more competitive edge in career choices.
- Learning a second language is FUN!

Why learn a second language at a young age?

It was once thought that learning a second language while the first language was still developing could cause confusion, cognitive deficit or language delay. However, linguistic research shows the opposite today. It proves there are many benefits to learning a second language as a child:

- Children have a natural ability to learn.
- It is good medicine for the young mind. It helps maintain attention longer.
- The younger, the better. As their brain develops, newborns learn through sight, taste, smell, sound, touch and doing, allowing them to acquire/learn languages using all their senses.
- It helps children develop cognitive skills that contribute to their future academic success.
- The earlier children learn a second language, the faster and more likely they would attain native-like language proficiency.
- Children's brains are still developing, making it easier to learn two or more languages at the same time.
- Both languages become interdependent: children rely on the grammar and vocabulary of each language to communicate in more creative ways.

Why immersion?

- Instead of being the subject of instruction, the target language is used for instruction and as means of communication.

- Authentic communication allows children to learn the second language similar to how they learned their first.
- Language proficiency is attained faster by being completely exposed to the second language.
- Children learn practical language for conversational purposes.
- When children relate to the speakers of the second language, children are also creating a relationship of trust with them. Children learn to associate language with people, developing a sense of awareness for diversity.

Organizational Information of the Center

Licensing Authority

Mi Pequeña Academia is licensed by The Department of Early Childhood Education and Care (EEC). You may contact the EEC regional office for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

Department of Early Education and Care

Northeast Office

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Building 9, 3rd Floor

Lawrence, MA 01843

Phone: (978) 681-9684

Fax: (978) 689-7618

Founder

Mi Pequeña Academia is a legally licensed company founded in March 2014 by Carmenza Ruiz. It is now operated by Carmenza, who serves as director, and her daughter, Maria Helena, who is the administrator.

Our staff

We have a strong team of mindful, knowledgeable and passionate educators that are eager to share their expertise to support the growth and development of each child at Mi Pequena Academia. We are devoted to growing both personally and professionally in order to provide each child with the best opportunities to use their potential and curiosity when “exploring the world in Spanish” and create their own learning.

All of our educators hold the necessary credentials from the Massachusetts Department of Early Childhood Education and Care (EEC). They are also completely fluent in Spanish.

Staff Background Check

Everyone in our staff has been fingerprinted and thoroughly vetted before hiring. Once hired, the staff receives thorough orientation focusing on regulations and procedure, health care policies, and mandatory online training mandated by the Division of Early Education and Care.

Parents and Caregivers

We value our families because they are essential in our role as educators. We often offer, sponsor, or communicate about workshops that give families significant resources to support them in a successful parenting.

We encourage parents and caregivers to participate in ways around the facility including teacher's helper and event planning. You are also encouraged to voice your opinions and express your concerns with your child and the care for your child as it pertains to the childcare facility.

Volunteers

We may have *qualified High School students* to volunteer in our program. This is an opportunity for these students to practice their Spanish or share any other skills and assist the teachers and children during the different activities throughout the day. Volunteers also receive a certificate for community hours and are under direct visual supervision of a qualified educator at all times.

All volunteers attend training on our methodology and philosophy for the curriculum plan prior to their start date. The training also includes:

1. Procedures for the program they will be working on.
2. Emergency procedures
3. First aid procedures including the location of first aid kits
4. Supervision
5. Child guidance
6. Location of children's individual health care plans, records and forms

Volunteers are required to review the following before they start:

- Staff Training Manual (outlines teacher responsibilities, curriculum planning guidelines, philosophy of education and other information needed to be a successful volunteer teacher at Mi Pequeña Academia)
- Parent Handbook

Before they start, volunteers are required to provide a medical examination which includes evidence of immunity to measles, mumps and rubella and if applicable, a statement of physical limitations they may have when working with children. We

will conduct a background record check (BRC), which includes a CORI and DCF check, and follow all procedures required by EEC for using volunteers.

Volunteers will take part in observations, supervision meetings and planning meetings with the director and teachers.

Professional Development

In order to guarantee quality education, our team of educators are continuously working on their professional development by attending and discussing workshops and seminars, taking classes, and reading books and articles, all of which offer important insight to apply in our daily practice. Mi Pequeña Academia has chosen to close the last week in August for professional development, to not interrupt the course of the school year. During this time, educators will attend specific mandatory training that is required by the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care.

Our Unique Programs

We have four different base classrooms, each one dedicated to a specific developmental stage. Although we have classified each group by age, it will truly depend on the developmental stage of each child in the classroom where he/she will start. **If a toddler is close in age to be placed in the preschool classroom (2.5 to 2.8yrs), and is developmentally ready, a Developmental Placement form must be filled out prior to moving the child to the preschool classroom.**

As a child grows and continues to achieve important new skills, he/she will move to the next classroom. We work closely as a team to identify the most appropriate time for the child to transition to the next classroom, maintaining open communication with the parents and caregivers to ensure that everyone is ready for the change.

“Los Dinos” -Dinos. The Toddler Stage 1

In the first few months of toddlerhood, children can seem shy, cautious and frustrated individuals but at Mi Pequeña Academia we know that like *dinos* they are also playful, curious, powerful, emotional and legendary.

At Mi Pequeña Academia, we value and embrace all of these incredible traits in this developmental stage. We love to see our Dinos explore their surroundings, adapt with all the sensory-stimulating elements in their class and unravel their full potential through play, music, movement and all different types of experiences all while learning a new language!

As they grow, they begin turning into Dragoness; more assertive, creative, and determined. This is why we have decided to have two stages for Toddlers to create a transition for all the little ones to grow to their full potential.

“Los dragones” -Dragons. The Toddler Stage 2

Toddlers* may seem like little *dragons*: energetic, impulsive, and emotionally unstable. However, we cannot underestimate this developmental stage. Like *dragons*, toddlers are also very curious, creative, smart, confident, intuitive, playful, considerate, assertive, and determined.

At Mi Pequeña Academia we value such positive characteristics of this terrific developmental stage. We like to see our Dragons use their inner curiosity to explore and manipulate different sensory-stimulating elements, and unfold their potential through play, music, movement, as well as during their unique experiences listening to the rhythm and sounds of a new language.

****Children must be 15 months-old to start at MPA. Any child starting in the Dinos classroom must be a strong walker, meaning is self-motivated to walk around independently and does not rely on the teacher’s assistance to get from one place to another.***

“Los héroes” -Heroes. The Preschool Stage

The third year of age is probably the most crucial time in early childhood. Positive and negative feedback influence the child’s self-esteem. Preschoolers’ emotional development becomes increasingly complex as they learn to distinguish between fantasy and reality, understand friendship, become self-aware, take notice of rules, and learn to decide if a behavior is right or wrong within their family and social groups.

At Mi Pequeña Academia, we see this as the stage of becoming a Hero. Three year olds see friendship as having someone they can play and talk to. They are interested in helping their peers and caregivers. While experiencing fear, three year olds love to feel admired for courageous acts. Such behaviors set the beginning of the recognition of social cues and the development of compassion.

Our Heroes are encouraged to discover their own abilities and fine qualities, recognize their peers as friends, and find opportunities to help others and be courageous. Our Heroes are given opportunities to “train” in the use of positive ways to express their feelings and manage their emotions. They learn to use their inner creativity to express themselves in multiple ways. Our Heroes exercise their minds

and bodies every day during play, music and movement activities, to develop cognitive skills, strong bodies, and healthy habits.

“Los guerreros” -Warriors. The Pre-K Stage

Most children at the age of 4 and 5 begin to develop greater independence, concentration and self-control. They are able to express their feelings better as their language and cognitive skills have strengthened. In general, children at this age continue to master the necessary skills to self-identify and self-regulate.

Because of the characteristics of this stage, we like to call it the Age of Warriors. A warrior is fearless, brave and experienced. Our Warriors are encouraged to “fight the good fights”, finding alternative ways to solve conflicts, express their feelings and manage their emotions. They are challenged to observe, think, and respond critically and creatively about facts, family, society and culture.

At Mi Pequeña Academia, we also instill good values that our Warriors can take with them and use them for life after they graduate. Our Warriors strengthen their minds and bodies daily to develop healthy habits, and the necessary cognitive, physical and emotional skills for a successful beginning in Elementary school.

Saturday Program

The Spanish Club, or Club de Español, is a program for children to practice conversational Spanish. A variety of games and activities are offered in order to help children achieve specific goals learning communicative Spanish. There are two EEC certified teachers, or one teacher and one assistant, with a group of approximately 10 children. The program is 1.75 hours per day, from 9:00am to 10:45am. The program is offered in 7 or 8-week blocks, in the spring, fall and winter. All program policies regarding safety, emergency, enrollment and registration procedures, as well as any other policies stated in this handbook by Mi Pequeña Academia Preschool.

School hours

Mi Pequeña Academia's Spanish Immersion Preschool (MPA) is intended for children ages 15 months to 5 years. We are open Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. only. Children may attend 2, 3 or 5 days a week.

Closed Holidays

- Labor Day
- Indigenous People's Day
- Veterans day
- Thanksgiving Break (Wednesday open until 12:15 p.m., Thursday and Friday closed)
- Winter Break (*MPA reserves the right to close one or two days prior to and after the holidays -Christmas and New Year's-, depending on the days these festivities fall on each annual calendar*)
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Patriot's Day
- Memorial day
- Juneteenth (when it falls on a weekday)
- Independence Day

Closed Days

- A Friday in January for the first Parent-Teacher conference.*
- A Friday in June for the second Parent-teacher conference.**
- A whole week prior to the beginning of the school year in August (closed for professional development and school clean-up/set-up)

- A Thursday and Friday in June (close for professional development and school clean-up/set-up for summer)

Special School Days

- First day of classes
- Back to School Night
- Multicultural Parade (Friday before Indigenous People's Day)
- * First Parent-Teacher conference in January
- Teacher Appreciation Day, May 4th. *School is open normal hours*
- ** Second Parent-Teacher conference in June
- Dia de la Family (Family Day)
- Graduation Day in June

** Parent-Teacher conferences are held during the weekday, the entire day. There is no class for children that day.

Unexpected Closings

Mi Pequeña Academia *will close or delay openings* during snow days following the public school designated "snow days". For the safety of our children and staff, we will follow the school closings and delays of the Melrose Public Schools or if the staff isn't able to arrive safely to work. Snow Days will *not* be re-embursed. However, MPA reserves the right to remain open or close considering the school's circumstances. On a rare occasion our center may be forced to close due to a situation beyond our control (e.g., ice storm, electrical outage, no water service). Every attempt will be made to inform parents of an emergency closing. We let parents know about closings and delays via email and through the application Brightwheel, which we use for daily communication.

Enrollment Procedures

When a family is interested in enrolling their child(ren) at MPA, we will schedule a tour at a date and time that is most convenient for both the family and our staff and students. The tour will be conducted by the Director, Administrator or other designated staff member. The Guide and family will meet at the Director's office afterwards and respond to any questions and concerns the family may have. If they believe that MPA is a good fit for them, the Director will email a Child Enrollment Packet to be filled out electronically, and a start date will be arranged. The Parent Handbook will also be shared for review, as the family must sign an agreement with all of MPA's policies stated in the handbook.

The family will be asked to submit all the forms in the Child Enrollment Packet *signed*, printed out or electronically, along with the required medical and immunization records, before the start date in order to complete registration.

Child's Forms

- Child Enrollment Packet, which includes:
 - Admission Form
 - Developmental History and Background Information
 - First Aid and Emergency Medical Care Consent Form*
 - Emergency Card*
 - Transportation Plan and Authorization*
 - Photographic Release Form*
 - Additional Information - Spanish Language and Expectations of the Program
 - Policies and Tuition Agreement

**Shall be updated annually by the parents to keep the student's records current.*

Medical Forms

- Immunization Record
- Last physical exam
- Evidence of lead screening test within the last year
- **Other health care forms that are pertinent to providing care such as doctor orders for specific medications, Epi-pen, and individual healthcare plans, when applied.**

Registration and Tuition

Registration is open all year round depending on availability. There is a one-time, non-refundable, \$125 registration fee.

Monthly Tuition (September 2024 - August 2025)

(8:00am to 4:00pm)

\$2,830 for 5 days (\$2,547 for one sibling)

\$1,822 for 3 days (\$1,640 for one sibling)

\$1,349 for 2 days (1,214 for one sibling)

Tuition Payment

- **Monthly** -Tuition is due on the first day of the month for the current month.
- **Prepay** -From time to time we offer a small number of spots available to families of *full time students to prepay the entire school year (10 months from September to June)*. Please ask for availability. See **prepay policy** for details.
- **Prorated Tuition** -A monthly tuition rate must be paid in full unless the child is starting on or after the third week of the month. In this case, tuition will be prorated.

Sibling discount

(see tuition rates above)

A 10% discount of the base tuition rate (no after school rate discount) is offered to families with more than one child enrolled. This applies to only one sibling, attending the least amount of days. Prepay discount is not available for siblings.

Additional Enrollment Fees

- A one-time non-refundable registration fee of \$125 is due before the child's first day of class. If a child is withdrawn then re-enrolls at a later date, a second enrollment fee will be expected.
- *A deposit equal to one month's tuition to reserve the space. This deposit is applied to tuition in the last month of the child at MPA.* Each year a new contract is signed and the deposit rolls-over to reserve a space for the next school year, until the child's last month at MPA.
- First month of tuition prior to the start day.

Notes regarding tuition and fees:

1. *Deposits and tuition are non refundable.*
2. *There may be additional fees for field trips and other programming options throughout the school year.*
3. *We usually start a child on the first scheduled day of each month. However, if a child must start at a different time, we prorate tuition for that month only if starting in the third week of the month.*
4. *The deposit will be applied toward your last month's **balance**. Please note that tuition payments are adjusted **yearly**.*

Additional Tuition Policies

A \$15 fee is charged for late tuition payments. *This late fee will be applied for every week thereafter until the overdue tuition is paid in full.* Special payment arrangements may be made in advance with the director. A service fee of \$30 will be charged for any returned checks.

Tuition is expected for days your child may be absent due to illness, family emergencies, doctor visits, hospitalizations, vacations, or any other reason. Please note that tuition rates do not change in the event of a month including a holiday. **We do not trade a scheduled day for another day.**

Withdrawal From The Program/Cancellation of Contract

Parents are required to give **two months written notice** of their intention to withdraw *permanently* their child from the program. *All tuition and deposits are non-refundable.* One month of tuition must be paid and the last month is partially covered by the deposit made at the time of registration.

In the case that the cancellation of the contract is done unexpectedly, the deposit will not be refunded and the last month must be paid in full.

In the case the child must be withdrawn temporarily, the deposit credit can be used to place him/her on the waiting list for when he/she is able to return, or whenever there is another spot available within the same school year. **For a maximum of 10 months**, and depending on the child's age and family interest.

Summer Sessions Tuition and Enrollment

July and August are considered summer months for our optional summer sessions. Enrolled families may choose to skip summer sessions and return in the fall for the next school year, or choose one of the two months. Summer tuition is the same as the regular monthly rate and is due on the first day of each month. If we do not receive notice from parents, by email, Brightwheel message, or completed form, regarding their summer plans, MPA will assume the child will be attending, and the invoice will be issued with no refund option.

Communication with Parents

Since we want to create a strong relationship with our families we strive to maintain ongoing communication with parents. Using the application Brightwheel, we like to keep families informed of the daily experiences of their children as well as any other notifications and reminders pertinent to the child.

We maintain a log for each child where we write down our observations of him/her, which then is used to make a descriptive assessment of this child's progress and achievements. We will periodically share this assessment with the child's family. Twice a year we will have Parent-Teacher conferences (See School Hours).

We encourage families to share their ideas, concerns, and comments with us, in person or by email, and to visit the program during the hours their children are attending Mi Pequeña Academia.

Parents must inform Mi Pequeña Academia of any of the following:

- Any changes on:
 - address and/or phone numbers, or e-mail address
 - insurance coverage,
 - parent/guardian employment,
 - health/immunizations up-dates
- Any relevant changes in the life of the child that may be impacting him/her emotionally such as a death in the family, divorce of parents, a parent prolonged travel, pregnancy, etcetera.
- Any other pertinent information related to your child in areas such as *therapeutic, educational, social and support services received by the child*, in order to support the transitions and coordinate with services offered by other providers.

Mi Pequeña Academia will inform parents IN THE EVENT of any of the following:

- Change in educators in the program
- If there has been an injury and first aid has been administered
- If any communicable diseases have been identified
- If there have been any cases of abuse or neglect
- If there has been a change in program policy or procedure
- If any pets will be in the premises
- If there are any herbicides or pesticides used on the premises

Website

www.mipequenacademia.com is our website address. Any updates on schedule, tuition and community activities will be posted on our website.

Child Guidance

We hire highly qualified teachers to be part of our team. We strive at providing the best care for all children, paying special attention to each child's unique learning experience. *Most importantly, we understand that children are new to the world and everything is new to them. Children are learning how everything works and how to interact with others. They live in the present and are motivated by their unique emotions, needs and wants. Therefore, our staff is ready to guide children with knowledge, patience and love, towards identifying such emotions, needs and wants, so children can then express themselves in healthier and more effective ways.*

Because of the nature of our Spanish immersion program and curriculum, we are aware that children may experience anxiety in the beginning, which may be expressed in different forms of behavior. Our teachers are trained on recognizing such behaviors and implementing strategies that allow children to find alternative ways to express themselves, and to slowly feel comfortable using the new language for communication in the classroom.

In order to communicate effectively with children, especially with children new to the Spanish language, teachers may use flash cards, sign language, and body language. *ONLY when strictly necessary will a teacher use English with a child*, for example during a moment of continuous conflict, greatly emotional distress, or physical aggressiveness. In such cases, the child will be spoken to in private and the teacher will calmly and lovingly communicate with the child (or children) to try to solve the conflict.

Through the use of positive and consistent techniques that allow children to identify their emotions, needs and wants, we encourage child self-control, self-direction,

self-esteem and cooperation. The goal is to guide children towards making appropriate choices by themselves, and not rely on adults to make behavioral decisions for them.

As per EEC regulations, we are required to state that Mi Pequeña Academia prohibits:

1. Spanking or other corporal punishment of children
2. Cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical
3. Abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment
4. Depriving children of outdoor time, meals or snacks
5. Force-feeding children or making children eat against their will
6. Using food as a consequence
7. Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; or forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or forcing a child to remain on the toilet, or using other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.
8. Confining a child to any piece of equipment
9. *Timeout*

Transitioning to & within the School

As children begin their unique experience at Mi Pequeña Academia, parents may want to adjust their schedule for the first several days to personalize the transition based on family styles and needs. Mi Pequeña Academia is very sensitive to unique family styles, and we understand that every child may need something different, while emphasizing our own guidelines we will make for a successful transition. It's important for children to become as comfortable as possible. Predictability is comforting to children.

New families are encouraged to do drop-off at 8am on their first day, and are welcome to spend some time in the classroom with their child before morning snack begins.

The first week of the school year is a time for children to become familiar with the teachers, classrooms, routines and the environment. Children usually adapt very quickly to the new environment in Spanish, but we will speak in English with the child if we find it necessary to connect that way. We will also give lots of TLC to a child who is having a difficult time engaging or is suffering from separation anxiety.

Parent Orientation Nights are scheduled for the first week of the school year, when everyone is back from vacation and most parents are able to attend. This is a mandatory meeting for all new parents and strongly suggested for returning parents. It is an evening we use to review important policies and procedures, curriculum, and answer any questions that parents may have.

A positive transition ensures success and a productive beginning leads to the ultimate experience. When a transition is smooth and children are excited to come to school, everything else flows and learning happens.

Other transition suggestions and ideas:

- 1. Talk about Mi Pequeña Academia.** Tell your child about all of the fun things they will do. Read books about going to preschool, read bilingual books to share your enthusiasm about learning Spanish, go shopping together and pick out a new backpack and/or lunchbox. They will sense your excitement! Talk to them about their teacher and new friends, and assure them that they are in good hands and secure while you are away.
- 2. First Day of School.** It's important to develop a goodbye routine. We suggest you do something like a kiss and a hug, a high five or a fist bump upon arrival at school. It is a good idea to have your routine established before the first day of school. We recommend you talk about what to expect upon arrival at

school: “Mom or Dad will sing you in and then you will walk into the school with the teacher.” Also, talk about things your child may be looking forward to doing on the first day at school.

There may be tears and it may be challenging at first, but all of our staff are well trained to help with the morning drop-off. We recommend you walk with them up the door rather than carrying them and keep the goodbye short and sweet. **Always say goodbye so they don't feel insecure and reassure them that you will return.**

3. **Stay in touch.** Feel free to call or email your director after drop off instead of going into the school. Staying connected with us will help you and your child feel connected.
4. **Play Dates.** Invite a friend from school to do a playdate or go to a park. We connect families via email for this purpose.

Back To School Night Meeting

It will be scheduled for the first week in September. It may be virtual. Attendance is mandatory for all new parents and strongly suggested for returning parents. It will be a night to review important policies and procedures and to answer any questions that you may have regarding your child's transition to a new classroom.

Annual Transition to a New Classroom

Mi Pequeña Academia operates on a 10-month school year calendar, with two summer sessions of 3 or 4 weeks each (July and August). Parent conferences are held twice a year (January and June). End of school year parent conferences are designed to provide parents with a view of their child's growth during the school year. Parents receive an observation form containing many examples of how the child has developed in all areas of learning.

During transition periods, children will have the opportunity to spend a few hours in their new classroom so they can get comfortable with their new surroundings. The process to move up to a new classroom within the school year takes about 2 weeks.

If a toddler is close in age to be placed in the preschool classroom (2.5 to 2.8yrs), and is developmentally ready, a *Developmental Placement Form* must be filled out prior to moving the child to the preschool classroom.

At the end of the school year, each child will participate in (at his or her own comfort level) a Graduation Ceremony. During this ceremony, we celebrate the completion of the previous year and look forward to moving on to a new classroom and new teacher, or to a new school for the Pre-Kindergarteners.

Over the summer months, every teacher will make contact with his or her new class of children.

Transition to Kindergarten

Every child at Mi Pequena Academia will leave at age 5 ready to initiate a new big stage in his/her life. Some children may spend close to 2 years in Guerreros, depending on their birth date. We follow state standards for early childhood education to ensure that every child practices and develops the necessary skills in preparation for Kindergarten. Since we understand and respect the individual rhythm at which every child develops, our main focus is on the process rather than the achievement itself. We don't "rush" children to grow. Through continuous observation we keep track of the strong skills of each child, and subtly but proactively generate opportunities for exercising the developing skills. In the Pre-K classroom we dedicate valuable time to the practice of letter recognition, reading and writing in both English and Spanish.

Parents are welcome to ask teachers to complete Kindergarten Information forms. Children participate in Graduation and celebrate the successful completion of Preschool and the exciting new world of Kindergarten and Elementary School.

Referral Services

We are aware that there are children who have unique needs that are atypical for children of their age and may not be within the expertise of the general education of our teachers. Therefore, there might be a time when the child's teacher(s), the parent, and/or the director recognize a consistent need or problem exhibited by the child. This recognition of discrepancy in the child's social, emotional, behavioral, and/or physical ability at his or her age may signal the need for additional support through a referral. In this case, the director and the student's teacher may supply the parent with information on further evaluation.

Since our goal is to help every child be successful at our program, we do everything we can to make that happen, but we need the parent's consent and involvement. Therefore, *these are the steps we will conduct to assist a child who presents a concern:*

1. Recognition period: *the director and teacher will call a meeting with the parents to notify them of the concern. The teacher will provide examples of the child's work and/or anecdotal classroom notes regarding the child's needs. In the meeting, the director, the teacher and the parents should explore:*
 - a. *Is the issue a recurrent problem or new? Parents are best able to present invaluable insight into the knowledge, skills, and needs of their child.*
 - b. *Is the issue constant? All children may exhibit unique needs or problems at some point but it may only be an isolated episode for that day. The teacher*

will document any issue that is constant, providing dates and information about behavior of concern or skill deficit exhibited by the child.

- c. *Is the issue appropriate for children of this age? Our teachers will judge based on their strong understanding of the cognitive, behavioral, and physical development levels of the different developmental stages.*
2. Developing a Plan of Action: When possible, the teacher, director and parents will develop a plan of action and document it along with strategies to be used with the child, and progress.
3. Ongoing observation and assessment: The teacher, with support by the director and assistant teacher (when available), should continue to collect child work samples and keep assessment data relevant to the child's unique needs. Because it is critically important, the teacher will document all actions and strategies used in the classroom and the impact on the child.
4. Support for families: As much as possible, all teachers will seek out training to develop the skills for supporting the social and emotional development of all the children in our care.
5. Notification of unsuccessful Plan of Action: The child's parents will be kept informed of any changes in the child's progress. If the teacher and director, after a period of time, determine the problem cannot be controlled with simple classroom interventions, the director and teacher will notify the parents of the need for a referral.
6. Written Notice: The director and teacher will provide a written notice to the appropriate administrator of special education.
7. Referral resources: Mi Pequeña Academia will offer parents as much assistance as possible during the process for referral. Parents will be provided with adequate information such as phone numbers of who they can contact, reason for referral, summary of observations, and the previous efforts to accommodate the student's needs. Information of Early Intervention Services will be given to parents of children under the age of three. The director and teachers involved will document any procedures taken by the parents. All referrals, meetings, conferences or relevant actions will be documented in a written record to be placed in the child's file.

In general, parents are given a written progress report at the teacher-parent conferences that happen twice a year, one in December and the other in May. Additional conferences are always available to the parents if there are any questions or comments they would like to discuss with the teachers and director.

Termination & Suspension Policy

Mi Pequeña Academia reserves the right to suspend or terminate services for irreconcilable differences. These differences may include but are not limited to: refusal to pay tuition owed, lack of parental cooperation, or the preschool's inability to meet the student's needs. (See Referral Services)

In cases revolving around behavior, all efforts will be made to resolve conflicts in a timely and professional manner to AVOID suspension or termination through the following steps.

1. The Director will meet with the parents to discuss other options
2. The Director will provide referrals for evaluations and services
3. MPA Educators will pursue consultation and training for challenging behaviors
4. MPA will work with the parents to develop a behavioral intervention plan that can be implemented at home and in school for consistency.
5. Parents will be offered specific steps and requirements for re-enrollment and admission back into the program on a case by case basis. Parents will be notified verbally by the Director with written notification to follow immediately.

Child Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

Drop-off

Between 8:00am and 8:30am. Upon arrival, the person dropping off must sign the child in, registering the time of arrival on the roster form. A staff member will be waiting at the lobby to receive the child and walk him/her to the classroom.

A later start of the day for any child may be disruptive of the child's routine and the group's routine. By 9am, we do a headcount and follow the roster to know the total number of children at school and per classroom. Therefore, when a child arrives past 9:00am, it is disruptive to the routine of the child, and it may also confuse the teachers who have already done headcounts and are already immersed in the routine. We understand that appointments or other morning unexpected situations may arise, and we want to be flexible when possible. Please keep in mind:

- **If you may schedule a morning appointment, please notify us the day before at the latest. The latest arrival time is 10:00am.**
- **If an unexpected situation arises, please be aware that the latest arrival time is 9:30am.**

Pick-up

Between 3:30pm to 4:00pm. A staff member will be at the lobby waiting to bring a child to the parent picking up.

Late Pick-up Policy

We care about the wellbeing of our children as they are our focus, but we also care very much about our staff and like to be fair to them. Therefore, we want to ensure that all children are picked up on a timely basis in order for our staff to also leave the school on time and return home with their families. If you are late, a late pick up fee will be issued. A late pick-up fee of **\$1.00 per minute** will be charged for any child picked up after business hours, meaning it will start at 4:01pm. This fee is paid directly to the teacher who remained with your child. If payment is not made in cash at the time of pick-up, administration will issue an invoice through **Brightwheel** for all outstanding late pick-up dates. If late pick up occurs more than three times, the director will call a meeting to discuss additional fees for any future late pick up.

First Day for Newly Enrolled Families

The first day of class is an important time for both child and parents and we want to assist you during the initial drop-off. We ask newly enrolled parents to:

- Arrive at 7:50 a.m., *before drop-off time*, on the first day. Park and walk the child into the center. (See Safety -Parking Lot and Street Parking-)
- Spend a few minutes helping your child settle in the classroom and then say your Goodbyes.
- Never sneak out! It is best to leave a child crying after a kiss and a hug than leaving the child wondering what happened with his/her parents. It is crucial for the child's development of trust with the teacher.

What to bring on the first day?*

- ☐ A package of diapers, wipes and diaper cream (if necessary)
- ☐ Lunch and afternoon snack, with ice-packs. We warm up food if needed.
- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ Ballet slippers (or other type of indoor shoes **NO CROCS**)
- ☐ Two sets of extra cloths (seasonal)
- ☐ Pacifier, *blankie*, stuffed animal, or any special item your child sleeps with.**
- ☐ Prior to the first day, please bring or email: a photo of the child, plus a photo of the child's family.

Everything labeled please!

Pick-up *then* return to school policy

We understand that sometimes children have doctor's appointments during the day and must be picked up from school. However, for the safety of our children and in order to maintain attendance records at MPA, we cannot admit a child who has been picked-up during the day (anytime between normal hours) to return to school later the same day. We encourage families to schedule appointments accordingly.

Safety (Parking Lot & Street Parking)

Drop-off and pick-up must occur at the exact designated times each day, making a carline (see Drop-off and Pick-up) for families who drive. However, when occasional drop-off or pick-up occurs outside the time-window, due to a special situation, parents must be aware of the following:

- We have enough parking spaces for our staff members in our parking lot, but you may use these for quick drop-off or pick-up when a space seems available.
- Never park on Melrose Street. Please use the street parking on Main Street only. Please don't exceed the amount of time allowed.
- Park on the right side of the road so students will not have to cross the road on Melrose Street.
- Always turn off your car when parking for walking into the building.
- Always use the entrance on Melrose Street.
- Always hold your child's hand when crossing the streets, or in the parking lot.
- Always make sure your child doesn't run ahead or behind you upon arrival and pick up.
- Do not leave children unattended in the car. If needed, please call the school and we may be able to assist a student you are dropping off/picking up in or out of the car.
- Always follow the enter/exit signs in our parking lot, as well the city signs for permitted street parking and times.

Rest times

It is required that students in a full-day program are allotted time to rest daily. This is important for a child's health and wellbeing. Such time also allows a child to "re-energize" and develop self-control. The child does not "have" to sleep and may have teachers prepared *quiet activities* available to do on their mat. The center will supply a mat for each child. MPA will provide each child a sheet and blanket at the beginning of the year (see Clothing & Supplies).

We encourage parents to supply their child with a favorite stuffed animal or additional blanket for this time.

Food

During each class, a nutritious morning snack is provided. Please note that we have a nut-free environment. If your child has food allergies or dietary restrictions, please let our staff know.

If a child is to bring sugary items, we ask parents to bring enough for all the children in the group to avoid conflict between the children. We do discourage parents from sending in such items as children need nutritious foods to stay healthy.

At special occasions like birthday celebrations we encourage families to send/bring healthy options for food for all children; avoid sugars, sweets and pay attention to portions and sizes according to the age of children. If you wish to bring snacks to celebrate your child's birthday and share with the class, we strongly encourage you to bring Abe's Mini Muffins, which are often available at Whole Foods. These muffins are free of milk, eggs, nuts, sesame, soy, and pea protein. Plus, they're delicious!



Milk Bottles Policy

Mi Pequeña Academia does not store large quantities of milk for individual children on the premises. If your child is enrolled in one of our **Toddler classrooms**, milk must be sent daily in a **bottle with a straw and lid**. Children will drink their milk after lunch while seated upright, baby bottles with nipples are not permitted. We recommend sending the bottle in a cooler bag to keep it fresh throughout the day.

Outside objects (Gum, Food, Toys, etc.)

Please refrain from allowing children to bring personal toys or objects of any kind into the classroom unless otherwise instructed by the teachers. We are not responsible for any loss or damage of such specific items.

Clothing / Supplies

Diapers and Extra Clothes

Parents of Toddlers (and of any child not yet toilet trained) must provide an adequate supply of diapers and wipes. ALL parents should also provide 2 (two) complete changes of clothing and appropriate outdoor wear, including boots and snow pants (winter months). In the summer, additional appropriate seasonal clothing is required. When your child begins potty training please remember that outfits with zippers or buttons or with a belt can be frustrating.

Bedding

Mi Pequeña Academia will provide sheets and a blanket for each child at the start of their enrollment. Each child's sheet and blanket is saved in each child's labeled basket for the week. Sheets and blankets are sent home on the child's last day of the week to be washed.

Shoes

Mi Pequeña Academia has a No Shoe-Policy since we want all children to feel comfortable during the daily activities, and in order to ensure the cleanliness of the space. We ask that children wear Yoga/dance slippers at the center, which will be provided by the parents, and should be left in the school while enrolled in the program. Other similar indoor shoes are acceptable.

Children change their shoes into slippers at arrival, and wear their shoes again when going outdoors. At the end of the day, children are sent home wearing their shoes.

Labeling

Please label ALL of your child's belongings to avoid confusion and dress children in play clothes suitable for the weather.

Appropriate clothes to wear at school

When children play, paint, and eat, they get dirty! Please dress your child with comfortable and inexpensive clothing when coming to school. We change your child's clothing if they are soiled or wet only, and we send a note via Brightwheel to bring an additional extra set of clothing to replace next time.

Children potty training must maintain several extra underwear at school. If we run out of underwear at school, a pull-up will be put on instead. We will make sure to send reminders to parents to bring underwear replacement in order to avoid the use of a disposable pull-up.

We have extra pieces of clothing at MPA that children can borrow in case of an emergency when they have run out of extra clothes in their own basket. We ask parents to wash at home and return them to school clean. We do not lend underwear.

For your child's protection outside, rubber-soled shoes or sneakers work best.
Please no flip-flops, jellies, or sandals.

Toileting and Diapering Plan

- ❖ Toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.
- ❖ A child wearing diapers to class should bring at least 2 (two) sets of extra clean clothes to be kept at school.
- ❖ ***Although it is a great alternative and valuable initiative for families, we cannot have children wearing cloth diapers, sorry.***
 - Diapering and toileting areas are separated from food areas.
 - A supply of clean, dry diapers adequate to meet the needs of the children is maintained.
 - Each child's supply of diaper cream, wipes, and powder will be labeled with the child's name and used only for this child.
 - Staff will wear disposable gloves when changing diapers; these will be disposed of after each diaper change.
 - Each child's diaper is changed when wet or soiled.
 - The changing table will not be used for purposes other than diaper changing.
 - The changing surface will be smooth, intact, and impervious to water. It will be washed and disinfected after each use and diapers will be disposed of in plastic bags and placed in a lined, covered trash bin.
 - A disposable covering is used on the changing surface which shall be; of adequate size to prevent the child from coming in contact with the changing surface; be changed after each child has been diapered and disposed of in a closed container. This container will be emptied at least daily.
 - Staff and children will wash their hands with liquid soap and running water, using friction after each diaper change and/or toileting.
 - Hands will be dried with paper towels.
 - Children will be toilet trained in accordance with the requests of their parents and consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities.
 - Children will dry their hands with paper towels.
 - Bathroom surfaces will be washed with soap and water and disinfected on a daily basis.

- Soiled clothing will be placed in a sealed plastic bag and sent home to be laundered.
- Children will not be disciplined for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet or forced to remain in soiled clothing, or to remain on the toilet. We will not use any unusual or excessive practices for toileting.
- Teachers will be available to assist parents in the potty-training process.
- When children need to use the restroom, teachers will direct them there. Teachers will help a child who asks, unless otherwise instructed by parents.

Potty Training Tips

If your child is potty training at Mi Pequeña Academia we request you send in 4-5 changes of underwear, pants, socks and at least one other pair of shoes. We will communicate via Brightwheel when we need parents to send replacements and make sure that they have the right number of recommended changes. Please let us know when you're planning to begin potty training. This can be a challenging time for many children, and it's important that we stay in close communication to support your child consistently at home and at school.

*"Using the toilet is a very natural and gradual process that develops at the child's pace, rather than when the parent decides the child is going to be toilet 'trained'."*¹

At MPA we believe in the effectiveness of following the signs of physical and emotional readiness. Examples of emotional readiness are: a child...

- is able to follow instructions,
- shows more awareness of his/her surroundings,
- can express feelings and wants (some children become aware of a wet or soiled diaper and like to be changed).

Examples of physical readiness are: a child...

- can sit on a potty seat and get back back up without adult help,
- can pull down diapers or pants without adult help
- can control bladder and bowel muscles and keep diapers dry for at least 2 hours.

Besides those signs, parents should also be aware that toilet training is a process and requires time, focus, and patience. Therefore, they should ask themselves: "are we ready?". We encourage parents to take into consideration changes that may interfere with the process of potty training, or may affect the children emotionally such as having another child, traveling, moving to another house, etc. When such changes occur, parents should wait to start supporting their child's potty training process until their routine has resettled.

¹ [A Montessori approach to toilet training.](#)

It is important to *be consistent* and *not* switch between diapers and underwear. When you decide to make the move to underwear, do it! You will need to plan for trips to the potty and will soon learn where all the public bathrooms between home and your regular destinations are. We encourage families to read the article [A Montessori approach to toilet training](#) to learn more about a natural and gradual process to potty training, once you and your child are ready.

Additional advice to support parents in the process:

- You may need to start by taking your child to the bathroom on a regular schedule until they are confident about telling you when they need to go with enough time to actually get there and get on the potty. We usually recommend taking the child every hour at first, unless they have recently drank a lot of fluid. Watch for signs they need to go (the pee pee dance or hiding in a corner for #2).
- Make it a big deal to pick out the underwear together- let them pick out their favorite characters as this is very motivating!
- **We believe that pull-ups are not that different from diapers, and tend to confuse the child and prolong the potty-training experience. We suggest skipping this step all together.**
- It is normal to have accidents! That is how they learn. Send in 4 - 5 extra pairs of underwear and clothes when your child is in the training process at school.
- If the child starts to display signs of "not being ready" (refusing to go and try at regular intervals), delay the training, and try again when they display signs of readiness.
- It may take longer to learn to do #2. This is normal! You will learn your child's poop schedule and look for signs that they are ready. When you see these signs bring them to the potty to "check".
- It may also take longer to stay dry at nap or night time. We suggest putting a diaper *underneath* the underwear. Try referring to it as your "nap diaper" or "sleep diaper" so it is "different" from a regular diaper. Lots of times children will want to be completely done with diapers once they have made the move to underwear. Try to limit fluid intake right before nap/bedtime and always have them do a "pee pee" check before. If your child can make it through nap/nighttime with a dry diaper on a regular basis, they may be ready to try wearing underwear at night, too!
- Make a really big deal about your child's potty success! Hugs and cheers go a long way!

This is such an exciting milestone! *¡Buena suerte!* (Good luck!)

Injury Prevention Plan

Every consideration will be taken to ensure the safety of your child while in our care. Should an injury occur, an *Incident Report* would be completed by the closest adult and signed by the director. A copy of this report will be sent home. The parents will be notified regarding any injury suspected of needing immediate care by a physician.

- Teachers are responsible for maintaining a safe indoor and outdoor environment for the children. Equipment and materials are checked daily and removed or repaired as necessary.
- Mi Pequena Academia is a smoke free environment.
- All toxic substances, poisonous plants, first aid supplies, medications, sharp objects, and other hazardous objects or substances are kept in a secure place, out of the reach of children, in childproof cabinets.
- All staff members hold current certification in Basic Pediatric First Aid and CPR.
- Teachers will carry a first aid kit with a list of medical emergency numbers for each child when going on a field trip or leaving the school grounds.
- In the case of an incident which requires first aid or emergency care, the teacher who tended to the child will fill out an injury report, which will be maintained in the child's file.
- The school injury log is maintained in the office. It holds all reports of injuries that have occurred during school hours. The director periodically reviews these records in order to identify possible problem areas.

Plan for Transportation

The following procedures have been established to ensure the safety of the children whenever they are being transported:

- Parents are responsible for the safety of their children as they are being transported to and from school.
- Teachers are not permitted to transport children to and from school for insurance liability reasons.
- In an emergency (in school or on a field trip), the child will be transported by ambulance, accompanied by one of the teachers, if possible, to the closest appropriate hospital.
- During off-site activities and trips, the center will hire a school bus transportation provider to transport the students and staff. Parents will be notified in writing prior to the trip and an Off-site Activities Permission Form must be completed in advance, granting permission for the child to be transported.

- In the event of a field trip or walking field trip, all children will wear identification that includes the school's name, address and phone number.
- If a parent volunteers to chaperone a field trip or Off-site activity and provides transportation for their child, Mi Pequeña Academia is not liable for any accidents incurred. The child must have a car seat.
- Attendance will be taken before and after each trip.
- There shall be a vehicle inspection after a field trip to ensure that no children remain in the vehicle.

Neighborhood Walks

Due to the location of our building in the City of Melrose, getting to know our neighborhood is an important part of our program. When the weather allows, we sometimes take children on short walks to Elli Pond and occasionally stay for a picnic, at snack or lunch time. We do occasional walks to places in the community close to our building, such as the grocery store, the bank, the pharmacy, police and fire department, and restaurants. Everytime we go outside the building, children will be accompanied by their lead teacher and a teacher assistant. Teachers must bring with them the Emergency Information Card of each child. Children must be granted parental permission to go out on these neighborhood walks.

An occasional and more organized visit to a place within our neighborhood may be considered an Off-site Activity, for which parents will be notified in advance and will be asked to sign a *Off-site Activities Permission Form*. It may require a prepaid fee.

Health and Safety Policies

Emergency Health Care Procedures conform with EEC regulations. Each classroom is supplied with a first aid kit, emergency numbers, health care policy and procedures. Mi Pequena Academia employs a Healthcare Consultant who is responsible for the implementation of all health-related policies and procedures. Your child's health and safety are of the utmost importance to us. In that regard and in compliance with EEC we have specific policies that have been drafted in order to keep the school environment a healthy one.

Allergies

Allergies are identified on the child's health forms and the teachers are aware of any known allergies for each child. This information is clearly posted in each classroom. It will be the responsibility of the director to keep this list up to date. If you provide us with an Epi-pen for your child, then please note that we need to have it stored in our First Aid Kit and it must have the original prescription label. We will need an

Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) from your doctor IF your child has a chronic health issue such as allergies, asthma, seizure disorder, diabetes, etc. The IHCP must include the symptoms, treatment, side effects, consequences of failure to treat and the plan to train staff members.

Minor First Aid

Staff members will administer minor first aid to a scrape or a cut by washing the wound with soap and water and applying a bandage.

Preventing the spread of infection

Our school operates for “well” children only. We are interested in preventing the spread of infection and thereby ensuring the health and well being of the children and staff attending each day. If your child has had any of the following symptoms, please keep them at home:

- A fever within the past 24 hours (101 above)
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting within the past 24 hours. ----*Please note that after three changes of diapers with diarrhea (loose smelly stool) parents will be contacted and the child must be picked up from school.*
- Thick mucus discharge from the nose
- Any contagious disease
- Any skin condition (rash) that has not been examined by a physician
- Conjunctivitis that has not been treated. ---*Please note our [pink-eye policy](#).*
- On any antibiotics for less than 24 hours
- Severe coughing
- Rapid or difficult breathing
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing. ---*Child should be taken to the doctor for a strep culture.*
- Excess fatigue
- Evidence of head lice or any other parasites

Pink-eye Policy

*The eye infection **conjunctivitis** (kun-junk-tih-VY-tus) — often called **pinkeye** — is common in young kids. It's usually contagious, and breakouts can sweep through preschools and playgrounds. But even teens and adults can get pinkeye.*

*Pinkeye is an inflammation of the **conjunctiva**, the white part of the eye and the inner eyelids. It's a minor infection and although it might look bad, it usually isn't serious.*

Still, if your child shows signs of pinkeye, it's important to see a doctor. Some kinds of pinkeye go away on their own, but others need treatment.²

MPA's policy states that a child that develops a pink-eye *and discharge* at school, or arrives at school with a pink-eye *and discharge*, will be sent home. The child can return to school 24 hours after the eye has cleared out or with a doctor's note stating it isn't contagious.

Plan for Meeting the Needs of the Mildly Ill Child

If your child arrives at school with symptoms of illness or disease, such as fever of 101 degrees or greater, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, unusual behavior, or any other of the symptoms listed above, the child will be sent home. *For the well-being of all of the children and staff at Mi Pequeña Academia, these policies will be strictly enforced. We rely heavily on all parents to exercise good judgment in this matter.*

Diarrhea Policy

After a child experiences diarrhea a second time within the same day, parents/guardians will be contacted and the child must be picked up. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Should a child become ill at school, a parent or emergency contact person will be notified and the child will be isolated from the other children. They will be made comfortable with quiet activities and under the supervision of a staff member at all times, until they are picked up. Parents should notify the school of any contagious illnesses and subsequent absences. *The child is not allowed to return to the center until symptoms are free for a period of 24 (twenty-four) hours.* Students may return earlier if they have a signed note for their physical stating that they may return to group care.

When a student is absent due to illness, please contact the center to inform the staff that the student will not be attending. Parents are to notify the center when their child has a communicable disease or condition that may have an impact on other students in the center's care. Parents will be notified in writing of a communicable disease or condition, if it has been confirmed in their child's classroom.

Administering Medication

Mi Pequeña Academia will administer prescription medication to students as directed by their physician. Medication will be stored in a safe and secure location

² <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/conjunctivitis.html>

out of the reach of children. Medication must be in the original prescribing container and must include the student's name, medication name, dosage, and expiration date.

Mi Pequeña Academia will administer non fever reducing over the counter medication to students with a note from their physician, ONLY. The medication must be in the original container and show the expiration date.

Mi Pequeña Academia will administer non-prescription topical ointments, such as diaper cream and sunscreen, with parents signed permission.

Mi Pequeña Academia will maintain and administer all emergency medications for students under our care. In the event that a student requires emergency medication (such as inhaler, EPI-pen, Benadryl) the student's parents will be contacted by phone following the medication administration.

When possible, all unused, discontinued, or outdated medications will be returned to the parents and documented in the student's record. When returning medication to the parent is not possible or practical, all medications will be destroyed in accordance with the Department of Public Health Drug Control Program, and documented in the student's file.

Mi Pequeña Academia will not administer the first dose of any medication to a student. Please request the form for Medication Administration that must be filled out and signed by the pediatrician. We cannot and will not administer medication without this form.

Infection Control

To minimize the spread of infectious diseases at school, children must be immunized as dictated by Massachusetts Law. Evidence of immunizations must be provided by parents, and filed in the child's record before the first day of school. We require all of our staff to be trained in the following infection control procedures:

1. Latex Free gloves will be worn whenever bodily fluids are involved.
2. The staff and children will wash their hands with liquid antibacterial soap and running water, using friction. Hands shall be dried using disposable towels. Staff and children will wash their hands at a minimum, at the following times:
 1. Before and after eating or handling food
 2. After toileting or diapering
 3. After coming into contact with bodily fluids or discharges (including sneezes, coughing)
 4. After handling animals or their equipment
 5. Before and after water play

3. In addition, educators must wash their hands
 1. Before and after administration of medication
 2. After performing cleaning tasks, handling trash or using cleaning products.
4. Staff will monitor hand washing.
5. Classroom and bathroom surfaces will be washed with soap and water and disinfected on a daily basis.
6. Toys, materials, doorknobs, fixtures and floors will be cleaned and disinfected daily.
7. A solution of ½ cup bleach to 1 gallon water will be made fresh each day or an approved disinfectant will be used for cleaning surfaces.
8. Disposable gloves will be provided and will be used whenever contact with bodily fluids occurs. The affected areas shall be disinfected; gloves will be thrown away in a lined covered container. Staff and children will wash hands after cleaning up the soiled area. Soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag, which will be sent home with the child.
9. All cleaning supplies will be kept in a secure place and out of reach of the children.
10. All staff will be trained in infection control before the start of the year.
11. Fabric toys and dress-up clothes will be laundered at least monthly.
12. Children are routinely asked to use and dispose of tissues and to cover their mouths and noses while coughing and sneezing.

Emergency Procedures

At School:

- In the case of a Fire, Earthquake or other disaster, Mi Pequeña Academia has emergency evacuation procedures in place for every child's safety. Mi Pequena Academia prepares for emergencies by conducting monthly fire drills. A Fire Drill Log is maintained, which documents the date, time, exit route, number of students, and effectiveness.
- All staff members hold current certificates in First Aid and CPR and are required to have a working cellular phone at all times. A complete First Aid kit is located in each classroom. In case of a minor injury to a child the teacher will tend to the child and administer first aid to the child. An injury report will be filled out, signed by the parent and placed in the child's file. All incidents are recorded in the school's injury log.
- In the event of a major medical emergency, while one staff member remains with the child, another will attempt to contact the parent. If a parent cannot be reached, a call will be made to the child's physician. Arrangements for transporting a child will be made at this time. The staff tending to the child at this time will travel with the child and will make all necessary decisions until a parent or guardian arrives. It is essential that all medical records and information be kept up to date for this reason, and that the parent signs all consent forms.

- There is an easily accessible MPA emergency kit in addition to the backpacks with the following supplies,
 - a. Emergency contact info for each child
 - b. Emergency medical treatment consent forms
 - c. Special medications needed by children
 - d. First aid
 - e. Toys and activities appropriate for indoor or outdoor situations
 - f. Clipboard for keeping track of child counts and pick-ups
 - g. Batteries and chargers for devices, flashlights, non-perishable food, water
 - h. Diapers, and warm clothing
 - i. Small trash can and garbage bags
 - j. Information for town and regional disaster procedures

On Field Trips:

A small first aid kit will always go with a group leaving the school premises, as well as emergency numbers for each child, medical information and a cellular phone. Each child will wear identification with the school's name, number and address. The same procedures will be followed for calling parents and transporting a child to the nearest hospital in the event of an emergency.

Evacuation Procedures

Room specific evacuation plans are posted in each classroom near the exits. In the event of an emergency, the director or assigned administrator is responsible for making all necessary phone calls and arrangements. In cases where it is safe to be outside the safe area is the triangular grassy park space by the nearby tennis courts. In cases where the safe area must be sheltered, teachers and students will shelter at the Rockland Trust bank building.³ Evacuation drills are conducted on a monthly basis and logged on a chart to be kept in the school records. Teachers will have, and bring with them classroom backpacks, Emergency Information Card for each child, and an attendance sheet.

1. Teachers will gather the children, count and confirm all students are accounted for, exit their classroom with children, and walk calmly to the building exit
2. Once safely outside and walking towards the designated safe area teachers will again make sure all students are accounted for.
3. Once at the designated meeting place, teachers will routinely check attendance and make sure that all children are accounted for.
4. Director will sweep the school to make sure all children and staff members are out of the building.

³ The branch management has agreed to accommodate all students and staff in an emergency.

5. Director will bring the emergency kit and meet teachers and children at the designated meeting place and check attendance sheets to make sure all children and teachers are accounted for.
6. Once all children and teachers are accounted for, if the building is deemed safe as in a practice drill, the director will accompany teachers and children back into the school. If the building is not safe the director will use their cellphone to contact parents for pick-up and use the emergency pick-up log to keep track of when, with whom, and where each child is picked up.

Shelter in Place and Lockdown Procedures

All staff are trained to respond to the situational needs brought on by various emergencies that require shelter in place and lockdown procedures. All staff are also trained to be able to turn on and off the mechanical systems for the building including heat and hot water. The emergency kit has supplies including food, water, blankets, flashlights, diapers, clothes and other necessities that are sufficient to maintain safety inside the building until a rescue team arrives. The staff will meet the unique needs of the shelter in place or lockdown situation using these procedures as an adaptable guideline.

1. As soon as the emergency begins the director will alert other staff by sending an emergency notice to the cell phones and calling out.
2. Teachers will gather the children to the safest area of the classroom or building floor then count and confirm all students are accounted for.
3. The director will make a 911 call or other appropriate emergency calls to authorities.
4. In the case of a lock-down the director will make sure the appropriate doors are locked, lights turned off, and window blinds are closed.
5. For the duration of the emergency teachers will account for each and care for the students, helping them stay calm and using appropriate activities to hold their attention. If the emergency is extended, the classroom backpacks and emergency kit will be used to maintain safety and health.
6. As soon as the emergency has stabilized the director will begin contacting parents.

Missing Child Procedures

The director is responsible for searching for any missing students. They will first get the details from the teacher who identified the missing student. All staff will be alerted and asked to make sure their students stay in whichever room they are currently in. After first checking the other classrooms, bathrooms, other closets/spaces in the building, and finally the outside playspace the director will confirm the student was indeed in attendance that day then contact the police and

the parents of the missing student. On field trips, the director maintains these responsibilities so that the teachers can pause any activities, group up, and continue to care for the rest of the students.

Plan for Various Emergency Situations

In the unlikely event that an emergency should arise at school, we have established the following contingency plans:

Fire, natural disaster, or situation necessitating the evacuation of the building:

- The classroom bag and emergency numbers will accompany the group outside.
- We will follow the emergency evacuation procedures and leave the building immediately.
- We will meet at the triangular grassy/open area by the tennis courts or Rockland Trust if there is inclement weather. The director will make necessary phone calls to parents and others.

Power outage or loss of heat

- If the duration of the outage (according to the local electrical supplier) is thought to be less than two hours the school will remain open.
- If the outage is likely to be greater than two hours (according to the local electrical supplier) and/or we determine we will not be able to keep the room temperature at 65 degrees we will cancel school and call parents immediately. If the lack of power results in the loss of telephone service, the school cellular phone will be used to make calls.

Loss of Water

- If the school experiences a loss of water, it is likely to be a problem that cannot be fixed immediately. If the school is unlikely to satisfactorily meet the requirements for toileting, flushing, diapering and hand washing, we are required to cancel school and contact parents immediately.

Emergency care of the children if confined to the building during a natural disaster

- Director is responsible for notifying all parents. Children will engage in appropriate activities until parents arrive to pick up.
- We will follow the shelter in place procedures. Extra food and water supplies are stored in the school. Extra clothing for each child is located in bags in each cubby.
- The director is responsible for the health and safety of all the children, and will supervise any first aid needs if required.

Confidentiality of Records

A written record of each child will be kept on file at Mi Pequeña Academia, which contains the following:

- Face Sheet containing personal information, names and addresses, emergency contacts, and admission information.
- Medical records including physical examinations, immunizations, and medication logs.
- All necessary consent, permission slips, and authorizations.
- Written progress reports.
- Individual programming plans for children with special needs.
- All pertinent correspondence between parents and the school or outside services.

All information contained in child records is confidential. Mi Pequeña Academia will not release information to anyone unrelated to the child without written parental permission. A log will be kept to record all those who have had access to a child's record. If a parent would like access to their child's file, they must give two business days notice.

Photographs and Publicity

Photographs of the children participating in our programs may be taken from time to time and may appear in newspapers, magazines, brochures or other publicity materials. Your permission for photographs including your child, to be used without compensation, is part of this agreement.

Policy for Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect

Every educator is a mandated reporter under M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A and must make a report to the Department of Children and Families whenever he/she has reasonable cause to believe a child in the program is suffering from serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon the child, including but not limited to sexual abuse, or from neglect, including but not limited to malnutrition, no matter where the abuse or neglect may have occurred and by whom it was inflicted.

Mi Pequena Academia operates the program in ways that protect children from abuse or neglect and from subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment including any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body, shaking, threats, or derogatory remarks

Educators are mandated reporters and must by law, report suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families and EEC if allegations involve a child while in the care of the program. Parents will be notified by the center of allegations of abuse and neglect involving their child while in the care of the program.

- All staff at Mi Pequena Academia will be trained in the skills of recognizing signs of abuse and /or neglect.
- All staff will document observation of suspected abuse or neglect.
- All staff can report directly to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or to the Director who will immediately contact DCF pursuant to Chapter 119, Section 51A of Massachusetts General Laws. The 51A form should be filled out before making the phone call since it covers the information needed for the oral report.
- The director will notify the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) immediately after filing a 51A report, or learning that a 51A report has been filed, alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of the program or during a program related activity.
- The school will cooperate in all investigations of abuse and neglect. These include identification of parents of children currently or previously enrolled in the program, providing consent for disclosure to EEC, and allowing the Department to disclose information to, any person and/or agency EEC may specify as necessary to the investigation of allegations and protection of children.

An allegedly abusive or neglectful staff member will be removed from teaching duties. The Director will call DCF and file a 51A; the Director will also call the Department of Early Education and Care. The staff member will not be allowed to work directly with children until the DCF investigation is completed and for such further time as EEC requires.

Changes in Policies

The fees, procedures, and policies stated in this handbook are subject to be changed at the discretion of the school administration. This Mi Pequeña Academia Parent Handbook was updated in May, 2026.

General Policies

Conflict of Interest

At MPA, we value the professionalism and dedication of our teachers in providing quality education and care for our children. It is important to clarify that our teachers are prohibited from engaging in certain outside activities at the request of parents.

While we understand that parents may seek additional support or services, such as babysitting, tutoring, or educational assistance, we cannot allow our teachers to participate in these activities outside of their professional duties at MPA. Engaging teachers in such activities can compromise the integrity of our educational environment, blur professional boundaries, and potentially create conflicts of interest. Therefore, we kindly ask parents to refrain from requesting or expecting our teachers to provide these services outside of their role at MPA.

Mi Pequeña Academia 2026 - 2027

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- Special School Days
- Closed Holidays
- Half day. MPA closes at 12:15pm
- Prof. Development (MPA closed)
- Parent Teacher Conferences
Parents only. School closed.
- Staff Meetings 4-6pm

Special dates and closed days

- 9/7 Labor Day
- 9/1 First day of school year
- 9/18 Back to school Zoom
- 9/25 School visit (4pm-4:30pm)
- 10/12 Indigenous People's Day
- 10/9 MPA Multicultural Parade @ 3:30
- 10/30 Dress-up Day
- 11/2 Día de los muertos
- 11/11 Veterans Day
- 11/25 Half-day
- 11/26-11/27 Thanksgiving weekend
- 12/19 Holiday Bonfire
- 12/23 Half Day
- 12/24-1/1 Winter vacation
- 1/18 Martin Luther King Jr
- 1/29 CLOSED First Parent-Teacher Conf.

- 2/12 Friendship Day
- 2/15 President's Day
- 3/26 Good Friday
- 4/19 Patriots' Day
- 5/4 Teacher appreciation day/week
- 5/15 Family Day
- 5/19 Picture Day
- 5/31 Memorial Day Observance
- 6/4 CLOSED Second Parent-Teacher Conf.
- 6/18 Juneteen Observance
- 6/23 Last day of school year
- 6/24-6/25 CLOSED for Prof. Development
- 6/26 Graduation Day
- 7/5 Independence day Observance
- 6/28 to 7/23 July Summer Month
- 7/26 to 8/20 August Summer Month
- 8/23-8/27 CLOSED for Prof. Development



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