The Family Matters School Family Handbook

Welcome Letter

Hello Parents,

Welcome to The Family Matters School parent handbook! Through this handbook, we will share with you basic information about The Family Matters School. If you have any questions, please be free to call Haddie at 773-465-6011. Ext. 1118.

The Family Matters School is in a partnership with you so that together we can provide an environment that will be physically, academically, and emotionally nurturing for your family as we grow, learn, and share with one another. Each child in The Family Matters School has individual needs, concerns, interests, and talents. By working together, we can more effectively meet the needs of your child(ren) and support them as they develop their gifts and talents to their greatest potential.

Thank you for enrolling in The Family Matters School. We welcome and encourage new ideas and suggestions from you in your areas of interest and expertise. We look forward to working with you and your child(ren).

Respectfully yours,

Tasha Dudley
Ashti Salih
Haddie DeLong
Kim DeLong

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The Family Matters School Team Member List

Teaching Team:	Ashti Salih (Kindergarten and 1st) Tasha Dudley (2nd, 3rd and 4th)
Director of Education:	Haddie DeLong
Director of Development:	Tabitha Williams
Executive Director:	Kim DeLong

Approach

The Family Matters School believes the goal of education is to fuel the innate desire to learn through engaging, cooperative, and meaningful learning experiences that encourage youth to follow their curiosity and build relationships with their community. The foundation of this education equips children to view the world as a place of opportunity where change is possible. This approach to education calls youth to become courageous people who understand that by trying new things and making mistakes, they build their knowledge base. Family Matters children develop the skills for academic success as endorsed by the Illinois State Board of Education. These academic tools are grounded in real-world applications so there is a direct connection between what is learned at school and life outside of school. A community-based approach to learning honors the gifts of many voices, cultivates relationship-building, compassion, and communication skills, and creates a culture that is solution-based.

Philosophy

Learning is a natural and innate desire; it flourishes amid space for discovery and exploration. An environment that values individuality, encourages self-awareness, and supports the unique learning paths of each child optimizes the learning potential for youth. Tangible, real-world, relevant, and sometimes open-ended experiences provide impactful learning experiences. Positive educational experiences can directly motivate and propel children to make changes in their communities and the larger world. Education is strengthened and enriched by including the whole family.

Diversity Statement

Central to the learning community at The Family Matters School is the ability to ask questions and to openly communicate about issues in our neighborhood, city, and the larger world. This means freedom to talk about the issues of race, socio-economics, faith differences, and other identity issues as they arise. Teachers and staff team members intentionally work to avoid stereotypes and take an anti-bias approach. The learning community at Family Matters can be a safe place for discussions where:

a. All voices are equally valued and respected.
b. All people have the right to express who they are and what they believe while respecting other people's rights to express and hold different beliefs.
c. Empathy and understanding are cultivated.

Commitment to Social-Emotional Wellbeing

At The Family Matters School, we believe that equally important to academic skills and critical thinking ability are social-emotional skills and wellbeing. To use our intellect to its fullest, knowing how to communicate and interact with others in the world is essential. Likewise, it is essential to have an understanding and appreciation for ourselves as individuals. Reflecting on our interactions with others and developing the ability to communicate honestly, directly, and free of blame, shame, judgment, ridicule, and fear are woven into the learning fabric. We use the Family Matters Principles of Leadership as our guiding philosophy for social-emotional learning.

Methods

Children learn through experiencing and doing. These experiences can fill them with life and vitality, so that they become totally absorbed in whatever the activity, be it creating a new toy, learning the meaning of a new word, or understanding a new concept. Children are forever developing, growing, and learning.

The Family Matters School offers many opportunities based on research-based best practices for learning and growth. Each day, children work with one another and with teachers to develop their study and organizational skills as well as strengthen their academic skills in core areas of reading, writing, and math. Children will also participate in

hands-on experiential learning each week in a variety of areas, such as language arts, math, science, social studies, and the arts.

Children grow and develop through nurturing, trust, laughter, and love.

Governance

Family Matters is governed by a Board of Directors responsible for all major budget, fiscal, and policy decisions and is supported by faith institutions, foundations, and individuals.

Funding

The school is funded through faith institutions, foundations, fundraisers, and individual donations. About 5% of the school budget comes from tuition.

Parent Involvement

Parents are the foundation of our school and are essential supports in all aspects of the school. We have an "open door" policy whereby parents are always welcome to come, visit, or volunteer. If you have a special talent or interest, you are encouraged to come and share it with the school.

The Family Matters School is suggesting a 20-hour annual volunteer commitment. This time includes:

Monthly Parent Gatherings. The parents provide input into school operations, school support, and evaluation.

Principles of Leadership Training. *More details to be provided*.

Field Trip Chaperoning

Fundraiser Participation

Each family will sign a contract, which outlines the required parental involvement. (See page 24 for details.)

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences will be scheduled with each child/ren and parent twice during the course of the year. As the need arises, staff or parents may request a conference at any time to review goals. Other meetings will be held regularly and may be requested at any time during the year by either parents or Team members.

Eligibility

All children, age five by September 1st of the school year and residing in Rogers Park or Evanston, are eligible to attend The Family Matters School.

Tuition

Tuition is $50 per child per month. It may be paid in cash, by check, credit/debit card, PayPal, Cash App Pay, or Venmo. If the amount is prohibitive, families have the opportunity to discuss an alternative agreement tailored to their individual circumstances. Discounts are offered to families enrolling more than one child. Tuition may be paid in a lump sum, by semester, or monthly.

The first tuition payment is due on September 2nd, 2025. Because August and December are both short attendance months, they will be charged as one on December 1st, 2025. If you are paying at a monthly rate, tuition is due by the first Monday of each month (through May 1st, 2026). Paying by the due date ensures your child/ren's continued enrollment at The Family Matters School. A grace period of five business days is allowed. Understanding that issues arise in life, if there are extenuating circumstances in any given month, please reach out to Haddie to discuss payment options before the payment due date. This policy will be honored according to the conditions stated above.

Health

Each child/ren is required to have a current medical form on file. This form is to include an immunization record and a current physical examination record signed by a licensed physician. All children are also required to have dental records on file.

Please note the following rules regarding illness:

1. Sick children are to stay at home. They need individual attention and rest. This is also important for the health of the other children in the school and Team members in the case of communicable diseases.

2. Please carefully check your child/children each morning for signs of illness (temperature, runny nose, lack of energy, coughing, upset stomach, or your child's assertion that they do not feel well).

3. If a child arrives at school and shows symptoms of illness or gets sick during school, the child will be isolated, and parents will be called. Parents will pick up the child *immediately* or make arrangements to have the child picked up *immediately.* Staff will call people on your emergency list who are available to pick up your child in an emergency if you are unavailable.

4. If a child is sick when attending school, he or she will be removed from regular class. The sick child will rest in a separate room, away from other classmates, until a parent, guardian, or their designated person picks up the child.

5. A child must be free of a fever for 24 hours before he/she returns to school. If a child is sent home with a fever, he/she must stay home the following day.

6. <u>Any child well enough to attend The Family Matters School will be expected to participate in all aspects of the school, indoors and outdoors.</u>

7. Please be sure to inform the Team if your child/ren has any allergies, such as allergies to food or to wasp or bee stings. If any medications are required for allergies, the procedures listed below under medications will be followed.

Medications/ Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, you will be notified *immediately.* If a Team member is unable to reach you, one of the emergency numbers will be contacted. If a child needs a doctor's attention, the Team will call 911 and he/she/they will be taken by ambulance to the nearest medical facility. The Team will make every effort to notify you by phone.

<u>**Please be sure to notify us of any changes in your address, work or home number, or emergency contacts. It is IMPORTANT that we are able to reach you at ALL TIMES.**</u>

All medications shall be a personal prescription from a physician bearing the child's name, physician's name, telephone number, date, and direction for administering the medication. Please be sure the Team member giving the medication has a record of the last time the child received his/her medication. If the medication is to be administered during the school day, the parent must hand the medication to a Team member and sign the release form.

Attendance

Regular attendance is critical at The Family Matters School. It is important that your child/ren experience/s a feeling of continuity and a sense of belonging. This, as well as academic achievement, is difficult to maintain when attendance is sporadic. Children of this age also need consistency and a feeling of security that daily attendance at The Family Matters School will afford. If any of the following changes regarding attendance occur, **please notify** a Team member before 8:30 am on that day.

Absence for any reason
Late arrival
Early dismissal or change in dismissal
Change in pick-up arrangements

As long as your child/ren is registered, we will provide care, nutritious food, and a comprehensive curriculum for him/her/them.

To maintain safety and security, every child enrolled in The Family Matters School will be signed in and out daily.

Arrival

Early drop-off begins at 8:30 am. If you arrive before 8:30 am, please stay with your child/ren. Doors open at 8:30, and Team members are available at that time.

Dismissal

The instructional day ends at 3:15 PM. Parents may pick up their children until 3:30 PM. We can release your child/ren only to those persons you have named on your application form. If someone else will pick up your child/ren, please notify the Team in advance. New individuals picking up children may be asked to show identification.

Walking to/from School Independently

Parents who wish to permit their child/ren to walk to and from school independently are to sign the permission form (see Appendix C). A Team member will put the time of their arrival/departure in the sign-out book. Families who choose this option are encouraged to create a plan with their child to ensure their safe arrival at home and at school (ie., Team texts parent upon arrival or departure).

Inebriation Policy

Parents or their designates are expected to be free of substance use when picking up children. If a parent arrives at Family Matters inebriated or under the influence of a substance, the Team may intervene. If we believe the child/ren is in any danger, the Team will call one of the people on the emergency contact list rather than releasing the child/ren to the parent. A meeting will be scheduled with the Director of The Family Matters School at a later date to discuss and resolve the incident.

Clothing

Please dress your child/ren appropriately for the weather since outdoor activities are part of the daily schedule. Each child is to have a full change of clothes on site, stored in a personal storage bin with his/her/their name on each piece of clothing to avoid mix-ups.

Please send your child/ren in casual and comfortable clothes and shoes. We do a lot of running, jumping, painting, gluing, *etc.* Make sure that all clothing is washable. Please provide your child/ren with a separate pair of shoes to wear inside of Family Matters. The type of shoe is up to your discretion; we recommend house shoes with soles.

Lost & Found

There is a lost and found box located inside the 1st floor learning space. Please check it periodically.

Toys

The school provides all equipment necessary for activities. Please leave personal toys at home; it can be difficult to share a treasured possession, and it may get broken. If an item is brought to the school, the child assumes full responsibility for it.

Nutrition

The Family Matters School will serve lunch and a snack daily. The meal will consist of a main course, fruits, vegetables, and a beverage. Children may bring their own lunches if it is approved by a parent. We are intentional in teaching and modeling healthy eating habits.

Occasionally, your child/ren will have an opportunity to cook or otherwise prepare special food at the school for a meal or snack. Birthdays will be celebrated in a way chosen by the children, the Team, and parents.

Guiding Behavior

Family Matters sets limits that assist children in developing self-control, assuming responsibility for their actions, and being aware of the rights of others. Guiding behavior, which will be developmentally related to a child's act, may include firm positive statements about redirection of behaviors, or a brief period during which the child will be given private space as a means of offering him/her/them time and opportunity to regain self-control and to talk about what is upsetting to him/her/them.

The child will learn about the relationship between actions and consequences. Corporal punishment is expressly forbidden. Physically or verbally harming a child in any way is strictly prohibited. If a child behaves in a manner that is unacceptable at The Family Matters School, a Team member will call a conference with the parent and child to discuss the issues and possible solutions. Children are prohibited from physically attacking a Team member or another child, and this is grounds for being dismissed from the school.

Safe Space

The Family Matters School is a safe place for...

Feelings
Everyone is treated with compassion and respect. Each person is to feel comfortable expressing his/her/their individuality. Everyone is treated fairly and respectfully regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, looks, size, strengths, or areas for growth.

Personal Space
We treat others with respect and observe each other's personal space.

Personal belongings
We respect the property of others and of the school.

Ideas
We listen to others openly. We speak in a respectful manner and tone. We avoid language that is inappropriate to a school environment. Each person may express his/her/their feelings and opinions in an appropriate manner and at an appropriate time without interruption.

Learning
We work together to maintain a calm and productive atmosphere by knowing and following the expectations of the classroom. Each of us is trying to behave in a way that is respectful of others.

Bullying Behavior Policy

The Family Matters School will not tolerate harassing, intimidating conduct, or bullying behavior, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that unreasonably interferes with a child's educational performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning environment. Bullying behavior, intimidation, and harassment diminish a child's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate.

The State of Illinois defines "bullying" behavior, including "cyber-bullying", as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a child or children that have or can be:

-placing the child or children in reasonable fear of harm to the child's or children's person or property;

-causing a substantially detrimental effect on the child's or children's physical or mental health;

-substantially interfering with the child's or children's academic performance; or

-substantially interfering with the child's or children's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school (as defined in Public Act 098-0669)

The following behaviors are examples of bullying behavior:

-Telling or forcing another person to do something against his/her/their will;

-Making another person give up his/her lunch, place in line, or material possessions;

-Threatening some kind of retaliation (physical harm or withdrawal of friendship) if a person doesn't comply with the bullying person's request;

-Repeated acts of physical aggression upon another person (tripping, hitting, poking, pushing);

-The spread of gossip, rumors, and lies to hurt another person;

-Teasing, mocking, and taunting a peer.

School's Responsibility in Bullying Behavior

The Family Matters School is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for every child. When bullying behavior is thought to occur, we will take prompt, strong action in dealing with any and all aspects of such situations. Bullying behavior is contrary to State law (Public Acts 98-0669 and 98-0801) and school policy. The Family Matters School will determine whether a reported act of bullying behavior is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction and shall require that the school provide services to those children being bullied.

The Family Matters School believes that education, rather than punishment, is the appropriate way to deal with bullying behaviors. To that end, the staff team will make every effort to work with both the person who is exhibiting bullying behavior and the victim. The team will assist in preventing bullying behavior and minimizing the risk of children being treated unfairly. The Family Matters School can and will take whatever steps necessary to protect the rights and the well-being of the children and/or staff. Children who engage in acts of bullying behavior may be asked to leave the school if they are unable or unwilling to change their behavior. Teaching children to shun these disruptive

behaviors and providing all children equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment is our goal at The Family Matters School.

Investigating Bullying Behavior

Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying behavior was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the investigation about the reported incident of bullying behavior.

Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying behavior prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

Notifying the entire staff team and the Executive Director, or her/his/their designee, of the report of the incident of bullying behavior as soon as possible after the report is received.

Consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing children's rights, providing parents and guardians of the children who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal or school administrator or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying behavior.

If necessary, we will provide information to parties about local services (including social work, psychological services, etc.)

Bullying behavior based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other

distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in each of the following situations:

-During any school-sponsored education program or activity.

-While in school, on school property, on school field trips, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.

-Through the transmission of information from a school computer or using the school network.

-Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program, or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school if the bullying behavior causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of the school. Item (4) applies only in cases in which a teacher or school staff member receives a report that bullying behavior through this means has occurred and it does not require the school to staff or monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

“Cyber-bullying" means bullying behavior through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectric system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying behavior in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying behavior given here.

Victims of Bullying Behavior

Whenever a child believes that he/she/they are being treated unfairly, he/she/they must go to any teacher or school official to tell of his/her/their experience as soon as possible. Failure to report such incidents delays the school's efforts to deal with the problem. Any issue involving bullying behavior must be reported as soon as possible, either by the victim of bullying behavior, by the victim's parents, or by another child who has witnessed the event. We encourage any child to come forward and report incidents to his/her/their teacher or to the administration. At The Family Matters School, anyone who silently witnesses an event and remains a bystander is also considered part of the problem. Conversely, false reporting of bullying behavior is considered to be another form of bullying behavior. Retaliations or reprisals against those reporting bullying behavior will not be tolerated. As such, these actions may result in the same graduated sanction scale as above.

The Victim's Parents

If/when a parent believes that some sort of bullying behavior is affecting his/her/their child, the parent must:

-report the incident to the school immediately;
-realize that resolving the problem permanently may take some time;
-ask the school to keep an extra watchful eye on the child.

The Parents of a Child Displaying Bullying Behavior

When a parent has been notified that his/her/their child has been engaging in what is considered bullying behavior, it is expected that:

-Parents will make it clear to their child that such behavior is unacceptable.

-Parents will work with the school administration and the children involved to help resolve the situation. Parents should be aware that continued bullying behaviors may result in suspension and/or permanent expulsion from The Family Matters School.

-Bullying behavior is contrary to State law and the policy of the non-sectarian nonpublic school and is consistent with subsection (a-5) of this Section [free exercise of religion].

Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Peer conflicts are a normal part of growing up, and social conflicts are often mistaken for acts of bullying. While some reported cases of bullying behavior are unfounded and determined to be a social conflict, The Family Matters School is available to support children through social conflicts as well. Parents, staff, and children may consider the following when determining appropriate next steps and whether or not to report a case of bullying behavior.

Social Conflict or Bullying Behavior?

Social Conflict	Bullying Behavior
● Social conflict is a disagreement or an argument in which both sides express their views	● Bullying behavior is negative behavior directed by someone exerting power and control over another person.
● Happens once, or occasionally. May be accidental and not serious in nature.	● Pervasive, purposeful, and happens repeatedly, or presents a serious threat (physically or emotionally)
● Equal power between those involved	● Person displaying bullying behavior has more power
● Individual is remorseful, generally stops and changes behavior when they realize it is hurting someone.	● No remorse, blames victim ● Continues behavior when they realize it is hurting someone.

Resource: Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center

Bullying behavior can happen despite our best efforts to create safe, welcoming environments for children. Research shows that most bullying behavior takes place in school during the school day in places where there is often little or no adult supervision. We teach children to empathize, negotiate, and compromise when involved in the everyday conflicts of human life. We have learned, however, that the conflict resolution skills they use to resolve normal

problems with their peers may not work in situations of bullying behavior. There is an inherent power differential in such situations that usually renders negotiation and compromise skills useless. A child who is the recipient of bullying behavior generally needs the intervention of an adult who can equalize the uneven power relationship between the one who is displaying bullying behavior and the victim.

Bullying behavior often involves bystanders. We try to educate children about bullying behavior and bystanders, so that they will act to encourage children who display bullying behavior to stop and to support the victims of bullying behavior. Bullying behavior will not be tolerated in our school community. We want children to know that adult intervention will be swift and consistent. Consequences will be clearly defined and applied as fairly as possible whenever bullying behavior occurs. We teach children the difference between ordinary, developmentally appropriate conflict and bullying behavior. We encourage them to stop bullying behavior that they are aware of, if possible, and to report it when they see or experience it. The adults in the community can only give the guidance and support necessary if they know when bullying behavior occurs. Parents, too, are encouraged to report suspected cases of bullying behavior.

Children are encouraged to immediately report bullying behavior. A report may be made to a teacher or the Director of Education. Reporters shall remain anonymous and are protected against retaliation. Anyone, including staff members and parents/guardians, who have information about actual or threatened bullying behavior, is encouraged to report it to the school staff.

When addressing allegations of bullying behavior, the school is required to contact all families involved in the bullying behavior promptly (within 10 days) and thoroughly investigate; give all families involved the opportunity to meet with the school staff; determine appropriate consequences; and protect children from retaliation.

If a teacher identifies a potential bullying behavior, they will monitor and document the child's behavior and involve other school staff in monitoring as well. If a negative pattern emerges, intervention will begin. The child and his/her parents will be informed of the bullying behavior.

Depending upon the seriousness of the bullying behavior and the age of the child, consequences will range from apologies and restitution to suspension. Children will be expected to acknowledge their behavior and to make a

contract agreeing that this behavior will end. In some cases, parents may be asked to seek appropriate counseling for their child. The Family Matters School will connect families to resources for counseling if needed. In the case of a child unable to cease bullying behavior, an enrollment contract will not be extended for the coming year, and expulsion will be considered. Any accusations of bullying behavior that are found to be false are considered grounds for further exploration. Those involved will meet with school staff to determine the root cause of these accusations and what actions need to be taken from that point forward.

Acts of retaliation against those who report bullying behavior will not be tolerated by the school. Children who retaliate against others will enter into discussions with the staff and their families regarding the behavior and what lies behind it. Retaliation indicates that the situation has not yet been resolved and will be dealt with in the same manner as the original response to the bullying behavior.

Creating a bully-free environment requires the efforts of all stakeholders at The Family Matters School: staff, children, and families.

To report bullying behavior concerns, contact Haddie at 773-465-6011 ext. 1118.

This policy is published in our School Handbook and distributed to all employees and enrolled families at The Family Matters School. The Family Matters School is dedicated to creating a safe space for all and will conduct an annual (or more frequent if indicated) evaluation of the above policy to ensure it is effectively addressing bullying behavior at the school. In evaluating our effectiveness, we will review the number of incidents reported, the frequency of the incidents, the locations of incidents, the type of incidents observed, and the bystander behaviors observed. All stakeholders: staff, children, and families will contribute to these reviews of efficacy.

This Bullying Behavior Policy is consistent with The Expectations for Youth Behavior as outlined in The Family Matters School Handbook.

Appropriate Setting For Children

The Family Matters School welcomes all children regardless of race, religion, gender, or physical challenges. Particular concerns about the child's development and adjustment will be discussed with the parents. We do retain the right to terminate enrollment at The Family Matters School if it is determined, with parental input, that another setting would more effectively suit the child's needs.

Operating Schedule

The Family Matters School runs from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM Monday through Friday.

Although we want to maintain as consistent a daily schedule as possible, there will be days when special events, such as visits from guests (actors, storytellers, musicians, *etc.)* and field trips, will cause the schedule to vary. Opening and closing times will always be consistent. You will be informed in advance of changes in the regular schedule.

Emergency Closure of School

The Family Matters School will be closed during weather emergencies – *i.e.,* any time that the Chicago Public Schools are closed due to adverse weather conditions. All parents will be informed by telephone and/or Remind/text of any emergency closure of The Family Matters School. We will remain closed until normal operating hours resume at Chicago Public Schools. The following conditions will also result in the emergency closure of the school: lack of heat, light, or water in the building.

Emergency Plans

The Family Matters School will practice fire drills with all school participants three times a year. Twice a year, school members will take part in a tornado/severe weather emergency drill. We will also conduct a Law Enforcement Drill twice a year to be prepared for violent threats within the neighborhood or building itself. Consistent practice of these drills will ensure the smooth execution of an evacuation plan in the unlikely event of an emergency.

Field Trips

The field trips take place throughout the year and will reflect the interests of the children and the curriculum of the school.

Transportation

On most occasions in which children need to be transported, an approved school bus company will be used. A licensed and trained driver by the bus company will drive the bus.

Families will be informed and may be asked to assist with other forms of transport such as carpools or the use of public transportation.

Communication

In addition to scheduled conferences, the Team will send notes home to inform parents of happenings in the school. Notes will be placed in the children's cubbies and on the bulletin boards. Please check these places at pickup time to be aware of changes in our schedule or any special events in the school. The Team will also email/text parents if that is their preferred mode of communication. You may also call us or set up meetings at any time. If you need to get in touch with The Family Matters School, please call Haddie at (773) 465-6011, ext. 1118. You may also text one of the teaching staff, and we will respond as we are able during the day. ***If you need to talk with a school Team member after 3:30 PM, please text the Team member or call Haddie. You may text any of the teaching Team Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 AM and 3:30 PM. We ask that you understand that we may not be able to answer your text/call until the next day.***

Open communication among parents, children, and Team members is essential for the school to run efficiently and effectively. Please call us if you want to share anything regarding your child/ren, your family, or the school operation. Your input is very valuable to us.

Maintenance of Facility

The building will be cleaned at the end of each school day. All tables and working surfaces are disinfected with a 1:3 bleach/ water solution.

Dismissal from School

If you decide to discontinue with The Family Matters School, we ask that you give a two-week notice. The Family Matters School will also give you a two-week notice if your child/ren are dismissed from the school. This is necessary to prepare the child/ren for the transition to another school and to allow other school participants to prepare for the separation.

Documentation

The following documentation is to be completed for a child's file before he/she/they can begin attending the school:

-Completed application form with emergency contacts, contracts, and demographic information

-Copy of child's current physical exam with shot and allergy information

-Copy of the child's birth certificate

-Dental and optical records

-Signed agreement/permission/contract letter

Conclusion

We are excited about The Family Matters School curriculum and the opportunity to grow, learn, and share with you and your child/children. If you have any questions or concerns about what you have read in this handbook, or any ideas you want to share, please call us at 773-465-6011 ext. 1118 (Haddie). We would love to hear from you.

Should any of the stated policies or procedures change because of improved methodology, we will inform you immediately and give you a copy of the changes in writing.

Once again, thank you for being a part of The Family Matters School. Your input and involvement are always welcome. We anticipate many enriching and joyful shared experiences in the coming months.

Appendix

Playground Safety
Walking to/from School Independently Permission Form
Medications Release
Children's Responsibilities & Rights
Parent's Responsibilities & Rights
Family Resource Guide
Family Matters Media Policy
The Family Matters School/Team Contract
School Year Calendar

Playground Equipment Safety Rules

It is important that each child **knows** the rules of safety and proper use of the equipment and is able to apply them in his/her/their everyday play to ensure the safety of all. Sharing and taking turns is also an important part of play and will be utilized in all aspects of the school.

The GENERAL RULES apply to all playgrounds being utilized. Modifications and adaptations in the rules shall be made to suit the individual situation when necessary. Children will be supervised at all times while playing on the equipment.

* Enter the equipment pit area only when you are going to use the equipment.
* Avoid the equipment when the area around it is icy, wet, or muddy.
* Walk (as opposed to running) only in the equipment pits.

Please always exit moving or high equipment carefully. It is far safer to slow down and step off, or climb down, than jump off.

Games shall be played outside the equipment pits. Keep balls and other small toys away from the equipment areas.

Wait your turn a safe distance away from the equipment. Always leave a space between yourself and the person in front of you.

Games of tag shall be played in wide-open areas.

Make and keep your play space safe. If you find sticks, stones, and other debris in play areas, remove it CAREFULLY and put it in the trash can or ask a Team member for assistance.

Report any broken equipment or unsafe conditions immediately to a Team member or volunteer on playground duty. They will know the best way to return your playground to the safest condition possible.

Before leaving the park each day, collect at least one piece of litter and place it in the trash receptacle. This is our way of keeping the park clean for the community and ourselves.

Family Matters

WALK TO/FROM SCHOOL INDEPENDENTLY PERMISSION FORM

I grant full permission for my child/ren to walk to/from school independently each day unless I otherwise inform the school. I understand that children who are walking independently will have a Team member sign them in and out. Children are expected to arrive by 9:00 AM and leave by the end of the school day, at 3:30 PM. I understand the risks involved when my child walks unsupervised and will not hold Family Matters responsible once she/he/they exit the doors of the building.

Signature of parent/ legal guardian:

_____ _____ Date: _____

Signature of participant:

_____ Date: _____

The Family Matters School
Medications Release

To be completed by the parent/guardian every time a medication is to be given to a child by our Team:

I give my permission for _____
(child's name)
to be given medication as described below. I understand that the medication will be administered by a member of The Family Matters School Team and recorded in the medication log.

_____
(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date)

Name of
Medication:_____RX#_____

Side Effects: (if known)_____

Number of Days to be Given: _____

Dates to be Given: _____

Dosage: _____

Time(s) of Day to be Given: _____

Special Instructions:_____

_____

_____

Needs Refrigeration: YES NO (circle one)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
All medications are to be in a prescription container with the child's name and date as in the above request. The name & telephone number of the prescribing doctor are to be printed on the medication.

File this form with the child's records after reviewing it with all of the Team members working with the child, and assigning it to a Team member to administer the medication. *Please store all medications in locked containers.*

PARENT SIGNATURE_____

WRITTEN GUIDELINES TO FACILITATE SCHOOL OPERATION

Child's Responsibilities & Rights

Below are listed some guidelines and basic concepts of the rights and responsibilities of both children and parents embraced by The Family Matters School.

Child's Responsibilities

Child will be responsible:

1. For learning to accept the consequences of their actions.
2. For respecting the rules that guide them during the school day.
3. For controlling their feelings so that their actions ensure the continued safety of everyone in the school.
4. For caring for and safeguarding any equipment or property in the building and all other locations, while they are in school.
5. For replacing any damaged equipment that is willfully misused.
6. For sharing equipment and facilities with all the children in the school.
7. For remaining with a Team member at all times and notifying them if they need to go to another area.
8. For returning materials and equipment to the place they found them before taking out new materials or going to a new activity.
9. For carrying out a chore to which they have committed.

Child's Rights

Children have a right to:

1. A safe and reliable environment.
2. The use of all the equipment and space on an equal basis; to find equipment where it is intended to be stored, and in functioning condition.
3. Have their ideas and feelings respected.
4. Rules, regulations, and consequences that are fair, equal, and respectful to and supportive of them.
5. Express their anger, frustration, disappointment, joy, *etc.* in an appropriate manner
6. Express their creative ability.
7. Explore and discover.
8. Continue developing their full potential.
9. Have an environment that offers a variety of choices: physical time, quiet time, indoor time, outdoor time, creative time, dramatic time, play time, and exploratory time.
10. Create, adapt, and negotiate The Family Matters School rules and activities in conjunction with the Team.
11. Have Team members who care about them, enjoy being with them, and support their growth.

Parents' Responsibilities & Rights

Parents have the responsibility to:

1. Let the Team know in advance if their child/ren will be absent for the day.
2. Observe the rules of The Family Matters School as set forth in this manual and in any additional policy statements.
3. Share their concerns with Team members and/or the Board of Directors, if necessary, if the school could more effectively meet their own or their child/ren's needs.
4. Listen to concerns that Team members have about their child/ren's behavior, and to work through an agreeable solution to any challenges that might occur.
5. Know the guiding behavior of the school as explained in this manual.
6. Sign their child/ren in and out at the start and the end of the day; notify a Team member when taking a child/ren from The Family Matters School; and notify a Team member when another authorized person is picking up a child/ren.
7. Inform the Team if child/ren have been exposed to a contagious illness.
8. Notify the Team of planned vacations and other absences in advance.
9. Notify the Team of withdrawal at least two weeks in advance.
10. Pay tuition fees on time.
11. Keep the child/ren's records up-to-date with changes in phone numbers and addresses.
12. Pick up child/ren on time.
13. Ensure that their child/ren are dressed appropriately each day for indoor and outdoor play.

Parents have the **right** to:

1. Know their children are in a safe environment where they are free to select a variety of activities.
2. Participate in all levels of decision-making concerning how their children spend the day.
3. Know what types of activities are being planned, and offer feedback on the kinds of activities their children enjoy.
4. Share their concerns with Team or Board members at any time.
5. Know if their child/ren are behaving in a way that is counterproductive to the learning environment at The Family Matters School, and spend time talking with the Team and the child/ren about the situation.
6. Know if their child/ren are absent from the school when he/she/they are expected to be there.
7. Voice special concerns and considerations above and beyond those covered in this manual, and discuss special cases where occasional exceptions may be made from the rules set forth in this manual.
8. Know about any changes in policy or procedures.

FAMILY RESOURCE GUIDE

Here is a list of places to call for support, education, and fun for your family.

HOTLINES

CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE
1-800-25ABUSE
(1-800-252-2873)

COUNSELING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL COUNSELING CENTER
(847) 216-6250

HOWARD AREA COMMUNITY CENTER
(773) 262-6622
7648 North Paulina Street, Chicago, IL 60626
Emergency food and housing, job placement service, mother and child food and milk school, day care center for 3- to 5-year-olds, and Social Service Center.

GOOD NEWS COMMUNITY CHURCH
(773) 262-2277
7649 N Paulina Street, Chicago, IL 60626
Religious services (worship – 11 AM)

A JUST HARVEST
(773) 262-2297
7649 N Paulina St, Chicago, IL 60626
Community Kitchen: Everyday, 12:00 PM-2:00 PM

PARENTAL STRESS SERVICES
(312) 372-7368
59 E Van Buren, Suite 1618, Chicago, IL 60605
24-hour Parental Stress Hotline offers counseling, support, problem-solving, and referrals. Parents Anonymous groups, Kids Anonymous, Sexual abuse prevention, Referral Service

Loyola Community and Family Services
(773) 508-3390
Provides behavioral and mental health services to families and children living or attending school in Rogers Park and Edgewater communities.
Granada Center
6439 North Sheridan, Suite 300
Chicago IL, 60626

COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTERS OF CHICAGO
(773) 769-0205

RECREATION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

POTTAWATTOMIE PARK FIELD HOUSE
(773) 262-5835
7340 N Rogers Ave., Chicago, IL 60626
Sports programs, gymnastics, tap dance, arts and crafts, summer day camp.

WYLLIE B. WHITE PARK
(773) 262-5051
1610 W. Howard, Chicago, Illinois 60626
Fieldhouse Hours: Sun: Closed, M-F: 9:00 AM-9:00 PM, Sat: 9:00 AM-5:00 PM
Park Hours: 6:00 AM-11:00 PM

ROGERS PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
(312) 744-0156
6907 N Rogers Ave., Chicago, IL 60626

HIGH RIDGE YMCA
(773) 262-8300
2424 West Touhy Ave., Chicago, IL 60645

MUSEUMS AND PLACES OF INTEREST

THE ADLER PLANETARIUM
(312) 322-0300
1300 S Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL
www.adlerplanetarium.org
Children ages 3-11 *(various admission package rates)*
Free days change...call or check website for schedule

PEGGY NOTEBAERT NATURE MUSEUM
(773) 755-5100
2430 North Cannon Drive, Chicago, IL
www.chias.org
Free day: Thursday

CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM
(312) 642-4600
1601 N Clark St. & W North Ave, Chicago, IL
www.chicagohs.org
$14.00 Adults, $12.00 Seniors(65+)/Students (13-22), Children are free
Free day: Monday

DU SABLE MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY
(773) 947-0600
740 E 56th Place, Chicago, IL
www.dusablemuseum.org

CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
(312) 527-1000
700 E Grant Ave., Navy Pier, Chicago, IL
www.chicagochildrensmuseum.org
Free Thursday nights--" Family Night"-from 5 PM to 8 PM

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
(312) 922-9410
Roosevelt at 1400 S Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL
www.fieldmuseum.org
(various admission package rates)
Free days change...call or check website for schedule

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY AND OMNIMAX
(773) 684-1414
5700 S Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL
www.msichicago.org
(various admission package rates)
Free days change... call or check website for schedule

SHEDD AQUARIUM
(312) 939-2438
1200 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL
www.sheddaquarium.org
(various admission package rates)
Most Mondays & Tuesdays are discount days (Sept. – Nov.) ... call or check website for schedule

Note: Public libraries often have free passes to museums. Also, Chicago residents often receive discounts with ID.

FAMILY MATTERS TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Cell Phones*: All cell phones are to be put away during programming. At The School, cell phones are kept in a safe place by the teacher during the school day. Parents are to call team members' phones if there is an emergency and they need to reach their child/children. If program members are seen using the phones during programming, a conversation will be held with them to resolve any difficulty in implementing the policy.

2. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other social media: Program members may visit YouTube to view videos with the approval and supervision of Team members. At all times, children and youth will use the following questions as a guide when visiting any website: Would I turn off this website if my parent or a Team member were to walk in? Is this a website I would show to my parent or a Team member? If the answer is no to either of these questions, then they may visit another website or choose a different activity.

3. Movies/music/music videos, etc.: Only G, PG, and PG-13 media with Team member approval may be viewed at Family Matters. The same questions (under #2) apply for music and music videos. All movies are to be appropriate for the youngest members of our programs. Whenever possible, headphones can be worn.

4. Use of Computers, Chromebooks, and Tablets: All program members, volunteers, and mentors may use the Chromebooks available at Family Matters with the permission of a Team member.

5. Use of Tablets*: All tablets are to be kept at home. If they are used at school and then brought to Family Matters, they are to be kept in backpacks until free time and with the permission of a Team member.

*Any lost or damaged tablet or phone is solely the responsibility of its owner.

CONTRACT WITH THE FAMILY MATTERS SCHOOL FAMILIES
AND THE FAMILY MATTERS SCHOOL TEAM

PART 1:

The _____family agrees to the following:

1) Our family understands that being a member of The Family Matters School means a commitment to the work we are undertaking: daily academic work, actively participating in the community of Family Matters, communicating honestly and clearly with each other, and advocating for my child/ren's education beyond the walls of Family Matters.

2) Our family will participate in ALL (scheduled) parent meetings. Excused absences will be arranged with The Family Matters School Team prior to the meeting. Special circumstances will be considered by the Team.

3) I will participate in family events whenever possible.

4) I will participate in all fundraising efforts by:
    a. Participating in and raising pledges for the annual Walk-A-Thon (held in the Fall)
    b. Participating in other fundraising/community building events
    c. The sale of tickets or other items for fundraising events

5) We will attend conferences with the Family Matters Team as needed, including all family members, if requested. Our family will meet jointly with The Family Matters School Team members and school teachers if needed.

6) I(we) understand that if I (we) am/are unable to fulfill the terms of this agreement, I (we) will be placed on probation. Once placed on probation, I (we) agree to meet with the Team. Missing more than three meetings will be grounds for termination from The Family Matters School.

PART 2:

The Family Matters Team agrees to the following:

1) We will send out reminders for all parent events a week before the events and follow up with reminders (phone calls, texts, email, *etc.)* the day of the event.

2) We will assist with transportation arrangements, including carpooling, to and from family events.

3) We will give ample notice for the sale of tickets and other fundraising events.

4) We will provide relevant parenting resources in our library and make them accessible. We will also respond to the training requests of parents by assisting in the research and procuring of speakers who will address expressed needs and interests.

5) We will provide a safe and nurturing environment at all times for the children and keep parents informed about the progress of their children.

6) We will do all in our power to provide a positive environment that strengthens the entire family and supports the larger community of the North of Howard neighborhood.

Parent Signature: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Family Matters Team Member Signature:

_____

Date: _____