



Kennedy
Children's Center

Where children, families &
communities learn together

PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

Learn more about us at www.kenchild.org

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Kennedy Children's Center

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM: 2023-2024

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Dear Parents...

WELCOME TO KENNEDY!

An official welcome to the 2023-2024 school year. Our most important mission is to provide high quality early childhood education to your child in a safe environment!

Our approach to learning is flexible and highly individualized. We respect that you are balancing the demands of multiple home and work responsibilities, including your young child's education program. Children thrive on the routines, structure and socialization provided by our school environment and we look forward to partnering with you on a new year of growth and learning. Please keep this manual in a convenient place so that you can refer to it as needed throughout the school year. It contains important information about your child's early childhood program.

A. INTRODUCTION TO KENNEDY CHILDREN'S CENTER

1. OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Kennedy Children's Center: *Where Children, Families, and Communities Learn Together*

Kennedy Children's Center (KCC) is dedicated to providing high quality education services to young children with developmental delays, in partnership with families and communities. We accomplish this through child-centered, evidence-based instruction that prepares each student to enter the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) public school system in the least restrictive environment possible. We seek to support families with training, guidance, and advocacy, and strengthen our school community through professional development and collaborations with local human service organizations. KCC is a publicly funded non-profit program licensed and funded by the New York State Education Department (NYSED).

2. OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Parents/guardians are **essential partners** in the education of their children, and we want to engage with you in the educational, social and physical needs of your child. We believe that children should learn to love school in a **child-centered environment** where active play and social relationships are key components.

Each classroom is staffed with a full time certified **Special Education Teacher** and two full time certified **Teacher Assistants** (TA's). Related services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling) are provided by licensed New York State **Therapists** as mandated by each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Parents who have Parent Counseling and Training on their child's IEP are provided with monthly opportunities to attend Parent Workshops provided for all parents. Your family support coordinator will discuss with you other opportunities for parent counseling and training. A **Family Support Coordinator** (FSC) is always available to each family to provide support for education and community resources.

Our teachers develop classroom activities that reinforce individual IEP goals and help children increase their social awareness of their peer group and other adults in the school environment. Teachers and therapists realize that **every child learns differently**, and they use teaching methods that encourage each child to participate regardless of language skills or social ability.

3. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GOALS AND THE KCC PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core is organized into five broad developmental domains. These domains are interrelated and guide in developing our curriculum to prepare each child for kindergarten. You can read more about [Common Core](#) here.

The domains are:

- **Approaches to Learning** – How children become involved in learning and acquire knowledge. This includes curiosity, concentration, creativity, persistence, and problem solving.
- **Physical Development and Health** – Children’s physical health and ability to independently engage in daily activities. These activities include eating, dressing and using the toilet.
- **Social and Emotional Development** – The emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children’s experiences in the home, school, and larger community.
- **Communication, Language, and Literacy** – How children understand, create, and communicate meaning of the world around them.
- **Cognition and Knowledge of the World** – How children integrate all areas of development. A child’s ability to understand the world and apply what they know forms the foundation for the reading, writing and math skills they will need in kindergarten and beyond.

The children’s daily schedule incorporates all these learning domains. While classroom schedules will vary from day to day, children will engage in a variety of large and small group activities, structured playtime, art, music, cooking, and physical movement.

Our teachers and therapists monitor student achievement over time through developmental assessments and formal observations. Each child’s instructional program is adjusted to match progress and mastery as per the IEP (Individualized Education Plan). If changes to the IEP are necessary, we will work with you and the CPSE (Committee on Preschool Special Education) prior to your child’s Annual Review to suggest modifications.

Formal Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice a year to discuss your child’s progress and issues of mutual interest or concern. These will be scheduled through Zoom, in-person or phone. If an in-person meeting is requested, it will be scheduled with you and all COVID safety protocols will be observed. As per NYCDOE policy, we update your child’s progress three times a year for children who attend our 10-month program (September to June), and four times a year for children who attend our 12-month program (September to August), by sending home a short narrative report of your child’s achievements. Your child’s IEP is updated annually or more often if a review is requested during the year.

B. PRESCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Studies about engaged and successful students indicate: “good attendance provides a child with more and better opportunities to learn.” These habits begin at the preschool level. Children who do not show up for school on a regular basis miss out on learning “fundamentals skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.”

The NYCDOE defines chronic absence as missing 10% or more school days per year either excused or unexcused. This translates into 18 days a year, or 4-5 absences per quarter. Children who miss 10% of school quarterly are considered to have “excessive” absences, which are likely to impact progress in reaching goals. We understand that there can be barriers to attending school regularly. School staff will be monitoring attendance and are available to help families address any barriers such as transportation, health problems, or personal issues that might be preventing a child from getting to school.

1. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attending school every day is very important for your child’s growth and development. Your child attends the Kennedy Children’s Center because they are mandated by the NYC Department of Education to receive services according to their Individual Education Plan (IEP). When planning family vacations or other trips, remember to schedule around the school calendar so that your child does not miss school.

If your child is going to be absent from school, please take the following steps:

1. Call KCC and state your child’s name, the name of your child’s teacher, and the reason for the absence. NYC Day Care regulations require the school to account for every student absence by 10:00am. If we do not hear from you by 10am, we are obligated to call you or your emergency contact to determine your child’s whereabouts. KCC uses an automated telephone system to call your home if we have not heard from you about why your child is not in school.
2. Call the bus company and inform them that they will not need to pick up your child. To resume bus services, you will need to call the bus company to let them know when your child is ready to return to school. The number for the bus company can be found on the following contact sheet: [KCC Bronx](#) | [KCC Manhattan](#). Please refer to the site your child attends.
3. As per New York State Education Department rules, please provide a signed and dated note explaining why your child was absent. A legal absence (as defined by **175.6 of the Commissioner Regulations**) includes: *personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads or weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics.*
4. A **doctor’s note is required** if your child had a contagious disease (including COVID-19) or is returning from a stay at the hospital. The doctor’s note must state which day the child can return to school.

5. After 5 days without a legal excuse, KCC is required to notify your child's school district. The school district will attempt to contact you within 15 days of our notice. If you have not established a legal excuse for absence, your child's services may be terminated.

If your child has been mandated for a 12-month program, they are expected to be enrolled for the entire 6-week Summer Program. The program operates in July and the first two weeks of August. Failure to attend the mandated Summer Program may jeopardize your child's placement in the Fall Preschool Program.

REMEMBER: It is very important for your child to attend school on a daily basis so they can progress, reach their goals, and become accustomed to routines and schedules. Children who are frequently absent miss valuable therapy and classroom time.

2. ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

Students who attend KCC are mandated to receive busing through the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT.) You will be asked to report the weight of your child, as this information is required to arrange for a car seat on the bus. Our Family Service Coordinators can assist you with any changes to pick up or drop off information.

Kennedy Children's Center does not hire the bus company or the drivers. Because the bus company is contracted through the NYCDOE, parents are required to speak directly to staff at the bus company with any concerns about bus service. We will provide you with contact information for your child's bus company and OPT (the Office of Pupil Transportation). We also encourage you to report concerns about your child's transportation to us, so we can help you resolve it as quickly as possible.

If there is no one at home to receive your child and we have made every attempt to reach someone on your emergency contact list, the bus company has been instructed by the NYCDOE to contact the bus company dispatcher and bring your child to the local police station. **PLEASE** help us avoid this unnecessary trauma by keeping the school updated with any change in contact information.

3. EMERGENCY CONTACTS

When you registered your child, you provided us with a list of 3 emergency contacts. **These emergency contacts are the only people other than you who are allowed to pick up your child from school or receive your child from the bus.** We will send a request for updated emergency contact information three times annually: in September, January, and June. This allows us to be sure we can reach you and your emergency contacts in the case of an emergency.

The following guidelines apply to emergency contacts:

1. You must provide written permission of any person you designate as an emergency contact. This should be done when you register your child.
2. Emergency contacts must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
3. Emergency contacts must be willing to pick up or receive children on an as-needed basis. For example, in the event of unforeseen circumstances (dangerous weather conditions, no heat or air conditioning, etc.), KCC may need to close early and would require that you or your emergency contact pick up your child from school or the bus earlier than the scheduled time.

4. You must inform people that you have listed them as an emergency contact. Administrators and classroom teaching staff have the right to ask whether a listed emergency contact is aware of their responsibilities.
5. **All emergency contacts will be asked to show appropriate picture identification (driver's license, state I.D., etc.) when picking up your child.**
6. We will ask you to update your emergency information (home phone, cell, email) and list of emergency contacts at least three times per year. We request that you contact your Family Service Coordinator (FSC) with any contact changes as they occur.
7. An individual whose name does not appear on the emergency contact list will not be allowed to pick up your child unless you have made a prior arrangement in writing. Again, you should inform your Family Support Coordinator immediately of any changes in emergency contact information or other important information.
8. If there is anyone, you have identified who **should not** have access to your child, please note that on the emergency contact form AND call the school to speak directly to your Family Support Coordinator. In the event that there is a legal document (ex. an order of protection), we will request a copy for our files.

4. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A. Related Services

If your child receives occupational or physical therapy, it is legally mandated that we have a current prescription that reflects the IEP mandates. As per your child's IEP, therapy sessions (like speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling) are scheduled for your child throughout the week. When your child is absent from school on a day that he or she is scheduled to receive a therapy session, we cannot guarantee that our therapeutic staff will be able to do a "make-up" session. That being said, we will make every effort to meet your child's IEP mandates.

B. Illness

A child **must not** be brought to preschool when he or she is sick. Children with coughs, colds, nasal discharge or a fever of 100° or higher should be kept home until symptoms disappear. A child who has had a fever may return to school once the fever has been below 100° for at least 24 hours. Please call the school to alert us if your child has a contagious illness including the common cold or stomach virus. These guidelines help keep everyone healthy!

Should your child become ill during the day, the nurse or staff member will call you or your emergency contact person to come pick up your child. Our response to contagious disease (COVID-19, lice, pink eye, ringworm, etc.) follows NYCDOH protocols for communicating with families and for cleaning the school environment. You will receive a letter from the school informing you of any specific contagious illness or condition that your child may have been exposed to on the bus or in the classroom. We do everything possible to keep your children safe and healthy.

All children are required to have a yearly medical examination completed on a form provided by Kennedy or by your child's pediatrician. Any child with an expired medical form can be excluded from the

program until a new medical form is received. Please plan to have your child seen by his/her pediatrician before the medical form expires.

Please be advised that the preschool nurse is available from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. The Nurse or a MAT (Medication Administration Trained) staff member are the only staff members authorized to administer medication at any time. Guidelines regulating the administration of both prescription and over the counter (OTC) medications can be found in the section below.

Children with significant medical or dietary needs will have a written Health Care Plan/Food Modification Plan that is developed and monitored by our school nurse or our Education Director. Epinephrine-Auto Injector pens will (are) be kept onsite for emergency use and administered by trained personnel in compliance with NYCDOH guidelines.

C. Administration of Medication

As per current New York State Department of Health regulations, if it is necessary for your child to receive medication during the time he or she is in our program, either on a daily basis or for an acute illness, the following procedures must be followed:

- A signed, up-to-date prescription from the physician indicating the need for the medication must be on file.
- A signed, up-to-date permission slip from you (the parent/guardian) authorizing the nurse to administer the medication must be on file.
- Medication must be delivered to the preschool nurse by the parent, guardian or another authorized individual (who has signed consent from the parent/guardian). Children are **NOT** permitted, under any circumstances, to bring in medication of any kind to school.
- Medication must be in the original prescription bottle that shows the child's name, dosage and times for administration.

Over the counter (OTC) medications, such as Tylenol, Motrin, diaper cream, cough syrup, etc., require written authorization for use from you, the parent/guardian, and from your child's pediatrician. Any OTC medications must be delivered to the nurse in the **unopened, original packaging**. The form authorizing the administration of OTC medications must be signed annually and is kept in your child's file.

If it is necessary for your child to receive medication at any time after admission, the **Medication Administration Forms** are available in the nurse's office.

5. WELLNESS POLICY

The Kennedy Children's Center (KCC) is committed to creating a healthy school environment that enhances the development of lifelong wellness practices to promote healthy eating and physical activities that support student achievement.

The Wellness Policy reflects the mandated guidelines of the New York State Child Nutrition Program. Our breakfast and lunch programs are funded through the National School Lunch Program.

A. Nutrition and Physical Activity

Setting Physical Activity Goals

Children participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity each school day. This includes guided and structured play times in classrooms, and indoor play areas.

KCC encourages parents and guardians to support their children's participation in physical activity, to be physically active role models, and to include physical activity in family events.

Establishing Nutrition Standards

KCC follows meal patterns and nutrition standards established for Pre-K students by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). KCC offers free breakfast and lunch to all our students, every day, regardless of household income. Meals are cooked in our onsite kitchens by trained cooks, and utilize whole foods and from-scratch cooking whenever possible. Menus are available on our website and incorporate the following:

- Whole and enriched grain products that are high in fiber and low in added fats/sugars.
- Fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits and vegetables using healthy food preparation techniques, and 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice. Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables will be served most often, rather than juices and canned fruits and vegetables.
- Low-fat, plain milk and yogurt, and nonfat and/or low-fat real cheese, rather than imitation cheese.
- Lean meat, poultry, or fish using healthy food preparation techniques.
- Water shall be accessible to students throughout the school day.

To see the current school menu, and to read our full School Wellness Policy, visit www.kenchild.org/families.

Non-Discrimination and Dietary Restrictions

KCC provides free breakfast and lunch to all students, regardless of income. Our school nurses and family support staff work closely with families to accommodate a wide range of allergies and feeding needs. We abide by the USDA Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay

Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

B. KCC Mealtime Options

Every student who attends KCC is automatically entitled to receive breakfast and lunch every day, at no cost to families. Meals are cooked onsite by certified cooks in our school kitchens. Meals meet the nutrition guidelines set by the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs. We can accommodate a wide range of allergies and feeding challenges. We strive to make meals healthy, tasty, and attractive to preschoolers.

However, we recognize that some families prefer to send food from home. Therefore, we allow families to select the food option plan that best serves their child's needs. Families may choose one of the three options below:

Option 1- Your child will receive breakfast and lunch prepared by KCC's school staff.

Option 2- You completely opt out of the food program. This means that you will send in your child's breakfast and lunch every day. Your child will not be offered meals prepared by the school kitchen.

Option 3- You partially opt out of the food program. Your child will receive the school meal, and staff will work with your child to try new foods. If they will not eat it, they will be given the food you send from home.

Please note the following:

- **We are not able to prepare, refrigerate, or reheat food from home.** Anything you send from home must be safe when stored and eaten at room temperature. Breakfast is eaten at 9AM, and lunch is eaten at 12:30PM.
- **We are a nut-free facility** due to student allergies. Please do not send your child with any nuts, nut butters (example: peanut butter) or seeds (example: items including sesame seeds). If you send food that includes nuts, we will have to throw it away.
- **We urge you to consider these nutrition guidelines** for your child's meals:
 - Breakfast: a grain (like low-sugar cereal or crackers), or low-sugar yogurt and a fruit.
 - Lunch: a grain, a protein, and a fruit or vegetable.
 - The school will provide water and 1% milk or soy milk.

Please do not send cake, cookies, candy, chips, or sweetened beverages like Capri Sun, Yoo-hoo, or soda.

C. Birthday/Celebration Policy

While we actively encourage parents to be involved and take part in activities and special events, there are specific guidelines we ask you to follow if you choose to celebrate your child’s birthday at school. Classroom staff always acknowledge children on their birthday in their own special way. Some classes celebrate with special birthday hats or Birthday Helper jobs, and of course by singing the Happy Birthday song. We understand that parents may want to join in on the fun and add to the festivities.

These guidelines help to keep children safe and allow us to continue to promote good nutrition.

All staff will monitor what is being brought in for children. Since some of our children have food allergies or special diets, it is important to check with your child’s teacher before you bring a special party treat.

FOOD CATEGORY	PROHIBITED	ALLOWABLE ALTERNATIVES
Beverage	Soda Fruit Drinks Chocolate Milk	We provide water throughout the day.
Dessert Item	Small candies Lollipops Large Cupcakes Ice Cream cakes	Mini Cupcakes/muffins Small Cookies Animal Crackers Baked Chips or Pretzels Fruit Ices
Fruit or Vegetable	Grapes, Cherries	Fruit-Kabobs (cantaloupe, watermelon, banana) Apples w/ Caramel Dip Veggies and Ranch Dip

Please do not bring Goodie Bags to distribute. Children often take out the small toys during the school day, and can become upset if they get lost or broken. They may go into their backpacks in search of the toys during the bus ride, which can be dangerous. In addition, some of the toys may be choking hazards.

The children and staff at Kennedy come from diverse backgrounds. Not everyone celebrates the same holidays, and not everyone celebrates a given holiday in the same way. Helping children understand the diverse nature of our school community is one of the goals of celebrating holidays at school. If you do not want your child to participate in holiday celebrations, please inform your child’s teacher.

6. POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PROGRAM

Be Kind



Be Safe



Be Respectful



At the Kennedy Children's Center, we believe that every child, regardless of current ability, is capable of further growth and achievement. Our staff is trained to guide children's behavior by word and example. Staff realize that children may not immediately understand or follow all the rules. Until children learn what is expected of them, they will occasionally exhibit challenging behavior. Furthermore, staff understand that children who struggle with language or other skills often use "temper tantrums" and other tactics to communicate their needs, because they do not know how else to express themselves.

We view discipline as part of good teaching, and disciplinary problems are viewed as "errors in learning." Instead of thinking that a child is choosing to behave badly, behavior is viewed as a skill that still needs to be taught, whether it is related to social and emotional interactions or communication. When a child acts out, our school psychologist, along with classroom teachers and teaching aides, consider where the behavior is coming from. Once we identify the source of the problem, we can begin teaching the child about appropriate reactions.

Part of our responsibility is teaching children how to create and maintain healthy relationships. With this in mind, our teachers aim to establish nurturing and responsive relationships built on mutual respect and trust with every child who enters our program.

At KCC, we practice School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS). We believe our school community can be successful when we help our students learn and develop skills in all learning domains. In order for this to happen, it is important that we establish a safe environment. It is our goal to create an atmosphere for learning by setting clear expectations and by directly teaching students about our expectations. The PBIS program helps us to create a happy, safe environment for all our students.

Our SW-PBIS team includes a variety of administrators, teachers, and building specialists to provide training, modeling and support systems for our entire school staff. PBIS Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework for supporting a positive school climate and culture to support student learning. PBIS practices are research-based and data driven.

When a student exhibits behaviors that may cause harm to themselves or others (e.g., excessive hitting, biting, throwing objects scratching, etc.), selected staff who have been trained in using protective restraint techniques (PRT) created for young preschool and school age children will assist your child and the classroom staff. These techniques are ONLY used when other less restrictive supports such as redirecting a child to a preferred activity, providing sensory support, and/or providing communication

supports) fail to de-escalate the behaviors that potentially could cause harm to themselves or others. Parents will be notified by phone, email, and/or text) anytime a PRT technique has been used.

The framework of the PBIS program at KCC centers on three important rules: **Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Respectful**. You will see these words posted around our schools as a way to remind our children, staff, and families about how we treat each other.

7. CHILD SAFETY

All children are entitled to live and go to school in a safe and nurturing environment. All staff and clinical consultants at the Kennedy Children's Center treat each student with respect and respond to their needs in a calm and supportive manner.

All staff and clinical consultants at Kennedy are trained to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment, as mandated by New York State Public Health Law. If our staff and/or clinical consultants suspect that a child has been subjected to child abuse, neglect or maltreatment, they are required by law to contact the NYS Child Abuse and Maltreatment Register for mandated reporters (800-635-1522).

KCC will make every effort to maintain confidentiality in all such cases and is committed to supporting students, parents, and staff members throughout the reporting process, while working cooperatively with Child Protective Services (CPS) and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

If you have any concerns about your child; if your child has been injured while outside of school; if you or your child needs assistance in any way; or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Family Support Coordinator at your school site. Communication with our school staff is encouraged. All undocumented injuries, sustained absences from school, verbal reports made by students, noticeable changes in a student's behavior and/or appearance, etc., must be reported and investigated. If your child is injured during the school day, you will receive a phone call and/or written documentation of the incident. Your child's well-being is our top priority.

Fire, evacuation, and lockdown drills are conducted throughout the school year. The preschool has an emergency fire and evacuation plan on file. If we need to vacate the building during an emergency, you will be notified of your child's location as soon as possible. It is essential that you provide the school with up to date emergency contact information.

In addition to the drills noted above, KCC has a written Health and Safety Plan, which is reviewed with staff on an annual basis. This plan includes a Lost Child Plan, an Emergency Evacuation Plan, and a Medical Emergency Plan. If you would like to review a copy of the Health and Safety Plan, please contact the Education Director. It is our goal to keep your child safe at school and to communicate with you about any concerns you may have.

8. PARENT WORKSHOPS, STUDENTS, INTERNS AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Kennedy Children's Center is a learning community. We work to create an environment that supports the understanding and ongoing education of our staff, parents and surrounding community in regards to effective, evidence based practices relating to early childhood education for children with special needs.

KCC sponsors various levels of student/internship placements in partnership with universities, colleges, and agencies. All students/interns participating in these programs are supervised under our internship protocols. You will be notified if any students/interns will be working directly with your child.

We offer many informative workshops for parents on topics aligned with the needs of the children. We hope you participate in as many as possible.

9. CLOSING FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

If the New York City Department of Education closes due to inclement weather, the Kennedy Children's Center will be closed as well. The NYCDOE website will provide up to date information on school closures, as will local TV and radio stations. The NYCDOE website is <http://schools.nyc.gov>. Because all of our students are transported to school by bus, depending on transportation/safety concerns **KCC may choose to close even if the NYCDOE remains open. Since we are prepared with remote learning, we are able to schedule remote sessions with you on snowy days.**

In the event of a school closure, parents/guardians will receive an automated message over the telephone. Parents/guardians can also opt to receive closure information via text message and email. In order for the system to work, it is imperative that we have your updated emergency contact information.

You can also learn about school closures by calling our main office. You will hear a recorded message in English and Spanish if school is canceled.

10. PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

We look forward to your active involvement and support of the program. Communication and cooperation between preschool and home help to establish a warm and nurturing environment and further our efforts to provide a rich learning experience for your child. Our website, www.kenchild.org, contains lots of resources and information that will help you keep up-to-date on school activities, developments in early childhood education, and other news. You can also follow us on social media:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/kennedychildrenscenter

Instagram: www.instagram.com/kennedychildrenscenter/

Twitter: twitter.com/kennedy_child

KCC hosts a variety of family events, parent workshops, and parent support groups to encourage involvement in your child's education program. Please note, parents who have Parent Training and Counseling on their Child's IEP are mandated to attend these programs as part of the services indicated on the IEP. We have a bilingual Family Services Department who are available to support you throughout the year and to help with individual needs. You will receive regular family newsletters with information on school events and techniques to help your child.

11. CLOTHING AND BELONGINGS

In order to be comfortable and able to participate fully in class activities, your child should be dressed appropriately, including shoes. Dress him or her casually and according to the season.

It is our goal to help your children with toilet training and to work with you through this process. If your child is not yet trained, you are required to supply diapers. You may send them daily, weekly, or monthly.

An extra, complete set of clothing (including underwear, socks, shirt, pants/skirt, sneakers, and sweater) should be brought to school in a marked bag. This will be kept in the child's cubby for use as needed.

Label all personal items; it helps to prevent loss. Although we will do our best to ensure that your personal items are safeguarded, KCC cannot be responsible for items brought to the preschool program.

Please do not send electronic games, cell phones, expensive items like jewelry, or special toys to school. Children have a hard time-sharing these items and they are easily broken and/or lost. Any special items brought to preschool are restricted to planned show-and-tell events. Your child's teacher will inform you of such events.

12. SCHOOL CALENDAR

Our preschool program operates 12 months a year. We will send home two calendars, one for the summer months of July and August (if your child has been approved by the preschool district to attend the 12-month preschool year) and a separate one for the September to June school year. Please keep this calendar handy for your reference and planning. Any changes to the calendar will be communicated in writing.

13. FERPA POLICY AND STUDENT RECORDS

The Kennedy Children's Center respects our students' privacy and protects the confidentiality of their education records. KCC adheres to the guidelines outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Your rights to Due Process can be found on the NYSED website at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/dueprocess/impartial-hearing-guidance-jan-2018.htm>

We maintain a file on each child enrolled at KCC. This file contains all the information reviewed with you at your preschool district CPSE meeting. Your child's file is confidential and only certain people are able to access it for educational or administrative purposes. This includes your child's current teaching and therapeutic team, school administrators, and clerical staff. We must have written permission from you, the parent/guardian, in order to release any information from a student's educational record.

You have the right to contact us to review your child's file at any time. Parents/Guardians may request that the student's educational records be amended if you believe those records to be inaccurate. You should clearly identify the part of the record you want changed and specify why it is inaccurate. This request must be made to your preschool district chairperson. If the preschool district decides not to amend the record as requested, you may request a fair hearing from the NYCDOE. KCC staff can assist you with contact information should you need to contact the district office.

We hope this handbook will be useful as we embark on an exciting year of growth and learning with your child! On behalf of all of us at the Kennedy Children's Center:

WELCOME!

Picky Eater? Try These Tips...

At KCC, we encourage children to try foods that are new and unfamiliar. This requires time and patience (sometimes for weeks!)

If a child is resisting new food, try the following tactics:

- **Play with Portions:** Some kids do better with one type of food on a plate, and small portions. Others prefer choices and will decide for themselves what looks good. Let the child's behavior be your guide.
- **Play with Your Food!** Let children smell the food and/or use their fingers. They are very young and many have not mastered spoons and forks yet.
- **Offer A Bite:** Put a bite of food on a fork/spoon and bring it to the child's mouth. They might sniff it one day, lick it the next, and before long, they will eat what is offered.
- **Milk as A Meal Alternative:** If there are no allergies to milk, children can drink milk if they do not want to eat the food. Milk has calories and protein and is a good meal alternative.
- **Model, Model, Model!** Children watch us all the time. By saying things like, "Yum, I am going to try the rice!" while you eat, children will become excited about trying the food themselves.
- **Dip It!** Allow the children to dip foods like chicken, fish, or veggies in ketchup or ranch dressing.
- **Remind Them:** Sometimes children need to see food a few times before they are willing to try it. Be patient and remind them of food they have tried before. "Oh look, sweet potatoes again! These were so yummy last time we tried them."
- **Use Visuals:** First/Then boards are really helpful. Pair the new food with the desired food; for example, "First Chicken, then applesauce."