

WELCOME TO THE RED BALLOON

Welcome to the Red Balloon, an Early Childhood Learning Center. We provide a twelve month program that caters to the needs of the working & student families in the Morningside Heights community.

This booklet is intended to serve as a guide and reference for parents and caregivers at the Red Balloon. It includes information on our curriculum and how we function as a community. We hope that it will serve as a valuable resource for you as your child progresses through the school.

Our Mission

The Red Balloon strives to be a model of exemplary early childhood education practices. We partner with families to create a safe and nurturing community where children are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Community Vision

We are a community that welcomes and celebrates diversity across multiple levels. We believe the uniqueness of our diverse learning community helps children and their families value differences, ultimately leading to increased understanding, empathy, and acceptance of all members of society.

Educational Philosophy of the Red Balloon

We believe that children learn best when they have caring adults to guide, respect, and provide challenges for them as individuals and as important members of a group.

We also recognize that children are unique and learn at different rates and in different styles. Our teachers are experienced educators who have developed their own creative and unique teaching styles and methods to respond to each individual child's needs.

The School focuses on nurturing emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and language skills in the children. We aim to develop their

- Problem-solving skills
- Risk-taking skills (accepting mistakes with the understanding that making mistakes is an integral part of learning)
- Pro-social skills (taking turns, using words, cooperative play, discipline, and self direction)
- Independence and self esteem
- Capacity to respect and care for others
- Listening skills and language development
- Pre-math skills and pre-reading readiness

We encourage parent involvement in school activities and believe that parental support in early childhood education has long-lasting positive effects on children's academic performance, self esteem, emotional development, and general well-being.

The Curriculum

The Red Balloon School provides a well-rounded, child-centered curriculum that offers a variety of challenges and experiences for children to explore, including educational games, artwork, story time, drama, music and movement, and a variety of activities that celebrate diversity and promote cultural awareness.

Daily Class Structure

Our teachers create the daily structure for each classroom and plan activities to enable the children make choices in their activities. This in turn enables them to become independent learners. During the course of the day, children have choice time, circle time, teacher-facilitated play, group activities, small-group play, one on one time, meal times, and outside or gym play.

Teachers work on the children's developmental skills by providing small-group activities: educational games to expand listening skills or language development, pre-math and science games, and pre-reading readiness and writing activities, as well as artwork, music, and movement.

The Classroom Environment

The environment suits the natural movements and developmental needs of the children. Each classroom is made up of several different learning centers, which reflect our curriculum goals. These areas offer specific learning materials accessible to all of the children throughout the day. Teachers use the different classroom areas to initiate and organize group activities. Children may also move freely about the classroom as they chose to interact with one another and/or the materials.

The classroom learning centers enable children to develop important emotional and social skills. In these centers, children may work individually or in small groups. As children plan what they would like to do and carry out their own plans, they learn how to be responsible for their own actions. The centers also foster independence by inviting children to direct their own play, which helps them learn ways to problem solve and play cooperatively with each other. As the teachers learn each child's personality they can help the children develop their conflict resolution skills. Children are also less likely to have conflicts when they are investigating their own interests and constructing knowledge in ways that are meaningful to them.

The learning centers enable children to strengthen important physical and cognitive skills. For example, the limited amount of space in the centers makes the children aware of how many children can work in each area. They learn important pre-math and cognitive skills just by counting how many children are in an area and how many spaces are available. In the art center children are free to create projects individually or to join in a project that is initiated by teachers. Children work with materials to experience and create their own individual artwork and constructions. Art projects also often focus on current curriculum themes.

Designing the classroom is an ongoing process by which the teachers support the

children's development and encourage them to try new experiences. As themes change throughout the year so do the materials offered in the centers. As the children progress, teachers offer more difficult materials for them to work with, providing a well-balanced and challenging curriculum.

School Governance

The Red Balloon is governed by a community-elected parent board. The board sets policy for the school. The Director is responsible for the daily administration of the school. The Head Teachers are responsible for the smooth functioning of their classrooms. Details on how the Red Balloon's governing structure works are available in the Red Balloon bylaws.

Communication and Participation

We believe that communication between children, teachers, parents, and school administrators is essential to the educational development of children, and that it enhances relationships that make the Red Balloon a successful community.

Parent-Teacher communication happens informally in the classroom and during bi-annual Parent-Teacher conferences. Teachers also post daily sheets to inform parents of each day's activities. School information is posted on centrally located bulletin boards. Letters to the parents, announcements, reminders about meetings and get-togethers, and newsletters are also distributed. The school director is on site and available for consultation during the school day.

We have an open door policy and encourage our parents to participate in their child's education. Parents are welcome in the classroom at any time but need to follow the rules & procedures of the class. When you are in the class we encourage you to let other children join in if they desire in order to help us model cooperative play and sharing. If you wish to present a project in a class (cooking, story reading, music, art, cultural presentation, etc.) please speak to the teachers to ensure it is age and class appropriate and scheduled at an appropriate time. You are more than welcome to join class trips.

Discipline

Our # 1 goal is to keep children physically safe. The first step that enhances safety is to provide proper supervision along with developmentally appropriate yet challenging activities. Needless to say we may miss an occurrence and that is why children need to know what to do. We talk to the children about the consequences of their actions, and offer other acceptable ways of behaving as well as brainstorming with them about possible solutions to a problem that don't include hitting or yelling. We will often use such alternatives rather than giving a child time-out, but we also recognize when children need time to pull themselves together and have a space to themselves. During those times when a child is out of control we give them a short "time out". When they sit we explain why this is happening and what we can do in the future. When they get up we once again go through that process. We encourage them to use their words and to seek out a teacher to help when words do not work.

We are particularly aware of the difficulty some children have with transitions--such as shifts in activities or arrivals and departures--and are prepared to respond by giving extra attention to their needs and behavior. It is important that we set reasonable and realistic expectations based on normal age appropriate expectations. Also it is important to model appropriate behaviors.. We offer as much help and advise as possible to our parents in addressing behavioral concerns. When it is deemed necessary we will bring in our consultant or any other outside sources that might help.

We believe it is more desirable to learn through the knowledge of potential, trust, love, and benefits rather than through fear, guilt, and consequences.

Hours and Classrooms

Our doors open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 6:00 p.m. Children can come as late as 9:30 and get picked up from 4:00 on. Breakfast is served from 9:00-9:30. We also provide a hot lunch for the children as well as an afternoon snack.

Along with a five-day program we also have a very limited two-day and a three-day program, all are full-day. The children range in age from 2 years old to 5 years old. We have three classrooms for different age groups. Children are at the following age ranges when they enter these classrooms:

Yellow Room ages 2.0 to 2.6 (up to 11 children)
Blue Room ages of 2.10 to 3.6 (up to 16 children)
Orange Room ages of 3.10 and older (up to 20 children)

Each room has three staff members including a State Certified Head Teacher.

The children are given time at the end of the day to intermingle with the other children as well as become acquainted and comfortable with all of the staff.

Enrollment Contract

All families are required to execute an enrollment contract prior to enrolling at the Red Balloon. A copy of the enrollment contract is included as an appendix to this handbook.

School Hours of Operation

The School is open on school days from 8:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m. In order to establish a consistent and secure learning environment, we ask that children be dropped off and picked up only during the hours noted below. Later arrivals or earlier departures are disruptive to classroom activities and to the children's peace of mind.

Children's arrival time: 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.
Children's pick up time: 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Meal Times

Children are offered breakfast at 9:00 every morning and sit down together at common tables. They eat lunch together at about noon time and are offered an afternoon snack. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks are prepared and served by the School. Details are in the section on Food.

Lateness policy.

Lateness rules are established so each child's day runs smoothly, with the least amount of stress, and to create optimal consistency for each child and the teachers.

When you are late your child's day starts off hectic and the transition disrupts the class. Although this is not your intention it sends a message to all children that school is not valuable. Our teachers work hard to provide the best nurturing, educational program possible and consistency is imperative.

You have between 8:00am and 9:30 am to get your child to school in the morning. After that you are late. The only excuse is a medical appointment or a school visit. Calling the Director to tell them you will be late will still be counted as lateness.

In the afternoon 6:00 pm is the time your child must be exiting the school.

If you are late it will cost you \$1 per minute both in the morning and afternoon. At the end of the month the Director will send you a bill. If you are late 5 times in a semester (September-December, January-June) you will have to meet with the Board of Directors to explain the excessive lateness and the Board will determine appropriate sanctions.

Emergency and pickup authorization

Parents may authorize a relative or caretaker to pick up a child only according to the following guidelines:

Regular pick up:

Parents must sign a parental consent form authorizing that specific individual to pick up the child on a regular basis. The name, address, and relationship of the individual is required. Pick-up people must be over 12 years old .

Occasional pick up:

Parents must provide written consent for a child to be picked up by anyone who is not established as a regular pick up person, or a phone call regardless of the relationship that person has to the child. The person picking up the child must show identification to the teacher in charge or the child will not be released.

Emergency pick up:

Parents must provide the school with the name of someone who lives within ten blocks of the school in case an emergency pickup is needed. In event of an emergency, should the children be required to leave the school building, and the parent or regular caretaker not be able to come to the school, the child will be

released with the designated emergency pick up person. Parents should update emergency pickup authorization as needed.

Illness Guidelines

Parents are asked to notify the school by 10:00 a.m. on the morning of a child's absence from school. **We do not administer medication to the children.**

Notification is important to the community, as children often inquire about classmates who are absent and teachers should be able to reassure them or pass along news of the classmate. Illness notification is also important to maintaining communication between parents and teachers, informing other parents about possible health concerns, and supporting teachers' awareness of the children's health overall.

A child is considered too ill to attend school if any of these conditions exist:

- The child has been diagnosed with a contagious disease. The child may not return to the Red Balloon until he/she receives written medical clearance by a physician.
- The child has had a fever within the last 24 hours
- The child displays symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours.

If any of these conditions should develop during the school day, the child's parent or guardian will be asked to come pick up the child right away.

These guidelines may be revised to adapt to changing conditions. Parents will be notified of any changes in the illness policy.

Physical Injuries

All efforts are made to ensure the physical safety of the children. However, if a physical injury should occur, the following guidelines will be observed:

- Injuries, will be reported to the child's parent or caretaker at the end of the day. All injuries will also be recorded in the teacher's log.
- If the injury is not deemed serious (such as a small scratch or cut), the child will be treated by the teachers. Any wound will be cleaned and bandaged, cold compresses will be applied to bumps or bruises, etc.
- If the child is in significant distress, regardless of the nature or seriousness of the injury, the child's guardian will be contacted.
- If the injury requires medical attention, the parent or guardian and the physician identified by the parents will be called at once. If emergency attention is required, the School will call St. Lukes Hospital or the nearest appropriate hospital and will also notify the parent and the child's physician immediately (please see the School

Emergency Contact List for details about locations and telephone numbers of local hospitals).

Administration of first-aid treatment and medicine:

If parents exercise any special policies with regards to treatment of injuries, they must inform the School in writing before the child enters the school.

No medicine will be administered by School staff or teachers .

Absence From School

Please inform your child's teacher or the office if your child is absent from school for more than one day.

Birthdays

Birthday celebration at the school is encouraged. We do ask for you to keep it simple. **Remember many children have allergies so do not bring any food items that have nut or nut products in them.** We also ask that **no** invitations to a private party be handed out in school unless every child in the class is invited.

Change of Clothing

Please remember to have a complete change of clothing at school. If a child has an accident, please send in a new change the following day. Remember your children grow, and the weather changes. Shorts in June good, shorts in December, not good. .Please have your child's name marked in their clothing.

Changes at Home

Please inform the office and the class teachers if their has been a change in address, phone number or e-mail.. It is also important to let us know if there is an addition or subtraction from your pick up list. If there are any changes at home, as simple as a parent going on a business trip, to changes in a living situation please let us know. Even small changes can affect a child's behavior. When informed we will be better prepared to handle any change in behavior.

The Library

Please enjoy our library. We have many books for children as well as resource books for parents. Books may be borrowed for 1 week. Please return each book in its' proper place. Do not allow your child to climb the shelves, chairs and tables. Please be respectful of the library and its' contents.

Toys & Food

Please do not allow your child to bring toys or food to school. We have whatever play equipment they need here. Also remember not to bring food. There are numerous allergies in the school and if a child shares their food with someone with an allergy there could be a life threatening result. If they want to bring in an appropriate toy for "Show & Tell" please put it in their cubby and we will take it out at the appropriate time.

School Calendar and Holidays

A school calendar will be distributed to all parents at the beginning of the year. This calendar will identify holidays and, as much as possible, will list parent meetings and events for the following year.

School Closures

Every effort is made to keep the school open on snowy days. The Red Balloon will close only on days that the New York City Public Schools are closed due to weather or other emergencies.

Should the School have to close because of a weather emergency or other situation, listen to WCBS (880 AM) radio and follow what is happening in the public schools.

If the School must close at mid-day for any reason, parents will be notified immediately and may ask their emergency pick-up caretakers to pick up children.

School trips

School trips are on a limited basis. Individual class trips are more numerous and varied according to the capabilities of the children.

School trips have included apple picking, trips to a farm, and trips to the aquarium. Individual classrooms will take shorter excursions to neighborhood sites of interest including the Fairway Supermarket, the local firehouse, local libraries, parks, museums,. etc. Parents are asked to volunteer as chaperones and may also simply accompany children on these trips. School trips give parents a chance to get to know one another and allow parents and children to enjoy different environments and to learn from each other and from their own experiences.

Supplies

School supplies are purchased by the school and, sometimes, donated by parents. Supplies are available to all children, with attention given to appropriateness of age and ability to use supplies.

Food and Dietary Restrictions

All attempts are made to serve healthy, fresh, tasty food and snacks to the children. Children enjoy food that is prepared freshly and served by the School. They share breakfast and lunch together at common tables and are offered an afternoon snack.

Beverages (water, milk, and watered juice) are also offered at regular intervals during the day.

Parents should notify the school in advance of any dietary restrictions. Sweets and processed foods are kept to a minimum. **WE ARE A NUT AWARE SCHOOL.**

Outside Food

Parents are discouraged from bringing sweets to school, except in the case of birthdays. No food should be brought to school.

Tuition 2007/2008

2 Year Old (Yellow Room) \$2100 month
 3 Year Old (Blue Room) \$1,850 month
 4 Year Old (Orange Room) \$1,850 month
 Part time (3 days) \$ 1125/month
 Part time (2 days) \$ 925/month

Tuition fees are set by the Parent Board and are subject to change.

Part Time attendance

Most of the children at the School attend full time. Children who attend 2 or 3 days a week attend on consecutive days. We have found that consecutive attendance best suits the needs of the children and helps them get into the rhythm of school days most easily.

Schedule of Payments

Parents or guardians of entering children are required to make the following payments according to the time table below:

Deposit : equivalent to 6-week (1.5 month) tuition (a non-refundable deposit to hold a place for the child at the School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half payment due upon signing of enrollment contract • half payment due by September 1
Participation bond: \$300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half payment due upon signing of enrollment contract • half payment due on Jan. 1
Activity fee: \$300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half payment due Sept. 8 • half payment due Feb. 1
Monthly tuition	by the 5th business day of the month

Parents are responsible for paying their tuition in a timely manner. Your account will be considered "delinquent" if outstanding charges are not paid by the end of the 5th business day of the month.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Each parent must participate in 2 parent-teacher conferences each year at times made available by the teacher. Parents sign up in advance for these conferences and are encouraged to come with questions about their child's unique personality, development, preferences, and needs. Questions about the classroom, activities organized by the teacher, and goals for the class and for individual students are also encouraged.

Teachers will offer a report on the child's behavior and development and will suggest ways that the parent can reinforce or support what is taught or experienced in the classroom. Issues like toilet training, sleep patterns, supportive conflict resolution, pedagogical choices, and the child's enthusiasms, aversions, and capabilities may also be discussed.

Parent Participation

Parent participation is at the center of the Red Balloon School and makes the School community possible. Some types of participation are required, some are encouraged, and others (of the parents' own invention) may be added as appropriate.

A deposit of \$300, payable in 2 installments, is required to insure that families adequately participate in the life of the school. At a minimum, each family is required to support and participate in Red Balloon Fairs and Bake Sales, Auction and contribute to Red Balloon fundraising activities. If, in the judgment of the Board and Executive Director, the family's participation is not adequate, the deposit may be forfeited.

Parent Participation in the School

Parents have a number of opportunities to participate. The Red Balloon has a Parent Board of 7-9 current families. It is a 1-2 year commitment with 8-10 meetings per year. We also have several Committees; the Social Committee (responsible for school social activities, family parties, and holiday events), Class Communication Coordinators (responsible for informing parents of upcoming events and encouraging participation) , & The Fundraising Committee (in charge of organizing the Jazz in June Auction). All parents must participate in all fundraising events. Every family is required to obtain at least 2 items to sell for our "Jazz in June Auction" as well as sell 4 tickets. We ask for help setting up the Auction, cleaning up, transport there and back..

Parent Grievance Policy

After any questionable incident, the allegedly grieved party has these rights and/or options:

- After normal efforts to settle any differences with personnel (staff, Director, parents, or others)
- Contact the Parent Board of Directors within 7 calendar days
- The Board has no more than 7 days to contact as indicated the party and arrange an interview.
- The Board then has no more then 7 calendar days to meet with the party, and initiate proceedings, such as inquiry, investigation, background information, etc.
- The Board will have no more than 7 calendar days to determine further action, render a decision, inform the participants, and close the case.

