Alcott School Early Intervention Program

Toddler Developmental Group PARENT HANDBOOK 2024-2025 School Year



535 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10552 Phone: 914-693-7677 Fax: 914-693-0386

www.alcottschool.org

Marilyn Donnellan, MS Ed, SBL
Director of Special Education
Email: mdonnellan@alcottschool.org

Contacts: Maureen D. Connolly, MS Ed. Ellie Cassanelli

Early Intervention Coordinator El Administrative Assistant

Alcott School is approved as a provider/evaluator of Early Intervention Program (EIP) services under active contract with the Westchester County Department of Health. EIP is a public program for children under three years of age who are suspected of having a developmental delay and/or disability. Potentially eligible children must be referred to the Westchester County Department of Health at 914-813-5094 to receive EIP services. A child's EIP eligibility can be determined only by state-approved evaluators under contract with Westchester County. All services must be authorized by Westchester County. All needed EIP services are identified in collaboration with the parent and approved by Westchester County. Westchester County will arrange for service providers to deliver authorized services. If EIP services are to be delivered in a child care or community location that requires a fee, the parent is responsible for these fees. EIP services are provided at no cost to parents. Health insurance may be accessed for approved services.

Alcott School Early Intervention



Dear Parents/Guardians:

Welcome to the Alcott School Early Intervention program. Alcott School began in 1968 as a Montessori Preschool and its mission to provide a quality educational experience for all children in a multicultural environment continues today. Since 1979 Alcott has offered special education classes in addition to its Montessori classes. The curriculum in all of our programs utilizes activities appropriate to the child's age and abilities and is designed to foster the child's competence and self-esteem. The classroom is set up by the teachers to present materials and activities that encourage each child's cognitive, language, motor, and social skill development.

This handbook contains important information that you will need to know. Please read the information carefully and refer to it throughout the school year. We look forward to working with you and your child.

Please feel free to contact me with your questions and/or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Maureen D. Connolly

Maureen D. Connolly, MS Ed. Early Intervention Program Coordinator

MC:mu

EI/TDG Booklet 2022-2023

~TABLE OF CONTENTS~

1.	Regulatory Oversight	•	•		•			•	•		•	•			4
2.	Board of Directors		•						•		•		•	•	4
3.	School Policy Information														
	What to Bring														5
	Photos/Favorite Objects From Home														5
	Visitor Policy														6
	Safety/Emergency Plans														6
	Emergency Drills														6
	Evacuation Plans														
	Safe Sheltering in Place														
	Procedures To Follow If Your Child \														
	School Bus Procedures														
	Children Who Do Not Take The Scho														
	In The Event Of a Medical Emergence	У													8
	Child Medical Forms and Medication														
	Snow Emergency/School Closing .														9
	Google Classroom														9
	Communication Notebooks														9
	Pocket Treasures														10
	Birthday Observance														10
	Snacks														10
	Diapering and Potty Training														10
	Playground/Gym														11
	Progress Reports/IFSP Meetings .														
	Therapy														
	Toddler Developmental Group Curri														
	Family Vacations					•	•			•					12
	Confidentiality and Access to														
	Amending Records														12
	Insurance/Medical Information .														12
	Prescription for Therapy														
	Eligibility Dates for El Programs .														
	Other Services Offered at Alcott .	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•			13
4.	Parent Involvement														
	Parent Teacher Conferences/Collabor	rativ	e te	eam	me	etii	ngs.								14
	Class parents														
<i>5</i> .	Appendix														

Alcott School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its policies or admission procedures.

1. REGULATORY OVERSIGHT

The Alcott School is affiliated with the American Montessori Society and is voluntarily registered with the New York State Department of Education. Alcott is a non for profit corporation chartered under the New York State Board of Regents. Both our Crane Road, Scarsdale and Dobbs Ferry sites are licensed as day care centers with the New York State Office of Family and Child Services. The Alcott School has oversight from the New York State Department of Education and the Westchester County Department of Health.

A copy of the Office of Children and Family (OCFS) regulations can be found in the lobbies of our locations.

Our licensor:

<u>Dobbs Ferry</u>
 Leslie Geathers

Telephone: 914-801-3253

New York State OCFS
Spring Valley Regional Office
117 E. Stevens Ave., 3rd floor
Valhalla, NY 10595

Telephone: (845) 708-2414

The OCFS Child Care Compliance Line is 1-800-732-5207.

2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alcott School is governed by its Board of Directors:

Debra Dalal Arlene Donegan Simrun Gialleonardo Debbie Mumford Susan Miron Schwartz

3. SCHOOL POLICY INFORMATION

BEFORE GOING TO SCHOOL:

Before leaving for school in the morning, please do an informal health assessment on your child. If your child has a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or is not acting well, please do not send your child to school. If your child has any symptoms once they are at school, you will be called to pick up your child.

WHAT TO BRING:

School is a place where children are encouraged to explore the environment and experiment with different kinds of materials. In order to promote these experiences, we recommend that you send your child in washable play clothes. In addition, please provide the following supplies labeled with your child's name on the first day of school:

- 1 sleeve of diapers (if needed)
- 1 box of wipes
- 1 backpack
- Please place the following items in a zip lock bag labeled with your child's full name:
 - (1) Shirt
 - (1) Undershirt
 - (1) Pair of pants or shorts
 - (2) Pairs of Underpants (if toilet trained)
 - (1) Pair of socks



Label all Items:

Please be sure to label all items with his/her full name. Please print the words in bold print with an indelible marker. In addition, label your child's coat, hat, shoes and any other removable clothing with his/her name. In this way, teachers can readily identify to whom these items belong.

PHOTOS/FAVORITE OBJECTS FROM HOME:

Making transitions and connections between school and home is important. To help with this transition, family photos from home will be used in school. Also, please feel free to take a photo of your child in school with his/her teacher to have at home. Please send in:

- 1 Photograph of your child
- 1 Photograph of your family which includes your child

For safety reasons, do not send your child to school wearing jewelry. Also, do not allow your child to bring candy or gum. Do not put your child on the bus with a pacifier or any food items, e.g., leftover breakfast toast, baby bottles, or sippy cups.

VISITOR POLICY:

Alcott School will require any and all visitors to the school to:

- 1. Sign in upon entry to the premises.
- 2. Indicate in writing the date of the visit and the time of entry to the school.
- 3. Clearly state in writing the purpose of the visit.
- 4. Present photo ID to have copied and put on file.
- 5. You will be given a visitor sticker to wear.
- 6. Sign out upon departure from the school indicating in writing the time of departure and return visitor badge.

SAFETY/EMERGENCY PLANS:

Your child's safety is very important to us. Children are supervised at all times during the program hours.

EMERGENCY DRILLS:

In order to be prepared for emergencies, we conduct monthly fire drills and two shelter in place drills per year. Our "One Call Now" system will be utilized in the event of an emergency to inform you of events and student collection locations.

EVACUATION PLANS:

Relocation may be necessary if the staff and students are unable to safely remain in the school building.

DOBBS FERRY LOCATION

- Primary evacuation site: Mercy College. Staff and children will proceed to 565 Broadway (formerly Our Lady of Victory Academy, now part of the Mercy College Campus) and into the school gym.
- Secondary evacuation site: Sacred Heart Church hall. Staff and children will safely walk down Broadway and enter the church which is at the intersection of Broadway and Ashford Avenue.

SAFE SHELTERING IN PLACE:

We have systems in place to immediately notify the staff and children of the need to shelter in place. All plans are available for review in the front office, however, for obvious reasons we will not make public where our students and staff will safely shelter should the need arise. Please note that although we hope emergency situations will not arise, should one occur, the safety and well-being of your children are of upmost concern to us. The children will believe that we are going on an adventure. The staff will bring food, water and other necessary supplies with them.

PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW IF YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABSENT:

- a.) If your child will be absent, please call the school office and give the reason for his/her absence.
- b.) Please do not send your child to school if you think she/he is ill. Please refer to the general illness guidelines outlined in the Medical Form Guide. If your child

cannot go out on the playground because of illness, she/he belongs at home. Please note: children must be fever free without medication, no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours prior to returning to school after an illness. Hospitalizations of any length require a doctor's note.

- c.) If your child gets hurt at home and as a result ends up with a cast, brace, stitches, staples, etc., he or she must return with a doctor's note clearing them to come to school and participate in all activities.
- d.) If your child is approved for bus transportation, also call the Bus Company to alert them your child will not be going to the school

If your child has been approved for bus transportation and the bus arrives at school and your child is not on it and no "absence message" has been recorded on the school voicemail, Alcott is required by the Westchester County Department of Health to call you to ascertain your child's whereabouts. **Please note**, if you do not contact us or the bus company and we cannot reach you, the bus company, after 2 consecutive days, will not come to your home.

SCHOOL BUS PROCEDURES:

The Westchester County Department of Health contracts with bus companies to provide transportation for children who are approved for this service. The name of the bus company that will be servicing the Alcott children for the 2024-2025 school year is:

Super Wheels (914) 613-8225



Alcott has no direct responsibility vis-a-vis this or any other bus company. The Bus Company and school, which service your child, are two <u>independent</u> organizations.

If your child is approved for busing, please refer to the attached Westchester County Department of Health "Preschool and Early Intervention Program Transportation Handbook for Parents" for complete information. See Appendix.

Bus drivers will only release a child to the care of his/her legal guardian or individuals whom you have designated to pick up your child in your absence. This information is provided on the Student Information Form (SIF) that you filled out. It is very important to update this information whenever there is a change.

Please note: <u>WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH</u> policy states that <u>if</u> no one is home to receive the child from the school bus (and the emergency contacts are also unavailable) the child is to be taken to CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES.

Please make sure someone is always at home to receive your child and that your emergency contact numbers are correct on busing forms. When numbers change, notify your Ongoing Service Coordinator, your child's teacher and the bus company.

For changes on any given day:

If your child does not require transportation or transportation plans change on any given day, **PLEASE**:

- 1. Call the bus company and alert them to the change.
- Attach a note to your child in such a way that it will not be pulled off. Write in the note what the changed plans are so that the teacher knows what to expect. (e.g., DO NOT PUT JOHNNY ON THE BUS AT 11:30. I WILL PICK HIM UP MYSELF.)
- 3. Write a note in the communication notebook with the date of the change of plans and what they are.



If a parent does not notify the school in writing of a change in dismissal procedure; e.g., another person comes to the school to pick up your child, the following will occur:

- a.) Staff will contact the parent by telephone to get written permission for release of your child.
- b.) Identification will be taken and photocopied of the person taking the child.
- c.) If parent cannot be reached by telephone, we will call someone on the emergency contact form, to contact parent/guardian.
- d.) Your child will stay in school until the parent/guardian contacts the school.

Please Note: Parents are required to fill out an emergency card with business numbers and 3 contact people and their telephone numbers. Parents are asked to give us their telephone and cellular numbers. Emergency cards are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The identification of all contacts are required. Your emergency contacts must be able to pick up your child within 30 minutes of being called.

For more permanent changes in bus pick up or bus drop off locations, please contact your Ongoing Service Coordinator (OSC) immediately. Your OSC will need to complete a new student information form (SIF) and will send it to the Department of Health and the bus company to make this change. The OSC will inform the school (Alcott) when the change is completed.

CHILDREN WHO DO NOT TAKE THE SCHOOL BUS:

For children who are brought to school and picked up at dismissal by their parents: Leave your child with the teacher of the class or teacher assistant only. *No child can be left unattended at any time.* Please be on time (or a few minutes early) for drop up and pick up. You must park in a parking space. The circle is only for the school buses. When you pick up your child, please do not linger and allow your children to play in the parking lot. Please hold your child's hand at all times in the parking lot.

IN THE EVENT OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY:

Children are transported to the nearest hospital. Children are transported to Dobbs

Ferry Hospital. You will be notified immediately of a medical emergency and where your child has been taken.

CHILD MEDICAL FORMS AND MEDICATIONS:

Please refer to the Medical Form Guide in your child's form packet for more information regarding physicals, immunizations, medication, allergies, etc.

SNOW EMERGENCY/SCHOOL CLOSING:



Inclement weather may sometimes necessitate closing school. Parents are asked to fill out the One Call Now COMMUNICATION FORM provided in the school enrollment packet. School closing will be sent via e-mail, text, and/or robo call. Please understand that delaying and/or closing is not something we do without a great deal of thought. Our primary concern is the safety of your children.

If we are already in school and the weather gets very bad or the power goes out, we will use our emergency contact system to inform you about closing early. Please be sure that your emergency and communication forms are updated and in the office so that we can reach you or the person you have designated to pick up your child. Please feel free to

come and get your child at any time if you are concerned about weather conditions.

For safety reasons, the bus companies do not like to operate in severe weather conditions. If the weather is severe, they may pick up the children early from school and take them home. Keep in mind that it usually takes 2 or 3 times longer for the children to arrive home in bad weather. Before we can send children out early, we must be sure someone will be waiting at home for them.

GOOGLE CLASSROOM:

Weekly Newsletters and classroom photographs can be viewed on your child's Google Classroom. A secure classroom will be set up and you will receive access to it from your teacher. Your child's photo will only be uploaded if we have your written consent. In addition to newsletters and photos, teachers will post songs and activities related to the themes as another platform for carry-over.

COMMUNICATION NOTEBOOKS:

Each child will be given a notebook, marked with his/her name. Each teacher or therapist will write in the book once a week about activities at school. This is to let parents know what is happening that week. Please be aware, these are brief communications as our teachers need to be spending time with your children while they are at school.

We encourage parents to write back about things that go on at home - simple things like "I took Johnny to the park today. He enjoyed the slide." or other events such as: "Danny has not been sleeping well - We got a new dog." In addition, if your child gets hurt at home (cuts, bumps, bruises etc...), please indicate this in the notebook. The staff performs daily health checks and we will call if we see something and it is not indicated

in the notebook.

POCKET TREASURES:

From time to time every child takes home something from school, either inadvertently or by plan. Often these items are very small in size like a tiny block or miniature toy, but frequently they represent a part of a set. If any unidentifiable objects turn up at your house, please return them to the school. We can tell you at a glance if they are important pieces of apparatus or random objects picked up from a friend.

BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE IN CLASS:



Children will be recognized in class on their birthdays. If you wish to send in a snack for your child's birthday, please speak with your child's teacher. Fresh fruit and vegetables are preferred. If parents choose another treat, such as cupcakes, they need to be small, store bought in a sealed

package with the ingredients clearly listed as well as allergens. Teachers will advise parents if there are dietary restrictions in the class. Please note that Alcott is a nut restricted facility. Alcott's Birthday Book Program is a fun and easy way to celebrate your child's special day. Ask your child to pick a favorite book, and then choose someone special in your child's life to visit us and read it in class. For safety reasons we cannot light birthday candles in the classroom or have balloons.

SNACKS:

Alcott provides snack consisting of fruit/veggies and something crunchy, such as Cheerios, Goldfish and veggie straws. We only serve water in a small open cup. You may send in a small reusable water bottle with a straw cup. We do not use baby bottles or sippy cups in school. If you send in a water bottle, please only send in water and not juice. Please note: Alcott maintains a nut-restricted environment. If your child has a specific diet, and you need to send in your own snack, please be sure to read all labels when sending snacks to school. This food must be sent in a sealed package with ingredients and allergens clearly listed from the manufacturer. Traces of peanut products are contained in such unsuspecting products such as Dunkin Donuts, M&M's & frosted Cheerios. Be sure to update your child's food allergies if they change during the year.

DIAPERING/POTTY TRAINING:

Children attending the Toddler Developmental Group do not need to be toilet trained. The staff changes diapers at least once during the session. We are unable to have parents or other family members/caregivers come in to change your child's diaper. Due to OCFS regulations, a child's diaper needs to be immediately changed when soiled. We do not initiate toilet training, however if your child is about 85% trained at home, we can start carrying over at school by encouraging your child to use the toilet at school. Due to staffing, we cannot take your child to the toilet at regular time increments, however we

can take your child upon arrival, during the session and before they leave for the day. Of course, if your child is at the point of indicating that they need to use the toilet, we will take them. The bathrooms are equipped with child sized toilets with a built in smaller seat. We cannot take portable potties in the classroom or in the bathroom.

PLAYGROUND/GYM:



Toddlers need time to develop gross motor skills and release their energy. Outdoor playground or gym activities are part of each day's routine. Please be sure to dress your child warmly in the winter and put on sunscreen in the summer. Children should wear rubber-soled shoes or sneakers which tie or Velcro in order to safely play on gym equipment. "Floppy" sandals are

dangerous and NOT permitted. Slip on shoes are not recommended. Socks should always be worn to prevent blisters and injury. Water shoes need to be worn for outdoor summer water activity. Crocs are not recommended, except for water play.

PROGRESS REPORTS/IFSP MEETINGS:

As a provider of Early Intervention services for your child, Alcott is required to write progress reports for each type of service we provide to your child every 6 months. These reports will be shared with you and your Ongoing Service Coordinator.

THERAPY:

In accordance with the revised rulemaking issued by NYS Bureau of Early Intervention, Alcott offers speech, occupational and physical therapy. These services will be provided outside of the Special Instruction time of the day. Before your child starts the program, a letter with specific details regarding your child's therapy will be issued. Therapies will take place during the 2 ½ hour session time. Alcott has a sensory gym and gross motor gym to address OT and PT needs.

TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL GROUP CURRICULUM:

The toddler classroom curriculum is developmental, presenting learning activities that are appropriate to the child's developmental age. Our model utilizes a structured environment to facilitate children moving to different centers within the classroom to obtain learning experiences they may not seek out if left on their own. The children utilize a visual schedule to help them learn to follow daily routines and increase their independence throughout the day. The structured classroom model helps children learn the beginning and end of an activity and increases their ability to attend to a task and organize their time. With this approach teachers, teacher assistants and therapists provide individual support to help children reach their goals. Visual cues, photographs and/or real objects can be used to assist with transitions and develop communication skills. In addition, to group Special Instruction, we are offering groups run by therapists, This is in addition to their individual therapies. These groups will focus on the profession of the therapist. For example, an OT would run a group that focuses on motor, sensory and ADL skills.

FAMILY VACATIONS:

The Toddler Developmental Group runs on a school schedule with vacation days throughout the year. The time your child is at school is important for continued progress. For continuity and success with achieving functional outcomes, we strongly suggest that you schedule your family vacations(s) based on the school calendar. Please review the school calendar which indicates the date's school is closed for holidays and breaks before making your plans. Please be aware that since Early Intervention is a 12 month program, there are classes for 6 weeks starting in the beginning of July through the middle of August. If you plan a vacation for 2 or more weeks during the summer session, your child's spot may not be held. Please notify us at your earliest convenience if you are not sending your child to the summer program.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO RECORDS:

Confidentiality of your child's records is guaranteed by law: (the Buckley Amendment of Family Educational Rights & Act) and by Alcott School policy. No records may be released without parental written permission, except to funding sources such as the County of Westchester and the State Education Department. Further information on this subject is available from the El Program Coordinator. A parent has a right, by making an appointment with the El Program Coordinator, to review records in his/her child's file at any time. With the El coordinator, they will receive an explanation and interpretation of the material in the record. They can receive a copy of the record at a reasonable cost, not to exceed 10 cents per page for the first copy and 25 cents per page for additional copies. No fee can be charged for records related to evaluations and assessments or for the search and the retrieval of records. A parent can receive a copy within 5 school days if the request is a part of medication or an impartial hearing or is needed for a CPSE review or IFSP review.

AMENDING RECORDS

As parents, you have the right to request an amendment to your child's records when you believe that the information contained in the record is inaccurate, misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of your child. Requests to amend a record must be provided in writing. Verbal requests must be made through an appointment with the Early Intervention Program Coordinator. Further information on this process is available from the El Program Coordinator.

INSURANCE/MEDICAL INFORMATION:

At some point, parents may be asked information about their insurance or Medicaid coverage by Alcott staff. This is done to comply with County or State requirements. Both County and State are investigating alternate means to fund some services to children with special needs. Accessing Medicaid or private insurance will not result in any charge to parents for Early Intervention Services.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THERAPY:

Occupational therapy and physical therapy services require a PCP form from your

doctor.

NOTE: Children are unable to begin these therapies without the proper prescription.

- 1) The prescription should list the type of therapy provided by Westchester County Department of Health along with the frequency of "as per IFSP."
- 2) The prescription must include an appropriate ICD-10 code, the date and physician's name, stamp and NPI#.
- 3) The make-up box should be checked off in order for the therapists to make up a missed session within two weeks.

ELIGIBILITY DATES FOR EI PROGRAMS:

In order to maintain placement in the Early Intervention class, you must follow the State and local guidelines. This requires "transitioning" your child to the Committee for Pre-School Education (CPSE) in your local school district by the day **BEFORE** your child's 3rd birthday. A CPSE meeting must be held that reviews the current evaluations and overall progress of your child. The CPSE committee will determine if your child meets eligibility for services through CPSE. If the child is eligible, THEN the family may also be eligible to continue with their El plan of service and exit on August 31st or December 31st, depending on which month the child turns 3 years old. Placement by the CPSE can be deferred until the child "officially" leaves Early Intervention. Your OSC should be assisting you in this transition process. The El Program Coordinator, teacher and therapists will help prepare you for this CPSE Meeting. The El Program Coordinator and/or teacher may attend the meeting with you.

OTHER SERVICES OFFERED AT ALCOTT:

Programs offered at Alcott for children in the Early Invention program are available as follows:

- Ongoing Service Coordination
- Toddler Developmental Group:
 - Up to 7 Early Intervention Children, one Certified Special Education Teacher, and 2-3 Teacher Assistants; Speech & Language, Occupational Therapist, and Physical Therapist.
- Collaborative team meetings
- Special Instruction or Family Training provided at home, daycare or through telehealth.
- Evaluations (core and supplemental).

Families may receive one or more of the above listed services from our school as approved by the WCDOH Early Intervention Services (children birth to three) is regulated by the Westchester County department of Health (DOH), Westchester County and the State of New York.

4. PARENT INVOLVEMENT*

Alcott staff serves families as well as individual children. The following is an outline of parent involvement activities offered during the school year.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES/COLLABORATIVE TEAM MEETINGS:



Parent-Teacher conferences/collaborative meetings are scheduled twice an IFSP. Usually, one is held in November. We try to have the second one before your child's third birthday to help with the transition process. In addition to these dates, another meeting will be held during the IFSP



time period. At the collaborative (team) meeting, we will meet with you in person or through the telehealth format. Collaborative meetings are times to share information about your child's performance at home and at school and to develop mutual goals.

If questions arise in between conference times, please feel free to phone your child's classroom teacher or the El Program Coordinator. Additional conferences may be scheduled if needed at the request of a parent or an Alcott staff member.

Functional outcomes are updated with parents at the 6-month and annual review meetings.

CLASS PARENTS:

In your initial paperwork packet, there is a class parent form. Being a class parent is a great way to become involved at Alcott. There are special events throughout the year that we need the support of the parents to make successful. It is a great opportunity to meet other families and show your support for the school. There are meetings throughout the year for the class parents to collaborate.

^{*}Here, as elsewhere in this booklet, the term "Parents" includes legal guardians and foster parents.

APPENDIX

- Alcott School Behavior Management Plan
- Westchester County Transportation Handbook (English and Spanish)