Mountain Phoenix

Community School



Early Childhood Family Handbook 2026-2027

Preschool & Kindergarten

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MPCS Early Childhood Program & Classroom Details

Vision Statement and Philosophy

At Mountain Phoenix Community School, we strive to be a gentle bridge between home and school. We honor a deep love of life, learning, imagination, and wonder. The early childhood years (ages 3 to 7) form the foundation for a child's entire education.

Rather than rushing development, we protect this dreamlike stage of life. We give children the social tools, motor skills, and practical experiences they need to thrive by creating a beautiful, home-like environment. Here, they can naturally become engineers, cooks, painters, mathematicians, builders, or anyone their imaginations take them through open-ended play and meaningful work. We build our community on a foundation of teamwork, stewardship, and kindness.

The Importance of Rhythm: Breathing In and Breathing Out

Young children are deeply carried by the rhythms of the world—from the breath in their bodies to the turning of the seasons. Children flourish when their daily activities reflect this natural order, giving them a profound sense of security, trust, and physical health.

Our daily schedule is a conscious flow of "breathing in" and "breathing out":

- **Breathing In (Gathering Together):** These are times of focused, shared harmony. We breathe in together during our morning circle, seasonal puppet plays, artistic activities, snack time, storytime, lunch, and rest periods. Transitions are gently carried by the warmth of the teacher's singing.
- **Breathing Out (Expansive Play):** Play is the central heart of our program. During these times, children actively explore their world, processing their experiences through creative building, pretending, games, and movement.

Throughout the week, children engage in rich, practical artistic work including watercolor painting, coloring, beeswax modeling, sewing, finger knitting, baking bread, and gardening.

Program Hours

Our daily and weekly configurations are structured around the following times:

- **Full Day (State-Funded) Kindergarten:** 8:00am – 1:30pm (Monday through Friday).
    - Napping House: *additional fee 1:30pm - 3:15pm (Monday through Thursday).
- **Preschool Options (Monday through Friday):**
    - **Full Day:** 8:15am – 3:15pm
    - (Note: Fridays feature an early release at 1:15 pm).
    - **Half Day:** 8:15am – 12:15pm.
- **For PK3 only (MWF or TTh only for PK3):** 8:15 am – 3:15 pm

- (Note: Fridays feature an early release at 1:15 pm).

Outside Play and Colorado Weather Extremes

Nature provides the ultimate guide for our curriculum. We cross our classroom threshold to explore the outdoors every single day, rain, wind, snow, or sun. We embrace the old wisdom: *"There is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing!"*

While we prioritize outdoor immersion, teachers use careful discretion regarding air quality and severe temperatures:

- **Cold Weather:** If the temperature drops below 19°F, outdoor play is limited to a maximum of 15 minutes at a time. Children must stay bundled and consult a teacher before removing any layers.
- **Hot Weather:** When temperatures exceed 90°F, we ensure continuous access to shade, hats, and fresh water, and we may shorten our outdoor time.
- **Sun Protection:** Parents and caregivers should apply sunscreen every morning. For afternoon play, children 4 years and older will be supervised as they apply their own. Teachers will directly apply sunscreen to children 3 years and younger.

Packed Lunches

All Kindergarten children and full-day Preschoolers bring a wholesome, home-packed lunch (School-provided hot lunches are also available; details can be found on our website) . We ask that you pack balanced meals that nourish your child's growing brain and body.

- **Kept Fresh & Warm:** Please include ice packs to keep items cool, or use an insulated thermos for warm foods, along with any needed utensils.
- **Items to Leave at Home:** To protect the children's sustained energy, please do not send candy, chocolate, soda pop, juice, or high-sugar items like commercial fruit snacks. If brought to school, these will be tucked away to enjoy at home after the school day.
- **Thoughtful Treats:** Fruit strips and fig bars should be limited to one total per day and will only be given out after afternoon rest time.
- **Nourishing Ideas to Spark Your Imagination:** Sandwiches or wraps, pasta, warm soup, hummus with vegetable sticks, unsweetened plain yogurt with granola, fresh seasonal fruit, chips with salsa, or a mix of nuts, seeds, and dried berries.

For Parents & Caregivers

Nurturing Rhythms at Home

Just as children are sustained by the predictable patterns of the school day, they are deeply nourished by consistent rhythms at home. While modern life presents many challenges, we strongly encourage a commitment to regular mealtimes and early bedtimes. For children under the age of seven, we highly recommend a peaceful bedtime between 7:00 pm and 7:30 pm to

support their neurological development and emotional well-being.

Clothing Guidelines

In early childhood, simpler is truly better. Children find immense comfort when expectations are clear, and we want our focus to be on *who* your child is, rather than *what* they are wearing. We ask that all clothing, slippers, outerwear, backpacks, water bottles, and lunch sacks be simple, functional, and completely free of media, commercial imagery, flashing lights, electronic parts, slogans, or corporate characters.

- **Active Wear:** Choose sturdy, simple clothing that your child can easily manage independently when using the bathroom or dressing. Shirts must cover the shoulders (no spaghetti straps). Shorts or leggings should always be worn under skirts and dresses to allow for joyful climbing and hanging upside down.
- **Footwear:** Children need sturdy, closed-toe shoes for running and climbing. Please do not send your child in crocs, cowboy boots, flip-flops, sandals, slip-on party shoes, or shoes with flashing lights.
- **Seasonal Layers:** Colorado mornings are often crisp, leading into warm afternoons. Layers are essential for keeping physical warmth intact, which directly supports healthy childhood development.
- **Winter Gear:** When snow blankets the earth, children must have a warm hat, insulated waterproof mittens, warm socks, snow pants, and waterproof boots. Please avoid thin leggings or ankle socks during the winter season.
- **Rain Gear:** A sturdy raincoat with a hood and water-resistant rain boots are required so we can play through the puddles.
- **Vital "Just in Case" Clothes:** Because our children work closely with earth, mud, water, and paint, clothing *will* get beautifully dirty and wet. Every child must have two complete changes of clothing kept at school, including 2 pairs of underwear, 2 pairs of pants, 2 pairs of socks, and 1 seasonally appropriate shirt.
- **Labeling:** Please take a moment to clearly write your child’s first and last name on all pieces of clothing, labels, hoodies, and jackets so they can be easily reunited if misplaced.
- **Jewelry:** Please leave jewelry at home as it is easily lost and acts as a distraction in play. Small, meaningful items (like a cultural necklace or simple earrings) that are never taken off and rest completely outside the child's daily awareness are perfectly acceptable.

Media Policy: Protecting Our Senses

To preserve their natural wonder and creativity, we expect our families to significantly reduce or entirely eliminate media exposure in their children's daily lives. This includes television, movies, video games, phone apps, tablets, and commercial audio devices. While this shift can feel like a tall order, families consistently find that stepping away from screens creates beautiful pockets of

time for deeper connection and family creativity.

Because young children absorb the world entirely through imitation and their senses, electronic media has a uniquely powerful, dimming effect on their developing minds. We often observe that children exposed to heavy screen time get "stuck" in repetitive play—only able to reenact media storylines or mimic mechanical superhero noises rather than generating their own creative thoughts. It can also shorten their attention spans and turn a magical storytime into a restless, frustrating struggle.

Toys from Home

To keep our classroom play anchored in shared imagination and natural materials, we ask that children leave their toys at home. If a personal toy slips into the classroom, it will gently "rest" on the teacher's shelf until it can be returned to you at the end of the day. The only exception is a soft, simple "lovie" brought solely to comfort your child during afternoon nap or rest time.

Cell Phone Courtesy on Campus

Young children require our full, grounded presence. When you cross our campus threshold for drop-off or pick-up, please tuck your cell phones and earbuds away. This brief window of time allows you to be completely present with your child as they bridge their two worlds.

Phones should only be out to complete your electronic sign-in or sign-out. If you are volunteering on the campus or attending a nature walk, please step completely away from the children if an urgent call must be answered. Our teachers carry their devices strictly for safety and emergency communications.

Parent Evenings, Conferences, and Community Care

- **Enrichment Evenings:** Our adult community gatherings are a vibrant source of connection, insight, and learning. Held throughout the year, these adult-only evenings cover Public Waldorf education, child development, and classroom life. We ask that at least one caregiver from each family attend these essential meetings.
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Regular conferences are built into our school calendar to closely share observations about your child's development. We request that these dates are honored and not utilized as travel days.
- **Volunteering Your Hands:** We love welcoming parents into our community circle! Whether you are raking sand in our play yard or sewing warm curtains for our windows, your help is a gift. We ask every household to strive for 40 hours of community participation per year. Opportunities, badging protocols, and our community confidentiality agreements can be easily accessed via Parent Square.
- **Open Hearts & Communication:** Your trust is paramount to us. If a question, worry, or concern ever arises regarding your child, please speak directly and openly with your child's teacher first. If further guidance is needed, our Early Childhood Program Director is always here to support the conversation. There is also a suggestion box on our website!

Recommended Reading from Our Teachers

If you are looking for deep insight into child development and parenting within a Waldorf framework, our faculty warmly recommends the following titles:

- *You Are Your Child's First Teacher* — Rahima Baldwin
- *Simplicity Parenting* and *The Soul of Discipline* — Kim John Payne
- *Beyond the Rainbow Bridge* — Barbara Patterson and Pamela Bradley
- *In a Nutshell: Dialogues with Parents at Acorn Hill* — Nancy Foster
- *The Children's Year* — Cooper, Fynes-Clinton, and Rowling
- *Lifeways* — Gundrum Davy and Bons Voors
- *The Hurried Child* — David Elkind
- *Endangered Minds* and *Failure to Connect* — Jane Healy
- *Teaching as a Lively Art* — Marjorie Spock
- *The Way of a Child* — A.C. Harwood

Licensing, Administration, & Safety

Mountain Phoenix Community School operates under the oversight of the Jefferson County School District and is fully licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services. All policies below mirror the strict regulatory protections of our district and state safety mandates.

Electronic Sign-In, Sign-Out, and Security

- **Brightwheel App:** State licensing mandates that every child must be securely signed in and out each day. Parents and caregivers must install the **Brightwheel** app on their smartphones.
- **Personal PINs:** You will be issued a unique PIN to use on your phone or the classroom iPad. This process is quick and must be completed by an approved adult guardian who is 18 years or older. Children are never permitted to sign themselves in or use the school devices.
- **Authorized Pick-Up:** Children will only be released to individuals explicitly documented on your emergency contact and authorized pick-up lists. If an unfamiliar face arrives to collect your child, teachers or office staff will check their government-issued ID, even if they have verbal clearance.
- **Emergency Verbal Release:** In a true emergency, you may give the school verbal permission to release your child to someone not listed, provided they present valid identification upon arrival. No child will ever be released to anyone under the age of 18.

Attendance, Absences, and Tardiness

- **Reporting Absences:** Please communicate all absences and specific health symptoms directly to your child's teacher via Parent Square, or call our dedicated school attendance line at 303-728-9100 ext. 333. Because we are a state-licensed facility, we are legally required to track specific illness vectors within our classrooms.
- **Tardiness:** Arriving late breaks the peaceful morning rhythm for both your child and the

rest of the class. A child is considered tardy after **8:10am** for Kindergarten and after **8:25am** for Preschool. If you arrive past these times, you must walk your child to the Main Office to receive an official tardy slip before coming to the classroom. If you arrive during circletime, it is possible that you will need to wait with your child outside of the classroom, before being let in.

- **Too-Late Times:** To protect our focused morning work, absolutely **no arrivals** are permitted after **10:00am** for Kindergarten or **10:15am** for Preschool.

Late Pick-Up Grace Periods & Fees

We understand that unexpected delays happen on the road. If you are running late, please notify the Main Office immediately. Our standard daily grace periods are as follows:

- **Preschool Half-Day:** 12:15pm – 12:20pm
- **Kindergarten Dismissal:** 1:30pm – 1:35pm
- **Full-Day Dismissal (Preschool & Kindergarten):** 3:15pm – 3:20pm

If a family exceeds their grace period more than twice, a late pick-up fee of **$5.00 per minute** will be applied to your account. In strict compliance with protective safety protocols, if a child is left at school for over 30 minutes without any contact from a parent or emergency guardian, the school reserves the right to contact emergency services (911) and Child Protective Services.

Before and After Care

- **Before Care:** MPCS hosts an early care program starting at 7:30 am through our Main Office for a fee of **$6.00 per day**.
- **After Care:** Extended afternoon care is contracted through the YMCA and available for children ages 4+. Please refer to our website for enrollment specifics. Even when utilizing the YMCA program, parents must complete their daily end-of-day sign-out on the Brightwheel app.
- **Napping House (for Kindergarten only):** Per semester fee of $850 (due in August and January). Reach out to the Program Director of Early Childhood for more details.
- **After School Enrichment:** These opportunities are available for children grades 1-8.

Independent Toileting Requirements

Per our state licensing criteria, all children enrolled in our early childhood program must be fully potty trained before their first day. Children must be entirely independent in their restroom habits and independently aware of when they need to use the toilet.

- **Accidents:** If an isolated accident occurs, a teacher will provide clean clothes from the child's cubby. To preserve legal safety boundaries, teachers do not provide individual wiping assistance; children must wipe themselves. For severe accidents, a parent may be called to pick up their child within 30 minutes.
- **Frequent Issues:** If frequent accidents occur during the opening weeks of the year, a collaborative support meeting will be called with the teacher, family, and Program Director to form an intervention plan. If these measures are unsuccessful, it indicates the

child may not yet be developmentally ready for our school environment, and they may be asked to leave the program until readiness is met.

Health, Contagious Illnesses, and Medical Care

A robust, active early childhood classroom is not an environment where a sick or recovering child can easily rest. Mountain Phoenix strictly adheres to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) regulatory brief, *"How Sick is Too Sick"*.

- **Fever, Vomiting, and Diarrhea:** Your child must remain at home for a **full 24 hours** and be completely symptom-free before returning to school. Children must return naturally—without the assistance of fever-reducing or symptom-masking medications. If a child is discovered to be at school under the influence of fever-reducing medication, parents will be contacted to pick them up immediately.
- **Mandated Health Reporting:** By law, our administration must report verified contagious outbreaks—including measles, mumps, chickenpox, or other state-tracked infectious vectors—directly to the public health department.
- **School-Day Illness Notifications:** If your child becomes lethargic, develops a fever, or is unable to safely participate in our active rhythm during the day, you will be called for an early pick-up. Parents or emergency contacts must arrive within **30 minutes** of our call.
- **Prescription Medications:** Any medication administered on campus must be cleared by a physician and authorized by a parent via our official Medical Health Form. All medications must be handed directly to our Clinic Aide first to fulfill mandatory licensing paperwork. Medications are safely logged and distributed solely by a designated, state-delegated employee according to strict prescription specifications.
- **Medical Food Allergies:** If your child has a diagnosed medical allergy, please immediately contact our Early Childhood Program Director, Joy Wegs, at **jwegs@jeffcoschools.us**. We will coordinate a clear safety protocol alongside your class teacher. For lifestyle or dietary preferences (such as gluten-free), we will gladly partner with you so you can provide safe, matching alternatives that align with our shared snack periods.

Accidents, Minor Injuries, and State Incident Reports

Bumps, minor scrapes, and bruises are a normal part of robust, play-based learning. For minor issues, our teachers provide immediate care, cleansing, and comforting words. A note will be sent home or a message logged on Parent Square to keep you informed.

- **Serious Injuries:** For injuries requiring medical evaluation, parents will be contacted immediately. Teachers will file an official incident form that must be signed by a parent or caregiver. If an incident involves two children, both families will be notified immediately while strict student confidentiality is maintained.
- **24-Hour Reporting Window:** If you take your child to a physician or urgent care clinic following an injury sustained at school, you must notify the Early Childhood Program Director within that same evening. The school has a strict **24-hour legal deadline** to file

an official injury report with the state. Following a report, state licensing officials may visit our campus to interview witnesses and faculty members.

Discipline Policy:

Discipline in our spaces is held with loving firmness, profound respect, and deep consideration for a child's developmental boundaries. Young children navigate their emotions primarily through imitation and environmental rhythms.

- **Redirection:** When minor corrections are required, teachers model appropriate gestures and redirect children by taking them by the hand and engaging them in an inviting task (such as helping tidy up).
- **Intervention Protocols:** If an action poses an emotional or physical safety risk, teachers step in immediately. Hurtful actions or words are never tolerated. The teacher will first provide deep comfort to the injured child. Next, they will address the child who caused the hurt, gently holding their hands or feet and saying firmly: *"Hands are for working and playing,"* or *"No, we do not hit or bite."*
- **De-escalation Steps:** If a child experiences a loss of self-control, teachers will gently remove them from the group using non-punitive, normalized restoration practices:
    1. Sitting quietly with the child away from the group.
    2. Taking a calming walk outdoors together.
    3. Allowing them a peaceful period of rest within a neighboring early childhood classroom.
    4. Accompanying them to the Early Childhood Office to rest, play, and reset in a small classroom space.
- **Unacceptable Behaviors:** Actions that fall outside our safe classroom framework include fleeing or running away from a teacher, persistent physical aggression, assault on staff or peers, destruction of school property or materials, and targeted, hurtful language.
- **Chronic Behavioral Interventions:** If unsafe behaviors become frequent, our protocol is as follows:
    1. The teacher will request an earnest parent/caregiver conference.
    2. Faculty will keep detailed, objective written observations for two weeks to track patterns.
    3. Teachers will seek collaborative observations from administration and peer colleagues.
    4. If needed, the parents, teacher, and Early Childhood Program Director will form a supportive circle to establish an active safety plan, behavior plan, or abbreviated schedule. For Kindergartners, this may include coordination with our Special Education (SPED) team.
- **Biting Policy:** Our state-mandated biting policy also encompasses extreme physical regressions like punching, kicking, or shouting profanities. Any instance of these behaviors results in an immediate call home. If a child bites and breaks skin or inflicts aggressive physical harm, they will be sent home for the remainder of the day and must

be picked up within 30 minutes.

Monthly Emergency Drills and Campus Protocols

Mountain Phoenix conducts organized emergency drills every month so children are deeply familiar with safety routines without experiencing any panic or anxiety.

- **The Classroom GO-Bag:** During any drill or real-world emergency, teachers carry an emergency pack containing our current Brightwheel sign-in logs, medical forms, emergency contact numbers, a first aid kit, and rescue medications.
- **Severe Weather (Tornadoes):** Children are escorted to our secure basement space located beneath the main office building where they remain until weather advisories clear.
- **Fire Evacuations:** Every room is equipped with an emergency fire exit. Classes meet at our designated outdoor assembly area and wait until fire officials clear the buildings.
- **Hold or Secure Protocols:** If local police activity escalates in our surrounding neighborhood, our outer campus doors are locked down securely. Normal operations proceed as usual inside the building.
- **Lockdown Protocols:** In the event of an immediate threat inside our facility, doors are locked, lights are extinguished, and children are guided into pre-designated, secure hiding spaces.
- **Missing Child Protocol:** If a child is misplaced, teachers instantly check their immediate vicinity and alert the Main Office. Campus directors, grounds teams, and administration will immediately execute a sweep of our grounds. If the child is not located, the Director of Education will contact 911, followed by immediate notification to the parents.
- **Emergency Contact Channel:** Real-world emergency notices are broadcast directly via the numbers listed in your **Infinite Campus Parent Portal** account. If an evacuation occurs, instructions regarding where and when to safely pick up your child will be provided by administration as soon as local police authorities grant clearance.
- **Special Accommodations:** If your child has specific developmental or medical needs that require tailored safety accommodations during a crisis, please contact the Program Director so a personalized response plan can be built.
- **Emergency Response / Evacuation:** We follow all policies in our MPCS School Handbook and Jeffco School District.

Mandatory Substance Restrictions

To maintain absolute legal safety on our campus, there is a **zero-tolerance policy** regarding the possession or consumption of any mood-altering substances by parents, volunteers, or visitors. This includes alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, cannabis, and any form of illegal or controlled substances. This rule applies to our campus grounds, parking lots, and off-campus field trips.

If an adult is observed utilizing any of these substances, they will be asked to leave immediately and barred from future volunteering. If the individual is chaperoning a field trip and responsible for other children, the families of those children will be notified immediately, and emergency

arrangements will be made to preserve the safety of our students.

Field Trips in Early Childhood

While off-campus trips are not a guaranteed component of our yearly curriculum, classes may occasionally coordinate seasonal field adventures.

- **Permission Clearances:** Every child must have a signed permission slip on file to participate. If a family chooses not to participate or a permission is missing, please note that the school cannot provide alternative childcare on campus for that day.
- **Chaperone Qualifications:** Parents driving or chaperoning a trip must complete an updated Volunteer Confidentiality Form, offer a copy of their valid driver's license, and have an active auto insurance policy filed with our Main Office.

Record Keeping and File Compliance

State child care licensing mandates that complete health records must be maintained for both returning and incoming students.

- **30-Day Document Window:** Families have exactly **30 days from the first day of school** to submit signed general health appraisals (yearly physicals) and validated immunization records or official state waivers.
- **Digital Signatures:** All student permissions, policy waivers, and emergency documents must be signed digitally via Parent Square within two weeks of the start of school, with primary contact profiles kept current in Infinite Campus. Any physical verification paperwork is stored securely in locked filing systems and shredded according to state destruction laws.

Preschool Tuition, Financial Policies, and Mid-Year Adjustments

- **Due Dates & Portals:** Tuition is due on the first day of every month and must be processed online through the **Infinite Campus Parent Portal**, over the phone, or in person at the Main Office via cash, card, or check.
- **Late Consequences:** If an account falls more than 30 days past due, your child will be excluded from attending classes until the balance is resolved. While we attempt to send digital reminders through Parent Square, tracking payments remains the legal responsibility of the caregiver who signed the enrollment contract.
- **Fixed Obligation:** Tuition balances remain fixed and non-refundable regardless of absences due to personal illness, temporary behavioral suspensions, vacations, scheduled holiday breaks (including Thanksgiving, Winter Break, and Spring Break), or unscheduled weather closures or government-mandated emergency lockdowns.
- **Preschool Tuition Schedule:** * *Kindergarten 8:00-1:30:* State-Funded (No parent tuition obligation).
    - *5 Full Days:* $11,826 per year.
    - *5 Half Days:* $8,850 per year.
    - *3 Full Days (MWF):* $8,850 per year.
    - *2 Full Days (TTh):* $5,922 per year.

    - **Napping House:* $850 2x's per year (August and January).
- **Financial Assistance:** Universal Preschool (UPK) state funding is applicable for eligible PK4 classrooms. We accept the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) across four partner counties: Jefferson, Denver, Adams, and Douglas.
- **Mid-Year Withdrawals:** Relinquishing your child's preschool enrollment mid-year requires a **strict 30-day written notice**. If a replacement student cannot be secured from our waiting list, the financial tuition obligation remains active through the duration of the school year, as outlined in your enrollment contract.

Licensing Complaints and Regulatory Contacts

Our program operates under the high standards of state child care safety laws. If you have regulatory concerns you wish to log with state inspectors, please utilize the contact directories below:

- **The Colorado Department of Early Childhood:** Division of Early Learning Licensing and Administration **303.866.5958 or 800.799.5876**
- **Jefferson County Public Health: 303.271.5761**.

All official state facility inspection logs and past compliance reports are open for public viewing at any time inside our Early Childhood Office.

Mandated Child Abuse Reporting

Every teacher, assistant, and staff member within our school functions as a legally designated **Mandated Reporter** under Colorado state law and has completed specialized protection training. We are legally required to immediately report any suspected signs or disclosures of physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual neglect directly to the Department of Human Services. The safety, protection, and preservation of the child's well-being is always our highest priority.

- **Public Reporting Hotline:** If you suspect a child is in danger outside of school, you can make a completely confidential report to the Statewide Child Abuse Hotline at **1-844-264-5437** (or the Denver local branch at **720-944-3000**).