



ALCOTT SCHOOL

Montessori SCIS

Parent Handbook

2024-2025

Marilyn Donnellan, MS Ed., SBL
Director of Education

Caitlin Jalalat, MA, MAEd
Montessori Coordinator

Debra Frank, MA Ed., SBL
SCIS Coordinator

Alex Kulpa, MS Ed.
Site Director

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Alcott School!

We look forward to partnering with you in providing our children with the most positive experience. We appreciate the trust you have placed in us and would like to take this opportunity to share our philosophy and policies with you.

Our purpose over the past 55 years has remained the same; to provide a quality educational experience for young children in a multicultural preschool environment, utilizing developmentally appropriate methods and materials. Our primary goal is to foster a feeling of competence and build self-esteem, while providing the foundation for each child to attain their personal best, make friends and have fun.

Please read the following information carefully and if you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Jalalat- Montessori Coordinator

Debra Frank – SCIS Coordinator

Alex Kulpa – Site Director & CPSE Evaluations Coordinator

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

www.alcottschool.org

History of Our School

Alcott School began as a Montessori preschool when founded by two professional educators, Arlene Donegan and Kathleen Rohrs, in September 1968. Alcott School has expanded its range of programs. The school began operations at the Bryn Mawr Park Presbyterian Church in Yonkers and currently resides in Dobbs Ferry.

Alcott School has always followed an inclusive model of education. Over the years, Alcott has expanded to include special education programs for toddlers and preschool children.

Overall, we provide a developmentally appropriate early childhood education program for toddlers and preschool students. Our staff and students come from diverse backgrounds. We offer a continuum of special services to address the individual needs of each child enrolled.

Mission Statement

The Alcott School is a Montessori and Special Education preschool whose objective is to provide all children with the opportunity to develop independence, an awareness of their own abilities and a feeling of self-worth. These objectives are met by providing developmentally appropriate, multi-cultural learning environments. Alcott School recognizes the important role parent education and support for the family plays in the development of young children. Alcott School is dedicated to helping support the families enrolled in its programs.

Program Goals

- To provide a stimulating and enriching learning environment
- To foster a sense of independence in all areas of development
- To develop respect for others and the environment
- To guide children towards an attitude of openness and discovery in approaching new ideas and activities
- To foster a child’s ability to socialize and maintain friendships
- To develop feelings of positive self-esteem and accomplishment
- To establish a love and foundation for life-long learning

Regulatory Oversight

The Alcott School is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. Alcott is a not-for-profit corporation chartered under the New York State Board of Regents. Our site is licensed as a child day care center with the New York State Office of Child and Family Services.

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

Our licensor, Leslie Geathers – Tel: 914-801-3253

**New York State OCFS
Westchester Regional Office
117 East Stevens Av. Suite 300
Valhalla, NY 10595
The OCFS Child Care Complaint Line is 1-800-732-5207**

Board of Directors

Alcott School is governed by its Board of Directors:

Presidents: Melinda Raffe Trovini

Secretary: Laurette Olson

Members: Debra Dalal
Debbie Mumford
Susan Miron Schwartz
Simrun Gialleonardo
Arlene Donegan

Classroom Hours

Toddler Class (Monday-Friday)

The toddler program will run from September through late June.

The hours are as follows:

½ Day Session	9:00am – 12:00pm
Full Day Session	9:00am – 3:00 pm

Three- to Five-Year-Old Classes (Monday – Friday)

The 3-5- year-olds attend class according to the following schedule. These classes run from September through late June.

½ Day Session	9:00am – 12:00pm
Full Day Session	9:00am – 3:00 pm

Extended Day Program (optional)

The Early Drop program is from 8:00 am to 9:00 am. Your child will be escorted to their classroom at 9:00 am to join their regularly scheduled class.

The Extended Day program is from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm. You will pick up your child promptly at 4:00 pm from the front door.

There is a discounted rate for families who sign up for the entire school year.

If you just have the occasional need for early drop or late pick up, please call Barbara Berge at 914-693-4443 to confirm space is available. We will do our best to accommodate last-minute requests.

Phase-In (New Montessori students ONLY)

Toddler Phase-In:

Toddlers will be phased in during the month of September. During this time our sessions will be shortened. Each child will have a “Family Meeting” where caregivers and the child will meet with the teaching team. This is a time to get to know each other, develop trust in new caregivers and ask any questions. The class will then be split into smaller groups and children will attend for 1 hour. This gives teachers the time to get to know the children in a smaller group first and support children as they separate from parents. The final step of phase in will bring the entire group of 12 children together. Some children are ready early on, while others need a little more time to feel comfortable in a new environment. Teachers and parents will work together to help each child have a smooth and comfortable transition.

Three – Five-Year-Olds:

During the first week of school, new children in the 3 - 5-year-old classes will be phased in on a gradual basis. All returning Montessori and SCIS students will start their full-day schedule from the first day of school. New full-day students will come from 9am-12:30pm the first week of school (dismissal for new students will be after lunch).

Arrival and Dismissal

Parents/caregivers are responsible for bringing their child to the **daily health check**. Parents/caregivers are required to wait for the health check in case of questions or concerns.

Punctuality at arrival and dismissal times is essential to maintain safety for everyone and to avoid anxiety in children.

Bus Information (SCIS ONLY)

Super Wheels: 914-613-8225

The Bus Company will be contacting you directly to arrange your child's pick-up and drop-off time. Alcott has no direct responsibility in arranging pick up or drop off. The bus companies and the school which service your child are **independent** organizations. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the bus company, please call them directly.

If your ***child does not require transportation on any given day, please call the bus company*** and report this fact to them so that they do not send out a bus unnecessarily. If your child's transportation plans are changed for any given day, please:

- Call the bus company and alert them to the change.
- Notify the school; send an email or make a note in your child's notebook stating what the changed plans are (e.g. Do not put Johnny on the bus at noon, I will pick him up myself) so that the teacher

knows what to expect.

Please have your child ready and waiting when the bus arrives. If your child delays the bus, often the whole school program for that day is delayed.

Please Note:

Westchester County Department of Health policy states that if 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 contacts are current.

Changes in Pick-Up

To ensure the safety of your child, if he/she will be going home from school with a different family member or a friend, please make sure to email your child’s teacher, as well as the following:

Caitlin Jalalat- cjalalat@alcottschool.org
Debbie Frank- dfrank@alcottschool.org
Barbara Berge- bberge@alcottschool.org

In your email, please include:

- Your child’s first and last name
- Who they will be going home with, what day and at what time
(Name on email must match name on the person’s ID)

The family member or friend will need to provide a government-issued ID.

It is important to provide this information even if the person is one of your emergency contacts listed on the Blue Card and/or Emergency Form.

Please note that your child will not be released without this information in writing.

Important: *If we have not heard from you and are unable to reach a caregiver or parent within one hour of dismissal, Child Protective Services will be called.*

School Absences:

If your child will not be attending school for any reason:

- Call the school at 914-693-7677, and call Super Wheels at 914-613-8225

If the bus arrives at school and your child is not on it, and no "absence message" has been received,

Alcott is required by Westchester County Department of Health to call you to ascertain your child's whereabouts. In order to be proactive, a quick voice message from you will avoid any further investigation. An absence note explaining your child's absence is required if you do not alert the school office as to the reason prior to his/her return.

Tuition (Montessori ONLY)

Please refer to your ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT AND TUITION AGREEMENT for more information.

Forms

We are required by law to have certain forms and information in your child's file. The list of required forms is as follows:

- Day Care Registration (Blue card – front and back)
- Emergency Release (front and back)
- Photo Opt-Out Form
- Class List Release Form
- Emergency Alert Contact Form
- Acknowledgement of receipt of parent handbook
- Email Consent Form
- Consent for Medical/Rx Release
- Authorization to share information with Alcott School
- Individual Health Care Plan for a Child with Special Health Care Needs, if applicable
- Medical Statement
- Medical History
- Prescription/Allergy forms, if applicable
- Vision Form
- Rest/Nap Policy
- Parent questionnaire
- Transportation Consent Form (SCIS only)

Each medical form is valid for one year from the date of your child's physical exam.

No child will be admitted into the school without these forms.

If your child has a severe peanut/food allergy that requires medication, you will need to have additional medical forms completed by their doctor and yourself. (Forms are available within the medical packet, on the website and in the school office). **These forms are valid for six months.**

Enrollment forms which are in this Parent Handbook packet **must be completed and returned to school no later than August 1,2024**

Copies of government-issued photo IDs are required for all adults listed on the child's emergency form.

Please post the Alcott calendar in a conspicuous place. You will need to refer to it frequently during the year. The calendar is also available on the school website at www.alcottschool.org.

Safety/Emergency Plans

Your children's safety is very important to us. Children are supervised at all times during program hours. The ratio of adults to children is in accordance with the Office of Children and Family Regulations.

Emergency Drills

To be prepared for emergencies, we conduct monthly fire drills and two shelter in place drills per year. Our emergency alert 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.

Primary evacuation site: Mercy University

Staff and children will proceed to 565 Broadway and into the school gym or designated classroom.

Secondary evacuation site: Sacred Heart Church

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 at each location. All safety plans were made in consultation with our local police departments. Please note that although we hope emergency situations will not arise, should one occur, the safety and well-being of your children are of utmost 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.

Child Injuries/Accidents

If your child is injured on the school premises, a staff member will inform you in person (at pick up time) about incidents such as minor scrapes. You will be informed about other injuries such as bumps to the head, large or small, by telephone after the incident occurs. You will be asked to read and sign an incident report at pick-up time on the day the incident occurs. If a parent is not picking up, we will send a copy home in your child's backpack or will be emailed a copy to sign and be returned to us in a timely manner. Children with head injuries may not be transported by bus; they must be picked up by a parent or other emergency contact.

Clothing

Label each piece of clothing.

Children should be dressed in washable play clothes. Try to use child friendly fasteners whenever possible. Zippers, snaps, belts and suspenders can make it more difficult for children to dress and undress independently. Use elastic waist pants and Velcro shoes/sneakers.

Only closed-toe, rubber soled shoes may be worn at all times. Flip-flops and Crocs are not acceptable.

All children should come dressed to play outdoors, even in cold weather.

This means they should be wearing warm coats, hats/hoods, mittens, snowsuits, and boots when there is snow. Please send in inside shoes as children will remove boots for indoor activities.

In addition, children should refrain from wearing any type of jewelry for safety reasons.

Toddlers:

Send in a box of baby wipes and 2 complete changes of clothing (including socks and sneakers) **in a labeled, adult-size shoe box.** A package of disposable diapers, labeled with your child's name, should be sent if your child is not toilet trained.

The Toddler staff change diapers. The children are encouraged to participate in this process. Please refrain from onesies, buttons, and overalls, as this will help develop independence.

3-5-Year-Olds:

Please send in a complete change of clothes on the first day of school. Please put them in **a labeled, adult-size shoe size box,** with two pairs of underpants, socks, a shirt, and pants.

Lunch (Full Day Programs)

As parents and staff, we all share a basic desire that our children eat nutritious food in a pleasant atmosphere. Good nutrition is important and something that we are all concerned about. We feel strongly that to be consistent with our interests and concerns, we need to do our best to ensure that each child in our school is provided with wholesome, healthy foods.

Please read carefully our policy regarding lunch:

- Please send your child's lunch in a soft sided lunch box with handles, with his/her **first and last name** clearly marked on it. Handles are necessary so that children can carry their lunch independently.
- Send foods that need to be consumed warm in a thermos. We do not heat children's food.
- Lunches will be kept in the fridge until lunchtime.
- Avoid choking hazards with food such as: hot dogs, string cheese, grapes, carrots, etc., please cut them into small bite size pieces.

Please do not send any of the following for lunch:

Soda, candy, gum, lollipops, popcorn or any junk food (Twinkies, Ring Dings, etc.)

Additional Suggestions:

Remember to choose foods your child enjoys eating. Preparing lunch with your child the night before often leads to a more leisurely morning routine.

Due to the increased incidence of allergies and asthma, we request that you DO NOT send peanut or nut products to school. We are a nut-restricted environment.

Food Allergy Guidelines

Our staff strives to provide a safe and healthy environment for all children. We follow these guidelines to the extent possible, but we do not guarantee that we can keep our environment completely free of food or other allergens that might cause a severe reaction.

- All children's allergies that require treatment must be documented by a medical professional, including symptoms that indicate a reaction is occurring and instructions for administering medication. Appropriate Alcott School documentation must be completed and turned in before the start of school. See medical forms in this mailing.
- We talk to the children about the importance of keeping the classroom safe and healthy for fellow classmates.
- We encourage frequent hand washing, especially before and after meals and snacks.
- We clean tables and other work surfaces several times a day; before school begins, before

lunch, after lunch and at the end of the session.

- We do not permit the sharing of lunches.
- We post lists of allergies in every classroom. The teachers and assistants are required to be familiar with every child's allergies.
- We make every effort to avoid serving foods that contain peanuts or tree nuts or may contain traces of such foods.
- Other foods such as shellfish, eggs, or milk may be served on a classroom-by-classroom basis depending on the food allergies present in that classroom.
- If children have life-threatening allergies to foods, we ask that the family provide an acceptable snack to be kept at school and served as an alternative, as needed. Snack must be in a container with a lid, child's first and last names and date. At their parents' request, these children may sit apart from the others when eating snacks or lunch.
- We ask that parents speak with their child's classroom teacher regarding children with allergies in the classroom before sending in special snacks or treats.

Our guidelines apply to all functions in the school building in areas where children are present.

Promoting Healthy Living Habits

The following is to share information with you about healthy food and beverage choices and the prevention of childhood obesity.

The foods children eat and lifestyle habits they learn have a lasting effect on their health. There are ways that Alcott School is promoting healthy habits while your child is in our care:

- We offer a fresh fruit and vegetable snack program as well as other options: for example, healthy cereal, crackers, avocado, cream cheese, trail mix, etc.
- We engage in daily physical activity. Our staff supervises the children at mealtimes and models appropriate table manners and conversation.
- Healthy eating habits are part of our classroom nutrition curriculum. We dedicate time and provide the children with activities that reflect this topic.

The following are good ideas for the home to help your child set healthy living habits:

- Offer the fruits and vegetables you see served in your child's classroom at home. Sometimes new foods take time. Offer new fruits and vegetables many times.
- Allow your children to help with food preparation, table setting and food planning at home.
- Cook and bake together.
- Chart how many different fruits and vegetables the family eats each week using stickers or drawings.
- Eat together.
- Talk about the healthy foods that you eat as a family.
- Stay active together. Going for walks or bike rides or playing in a local park are great ways to

enjoy activity with your children.

- Limit screen time as much as possible. Physical activity helps children’s bones and muscles grow strong and lowers the risk of weight gain.

For more information about healthy eating and exercise, visit:

Choose My Plate

www.choosemyplate.gov

Eat Smart New York

www.otda.ny.gov/programs/nutrition

Core Nutrition Messages for Healthier Food Choices

www.fns.usda.gov/fns/core-nutritionmessages/default.htm

Rest

We believe preschool age children who follow a full-day schedule need a daily rest/nap period during their school day. This is also a requirement by OCFS. It’s a way for the children to “re-charge their batteries” since their minds and bodies are busy working hard at practicing and learning new skills. Learning how to relax your body in this fast-paced world is a life skill that plays a part in our overall health.

Children enrolled in the full day program at Alcott School have a daily rest/nap period in their classroom after lunch. Each child brings a bedroll from home along with their rest shoes. These items stay at school during the week, **and the bedroll goes home for laundering on Friday to be returned on Monday.** Each child has their own labeled rest cot which the school provides. Cots are cleaned and sanitized by the classroom staff. During rest/nap time, the lights are dimmed, the blinds are closed, and the teachers help them relax and feel comfortable. Children lay on cots in a head-to-toe pattern to maximize social distancing. Sometimes soft music is on, audible stories are played or a teacher reads a book aloud.

Rest Shoes

We require shoes for rest time. To maintain a clean cot, please send your child to school with rest shoes. These are shoes that have not and will not be used for outdoor activities. They must have solid soles for emergency evacuation, in any kind of weather, in order for the children to walk out safely. Shoes should not light up or make noise.

During rest/nap time, all the children are expected to rest their minds and bodies for a reasonable amount of time while lying down on their cot. Many children will sleep each day, but those children who don’t fall asleep after a period of time will be able to engage in quiet work while the rest of the class rests. The length of time that each child rests varies depending upon multiple factors such as:

when did the child fall asleep, did the child have a poor night's sleep, how the child is feeling, etc. The classroom staff will share with you your child's rest/nap patterns at school, and we ask that you please do the same in regards to it at home.

Child Abuse – Mandated Reporters

Employees of the Alcott School are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and/or neglect according to New York State law. If any school employee has a reasonable basis to suspect that a child may be the subject of child abuse, maltreatment or neglect, the school employee **MUST** make a phone call to the Child Protective Services Hotline and provide them with enough information that the government may conduct an investigation to determine if the child is being neglected, abused or maltreated. A written report must also be submitted. It is not within the authority of Alcott employees to investigate suspected situations of abuse, but it is an illegal act to fail to report the suspicion.

Keeping Your Child Healthy

Our goal is for all of the children enrolled at Alcott School to have a healthy and productive school year. We are asking your help in achieving this goal. The following guidelines will minimize the chances of your child contracting an illness during the course of the school year.

- Help your child develop the habit of washing hands frequently.
- Teach your child to blow own nose and to wash hands afterwards.
- Teach your child to cough into elbow.
- Teach your child to keep their hands out of their mouths and away from their faces.

Keep your children home if they are sick or look like they may become sick during the day.

Upon entering the building all students must wash their hands with soap and running water. While at school, the children will wash their hands when they are dirty, after toileting, before and after food handling or eating, after contact with bodily secretion or fluid, and after coming in from outdoors.

Illness Policy

If your child will be absent, please call the school office. A note from your child's health provider is required upon returning to school if your child has been hospitalized or seen in the emergency room.

Children with the following conditions should stay home until the symptoms/condition resolve or until evaluation by their health provider determines that they are well enough to return to school. Children with symptoms of diarrhea, fever or vomiting may return to school after the **symptoms are resolved for 24 hours. Children who are prescribed antibiotics for any reason may return 24 hours after receiving their first dose** of medication. The following is a list of symptoms which meet the criteria for keeping your child home from school:

- Fever over 100.2 degrees or higher via ear thermometer.
- Diarrhea: runny, watery, or bloody stools.
- Vomiting more than twice in a 24-hour period.
- Mouth sores or ulcers if child cannot control his/her saliva.
- Sore throat with fever &/or swollen glands.
- Severe coughing: child gets red or blue in the face or makes a high-pitched whooping sound after coughing.
- Eye discharge: thick mucus or pus draining from eye or watery discharge with redness.
- Yellowish skin or eyes.
- Evidence of severe illness: lethargy, unusual sleepiness, irritability, prolonged inconsolable crying, labored breathing, or wheezing.

If your child cannot go out to the playground because of illness or requires more intense care and attention than the staff can reasonably provide, then he/she should stay at home.

On occasion, a child may become ill while in school. Alcott's policy is to notify the parent and request that they arrange for their child to be picked up at school as soon as possible. Young children who are ill in school are a health risk to their classmates, the teaching staff, and are uncomfortable. We appreciate your efforts to pick up your sick child in a timely manner.

If you have a caregiver who makes the decision on whether to send your child to school, please discuss our policy with them. We understand how difficult it is for all parents when their child is ill! The staff appreciates your cooperation.

If a child's symptoms become severe and we cannot reach the parents or designated emergency contact, we will call 911.

Immunizations

By New York State Law, as of June 13, 2019, there is no longer a religious exemption to the requirement that children be vaccinated in order to attend:

- * Public, private or parochial school (for students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade)
- or
- * Child daycare settings

Please see medical packet for more information.

Medications

No prescribed medications will be administered to children except in the event of an emergency. If your child has an allergy, asthma, seizure history or any other medical condition which may require the emergency administration of medication, a health care plan will be written. A *Request for Administration of Medication* for each medication must be completed by your child's health provider including signed parental permission.

Medication forms and instructions can be obtained in the medical packet in this mailing, in the school office or on our web site. **Medication consent forms must be renewed by your child's health provider every 6 months.**

Health problems such as a history of sudden febrile seizure may require that the child's temperature be monitored through the day.

Thank you for your cooperation. Your child's safety and well-being is important to us.

Emergency Closing

Inclement weather or any other emergency situation may sometimes necessitate closing school. School closings will be posted on Optimum Channel 12 in Westchester. A message via robocall, text and/or email will be sent using information provided on your communication form. If you are in doubt, call the school and listen for our message on the answering machine.

Please understand that delaying and/or closing school is not something done without a great deal of thought. Our primary concern is the safety of the children.

Parking

Do not pass school buses with flashing lights.

Do not leave children in your car unattended.

Do not leave your car running.

Do not park, wait for or drop off passengers in the fire lane!

- Park in designated spots only and escort your child to his/her classroom designated drop-off area (TO BE ANNOUNCED). Drive slowly and with caution.
- Be prepared to wait for a parking spot to become available.
- Be considerate of others and leave yourself plenty of time.
- During drop-off and pick-up, you may park behind cars facing Broadway in the lower lot. Those cars belong to staff members.

Please do not...

- Send your child to the drop off area unescorted.
- Park in the circle in front of the building where buses pull up.
- Leave your car parked in the middle of the parking lot, blocking other cars from pulling out.

Parent – Teacher Conferences

Two conferences are scheduled each year (Fall and Spring). We encourage both parents to attend conferences whenever possible. The coordinator and teachers are always available for special conferences whenever they are necessary. Children should not attend conferences. Please make arrangements for their care.

Do not hesitate to ask questions or share information (re: illness, separation, a death in the family, etc.) with the staff. It helps us respond to the needs of your child if we are informed of anything unusual occurring within your family. Very often what is happening at home affects a child's behavior in the classroom. Please keep communication open.

At any time during the year, if you should have any questions about the program, policy, or procedures, please speak with the Site Director, Education Director, Montessori Coordinator, or SCIS Coordinator.

Class Parents

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher will send out requests for class parent volunteers. Responsibilities include helping with classroom communication, teacher appreciation, and school wide events. We thank you in advance for your support and partnership.

Student Behavior Management Plan

Preschool children and toddlers are inherently working upon and refining their social skills. At the Alcott School, we help the children to develop internal self-control, independence, and empathy for others. At times it becomes necessary to intervene in a child's behavior and therefore, we have developed and implemented a behavior management plan.

Alcott School's behavior management plan consists of the following techniques to preempt instances where behavior management is necessary and to intervene in a child's behavior as needed:

- We redirect, i.e. in a conflict we provide choices and alternatives. For example, "You can either sit on a rug or at a table for story time."
- We focus on "Do" rather than "Don't." For example, "We walk inside," instead of "Stop running inside!"
- We encourage children to use friendly words rather than physical acts. For example, "This is my work."

- We praise positive behavior. For example, “I like the way you used your words.”
- We model desired behaviors in order for the children to learn by example.
- We arrange the classroom space to positively impact children’s behavior. For example, avoid large open spaces that might encourage children to run indoors.
- The classroom is the children’s place. We listen to the children and respond to their needs proactively to achieve their goals. We aim to keep the children engaged with activities thus helping to prevent conflict.
- We involve the children in the development of the classroom rules.

Alcott School adheres to the following guidelines when implementing behavior management techniques with a child enrolled in the program:

- Children may only be disciplined by the director, head teacher, program coordinator, program supervisor, classroom therapist or assistant teacher.
- Alcott School applies all rules consistently and appropriately to the ages of the children and their developmental level and abilities.
- Any behavior management used will relate to the child’s actions and be handled without prolonged delay.
- A child may be briefly separated from the group, but only long enough to gain self-control and will be in view of, supervised and supported by the director, head teacher, program coordinator, classroom therapist or assistant teacher.
- We do not use corporal punishment.
- We do not use methods of interaction that punish, demean, or humiliate children. Nor do we physically restrain children, other than to keep them safe.
- Any abuse or maltreatment of a child, either as an incident of discipline or otherwise, is prohibited.

Please note that, we do not tolerate or in any manner condone an act of abuse or neglect of a child by an employee, volunteer, or any person under the programs control.

Birthday Observances

Two weeks prior to your child’s birthday, please reach out to your child’s teacher to collaboratively make a plan. Your teacher will guide you regarding the traditional Montessori birthday celebration. This includes a photograph and milestone comment at each year of life. Details to come.

Toilet Training

Children attending 3-5 year old classes are expected to be toilet trained, or at least actively working on the process. If you are concerned about this, please speak with your child’s teacher. Toddlers are not expected to be toilet trained.

Personal Belongings

Children should not bring any personal items to school such as toys, stuffed animals and books. If a transition item is needed, please make sure to discuss with child's teacher.

Pocket Treasures

From time to time every child takes home something from school, usually inadvertently. Often these items are very small in size like a penny or small gold bead. Frequently these tiny treasures are part of a classroom activity and without them the activity is incomplete. If any unidentifiable objects like this turn up at home, please return them to the school. We can usually tell at a glance whether or not they are pieces of apparatus from the classroom or sometimes a random object picked up from a friend.

Special Notes for Toddlers

Separation

Parent-Toddler separation is different for each individual. Some children separate easily while others may take a little longer.

Parents and caregivers can best help with this process by following these simple suggestions:

- Talk about the program **only** a few days before classes begin
- Use simple, matter of fact words; and drive by the school building and point out "This is where you will be going to school".
- Do not "over sell" the activities.
- Talk about all classroom teachers at home, not just the head teacher.

Remember: Arriving too early or too late can lead to confusion, tears, or clinging behavior. Goodbyes are most easily accepted when brief and confident.

Talk with your teaching team to come up with a plan that is right for your child.

Following the plan that the staff has for you and your child usually leads to a successful separation. As phase-in progresses, friendships and trust with peers will replace your child's anxiety and he/she will relax and begin to enjoy the program.

Class Routine

Following a routine helps to provide comfort and confidence to the toddler. The knowledge of the order of the activities helps the child acquire a sense of time - a beginning, middle, and end to each session. A typical classroom routine consists of work time, story time, songs, and gross motor play. The teacher will share a daily schedule with parents once school starts.

The classroom is divided into areas including: block building, practical life and sensorial activities, art, language, pre-math/math, gross motor, and manipulatives. Art projects are open-ended and focus on the process rather than the end product.

Specials Notes for SCIS

Therapy

Speech and Occupational Therapy

Speech and Occupational Therapy may be provided using a “push-in” model. This means that individual and group therapy is provided in the classroom to facilitate a child’s use of language and fine motor skills among peers and teachers. “Pull out” services are also provided as needed to meet each child’s individual needs.

Children who require a sensory integration approach for occupational therapy may receive “pull-out” services. This means they will be taken out of the class for all or part of the session.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is provided in our gym, playground and/or classrooms. Physical therapy focuses on improving gross motor skills which include balance coordination, strengthening and age-appropriate motor skills.

Counseling

Counseling is a mandated related service which some children receive as part of their school program. Play therapy, behavioral support and improving peer interactions are the focus of this service. Counseling services are provided in the therapist’s office (pull-out) or in the classroom (push-in) based on the child’s clinical needs.

TEACCH

(Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-Handicapped Children) TEACCH is an approach to help children learn the beginning and end of an activity and to help them organize and structure their time. The children are assisted to follow a “schedule” which is set up for them to check to find out what activity comes next. In this model, visual cues such as real objects or photographs are used to assist with transitions.

Notebooks

Each child will be given a notebook, marked with their name. Several times weekly, the teacher or a therapist will write in the book about activities done at school.

We encourage parents write back about things that go on at home - simple things like "I took Johnny to the park today. He enjoyed the slide," or important things, "Grandma is coming for the weekend." The therapists also may write in this book to share with the parents some of the remediation activities they

are doing with the child. Sometimes the therapist may make suggestions for things parents and children can do together at home.

Confidentiality of Records

Confidentiality of your child's records is guaranteed by law (the Buckley Amendment or Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act) and by Alcott policy. No records may be released without parental written permission, except to funding sources such as County of Westchester and the State Education Department. Parents of three- and four-year-old children who are being placed at Alcott via their school district Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) have signed a CPSE consent form. No other permission is required to allow Alcott to forward your child's records to your school district in these cases.

Further information on this subject is available from the Director of Education. A parent has the right, by making an appointment with the Director of Education or the SCIS Class Coordinator to review records in their child's file at any time, and to obtain a copy of the records. A full copy of Alcott's policy on record access and confidentiality is available upon request.

Educational/Information Workshops

These workshops are held throughout the year. They provide an opportunity for Alcott staff or outside speakers to offer parents workshops and/or discussion groups on topics of interest. For example, once a year, we have a "*Transition from CPSE to CSE*" meeting with parents to discuss the process for students entering kindergarten.

Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) Annual Reviews

If your child attends Alcott School, you have already had an initial CPSE (school district) meeting and are familiar with the procedures and personnel involved.

If your child will graduate from Alcott this year, please skip to the next section, entitled Kindergarten Placement. If your child will not graduate from Alcott this year and is eligible to return next September, please be aware that in order to re-enroll your child in Alcott, the following procedure will be necessary in the spring semester.

School districts will hold an annual review, which is a meeting similar to your initial CPSE. However, at this meeting, no formal evaluations other than your child's updated IEP and progress reports are required. The exception to this is the child who has had updated formal testing; e.g., a new psychological evaluation done since the initial CPSE. In this case, the new information would be presented.

The CPSE has three choices at Annual Reviews:

- The child is benefitting from their current program and it should be continued for the coming school year.
- The child should continue in their present program, but the program should be modified in some way (e.g., the number of therapy sessions should be increased or decreased).
- The child's educational plan requires some modifications. They may need a more intensive (e.g., full day) special education program or may be ready for a less intensive approach (e.g., a

mainstream preschool program with special education or therapy services delivered in that setting).

The purpose of the annual review is to review the child's placement and progress to make sure they are benefitting from their program. Decisions about programs and services for the new school year are made by the CPSE, and a new IEP is written with parental input. The parent/guardian must agree to the new IEP and the program, services, goals and objectives it lists. If parents/guardians do not agree with decisions made at the annual review, due process is available. Details as to what due process is and how it works are available from your school district.

Alcott personnel will assist in preparing reports for your child's annual review to ensure that service plans for the coming year as agreed to by parent and CPSE members, proceed smoothly. As the spring semester begins, parents will receive notices and information regarding annual reviews from both their school districts and Alcott. Personnel from both organizations will be available to answer any questions or assist in any way, Parents are notified of the date and time of their CPSE meeting and are expected to attend. Any reports sent by Alcott to school districts are discussed with parents so that parents can participate meaningfully in the annual review meeting.

Eligibility

To be eligible for summer services, a child must meet the “substantial regression” criteria.

This means that their skills will substantially regress over the summer without continuous services. Regression & eligibility for summer services will be discussed at your child’s spring parent teacher conference.

The policy of the New York State Education Department, the department which approves summer services, is that only those children who will attend the **full six weeks** of summer session are eligible although exceptions are made in rare instances.

Rationale for this policy is that children whose parents wish to send the children for only a portion of the six weeks because of family vacation or similar plans do not consider their child truly at risk for substantial regression.

Kindergarten Placement CSE (Committee on Special Education) Procedures

The CSE places children with special needs aged 5-21 (e.g., from kindergarten through high school), in appropriate programs.

A child graduates from the SCIS program the June before they are ready to enter kindergarten.

The Alcott staff helps parents/guardians to find a suitable kindergarten placement in the following ways:

- Alcott, working with the school district, informs parents of procedures for having children placed in public school general or special education classes. (These procedures are described briefly on the next page.)

- Alcott staff writes reports as required by your child's school district. ALL reports sent to the Committee on Special Education are also discussed with parents.

It is important to understand that Alcott's role in the CSE process is that of a resource person to the parents and Committee. In the CPSE process, the Alcott representative is a member of the Committee. In the CSE process, however, they are not a Committee member. Their role, therefore, in the CSE decision-making process is limited.

Of course, if our staff can be of assistance in ways other than those being described, they are always available to parents.

In January, a *"Transition from CPSE to CSE"* informational workshop is held for parents, advising them of the formal procedures and legal rights involved in placing children with special needs.

Procedures for Accessing Special Education Classes and/or Services in your Public School

1. The Committee (usually consisting of a Chairperson, a psychologist, a special education teacher, a general education teacher, and possibly some other professionals) meet with you to discuss the reports they have received. Some members of the Committee **may** have seen or evaluated your child prior to this meeting. Some **may** have visited Alcott to observe him or her in class. After discussing the reports and their own impressions on seeing or evaluating your child, the Committee decides whether or not your child continues to qualify for special education services, and is therefore eligible for services in kindergarten. If your child no longer qualifies, he or she is "declassified," and will be placed in a mainstream kindergarten class. If your child continues to be eligible for services, the CSE must decide which handicapping condition best describes your child's difficulties. Although preschool children are designated with the general term "preschool child with a disability," CSE Committees are mandated to describe the child more specifically. They choose from 13 classifications, such as speech impaired, other health impaired, etc.

For eligible children, the Committee on Special Education outlines possible placements for the following year. Placement options include special classes or mainstream classes with special services. The parent is expected to be an active participant in discussions about choice of handicapping condition, placement and services as parental input must be factored into these decisions. A new IEP, with goals and objectives for the coming year, is written.

2. After the meeting, parents are allowed to visit the potential placement sites.
3. After the meeting, and after parents/guardians have agreed to the IEP, formal papers are signed stating what your child's placement will be and what special services (e.g., speech therapy) they will receive.
4. If there is any disagreement between the CSE and the parent/guardians "due process" procedures are available. Copies of due process rights are furnished to parents by their school district.

Note

If Alcott or your school district suggest that your child is ready for a general education kindergarten class, and you agree, it may not be necessary to go through the above-described procedures. However, some parents whose children are scheduled for general education kindergarten choose to make use of

the CSE process to alert their school system to the fact that their child has had educational services in the past, and request that his or her progress be monitored or special support services (e.g., speech therapy) be given on a regular basis.

Administrative Staffing

Caitlin Jalalat

Montessori Coordinator

Caitlin can be reached at (914) 693-4443 or at cialalat@alcottschool.org

Debra Frank

SCIS Coordinator

Deb can be reached at (914) 693-4443 or at dfrank@alcottschool.org

Alexandra Kulpa

Site Director & CPSE Evaluation Coordinator

Alex can be reached at (914) 693-4443 or at akulpa@alcottschool.org

Marilyn Donnellan

Director of Education

Marilyn can be reached at (914) 693-4443 or at akulpa@alcottschool.org

Theresa Osborn

Montessori Admissions/Accounts Receivable

Theresa can be reached at 914-693-4443 or at Tosborn@alcottschool.org

A staff member will be available during the school day. Voice mail is always in use when no one is available to answer the phone. Please leave your message on the answering machine or in our voice mail system if nobody is available to speak with you.