

# **Parent Handbook**

## **MARC Academy & Family Center**

### **Pre-Kindergarten Program**

*A warm and safe environment where children  
can learn, grow, and have fun.*

2105-2111 Jerome Avenue, Bronx, New York 10453

*“Only the educated are Free” –Epictetus*

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## Welcome

The MARC After-School program (MARC) welcomes you and your family. This handbook was made so that you are aware of all policies concerning your children here at MARC. Please read it thoroughly and keep it for future reference, as it covers very important policies and procedures that pertain to the care of your child. **The policies stated in this handbook are guidelines only and are subject to change at the sole discretion of MARC, as are all other policies, procedures, benefits, and other programs of MARC.**

If you have any questions regarding this handbook please call or ask the Director of After-School Programs or the Executive Director of MARC. MARC's phone number is 718-562-3410 at 2105-2111 Jerome Avenue, Bronx, New York 10453 and 718-716-7197 at 1895 Walton Avenue, Bronx, New York 10453.

Directors can be reached from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Jerome Avenue Site. We will go over this handbook during our open house, but this copy is for you to use as a reference. There will be a yearly revision of this handbook, and you will be notified, in writing, of any changes that may occur.

## **Our Mission**

“Only the Educated are free” truly embodies all that we stand for. To that end, MARC’s mission is to provide underserved children of the Bronx and their families with the opportunity to develop their social, creative, and academic skills so that they may become lifelong learners and responsible citizens who are free to make educated choices and decision in their lives. Success will be shown by self-esteem, measurable academic growth, and responsible actions.

## **Philosophy**

We focus on each child as an individual, with unique needs and readiness skills for learning. Our philosophy is to provide children with a developmentally appropriate environment that supports children’s social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth. Within this environment, children are given the opportunity to construct knowledge. We believe a child’s early experiences enrich and stimulate future growth. Children deserve to be treated and respected as individuals in an environment that welcomes reasoning, exploration, questioning, and imagination. We respect each child’s need for love, security, acceptance, warmth, and stimulation. We would like children to develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward learning, in addition to developing intellectual habits which prepares them to be lifelong learners. It is essential that these children develop critical thinking, self-correcting, and reasoning and problem solving skills, which will help them in their future education. Most importantly, we hope that the children leave preschool with a sense of respect for and a positive relationship with others.

## **Discrimination Policy**

MARC does not discriminate with regard to race, ethnic or national origin, religious affiliation, sex, or disability in all of its hiring practices and educational programs. Parents or guardians of children enrolled at MARC are informed that complaints of discrimination may be filed with the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, N.Y. City/ N.Y. State Human Relations Commission.

## **Confidentiality**

The information you supply to MARC will be kept confidential. We will, at all times, respect your privacy. Before any of the information is released to outside persons and/or agencies, parents will be asked to sign a release form.

## **Open Door Policy**

You are invited and welcome to visit the classroom anytime your child is in attendance, but please avoid visiting during rest time as much as possible. Parents are also free to call at anytime. If we cannot answer your phone call, please leave a message with the receptionist, and we will return your call as soon as possible.

## **Open Communication**

We will maintain an open stream of communication with you regarding your child(ren) and issues surrounding your child by means of daily discussion when necessary. We ask that you explain clearly and carefully your expectations as to how you expect your child to be cared for. Also provide updates on problems and progress that your child is making. Good communication helps us work together in the best interest of your child.

Communication is very important and we would like to ensure that there is constant communication between the program and the parents. We have a number of ways to get the message across. The first is the activities calendar; the second is the Parent Bulletin

board located at the entrance of the program and next to every classroom entrance. There are letters given to parents at the end of the day to inform them of any changes or upcoming events.

## **Goals**

While in our care your child will have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of activities, which promote all aspects of development. We provide children the comfort and experience of belonging to an extended family. Our approach to childcare is child centered and child directed. Children are offered choices whenever possible. Your child will bring home a calendar each month that will give a brief overview of what we will be doing. Just because you are not seeing anything daily in the form of work does not mean that we have not been busy.

## **Guidance/Discipline Policy**

The following methods will be used in our classroom(1) encourage children to solve the problem themselves (2) intervention and discussion (3) redirect to another play area (4) loss of privileges. We try to create an environment for children that is supportive and respectful of their needs. No child will be hit, spanked, belittled, or otherwise intimidated even with parental permission. The child will be talked to about what he/she has done wrong and why it was wrong. If this approach is unsuccessful, we will implement time out from an activity and redirect the child to another activity.

If we are unable to modify the child's behavior, we will then schedule a parent-teacher conference in order to develop a mutually agreed upon plan to correct the inappropriate behavior. Children will be treated with courtesy, respect, and patience. **At no time will a child be subjected to physical punishment by spanking, slapping, or hitting, shaming, frightening, or any type of verbal abuse, threats, or depriving of a meal or any part of a meal. No child will ever be punished for toilet accidents. Our goal is to help each child develop a strong sense of self-discipline, self-esteem, and self-control.**

## Discipline

Discipline helps each child develop the internal self-control and problem-solving skill to manage better as they grow and become an adult. We cannot allow children to injure themselves or others, or to destroy property. The limits we set protect and teach respect for themselves, the right of others, and our environment. We desire to strengthen each child's own cultural identity, while instilling a respect for others who might be different. We never embarrass or ridicule a child when they misbehave; nor do we allow physical punishment. We use positive tactics that strengthen self esteem. Most situations can be handled by redirecting the child to another, more appropriate activity.

## Locations

There are two MARC after School sites. Both sites provide instruction in subject areas such as Math, Reading, Writing, Culture, Computers, Performing and Creative Arts, and Conflict Resolution.

- **The Jerome Avenue site** is located at 2105-2111 Jerome Avenue between Burnside Avenue and 181<sup>st</sup> street. This site is fully equipped with a full service kitchen, computer room, a library, an art room and a stage with lighting for performing arts.
- **The Walton Avenue site** (After-school only) is located at 1895 Walton Avenue between 177<sup>th</sup> street and Mt. Hope Place. The Walton Avenue site can accommodate a maximum of 26 children, the site is fully air-condition and equipped with a full service kitchen, computer, a library, games, and other educational materials. Close to a nearby playground, Walton provides children with a warm and nurturing setting. Class sizes are smaller and easier to manage.

## **Activities/Schedules**

***UPK/Full Day Classes:*** Attending Preschool should be an enjoyable experience for the child as well as the parent. While here, your child will be exposed to many kinds of learning experiences including: arts and crafts, music, read-aloud (books and stories), self-initiated play, numbers, colors, shapes, letter recognition, circle time, computer time, block play, sand and water play, table toy manipulatives, dramatic play, and science play. Age appropriate activities are scheduled with flexibility to the needs of the individual child and day. We offer outside play when the weather permits. We follow a curriculum that includes, developing large and small motor skills, and do many arts and crafts that focus on process, not product. Free play is an important part of a child's early years. It is here that they learn social skills that will be needed for the rest of their lives.

***Rest Period:*** Children in our care usually take regular naps. Even if children do not go to sleep, we still insist that they lay down for a rest time. Please try not to schedule pick ups or visits during this time so as to not disturb the resting children. All children will rest on their own cots with their individual linens. Naptime is our only opportunity to take a break, clean up after lunch, do paperwork, and daily planning.

***After-School Program:*** Activities are hands-on, project based or literacy based. All activities require reading and writing. Our literacy program uses a variety of approaches to ensure literacy enrichment. Schedules can change due to outside programs such as field trips or enrichment programs we bring to the agency. There are two schedules; the first is broken into 20-minute lessons for each subject. The second schedule is broken up into 30-minute lessons. The 20-minute lessons are at Walton Avenue where there are fewer students and the 30-minute lessons are at Jerome Avenue.

## Meals and Snacks

We eat nutritionally balanced, wholesome foods for both meals and snacks. Children are encouraged (but not forced) to eat a variety of foods. Meals and snacks are served family style. Children are encouraged to use this time to share their experiences with each other. Manners are taught, and practiced during this time as well. **Please have your child(ren) here on time if you want them to have breakfast. If your child arrives after this time we will expect them to have eaten at home.** Please notify us of any food allergies or restrictions your child may have.

## Calendar

Every month an activities calendar will be available for the parents. The calendar will list the major activities and/or projects during the month. It will also highlight any parent meetings for the month as well the monthly theme. Please read the calendar carefully so you will understand what is going on in your child's classroom for the month. In this way you will be informed with specific dates and times of school events, parent meetings, school closures, etc.

## Meetings

There will be two mandatory meetings for parents a year. The first meeting begins in September and discusses enrollment, the curriculum, activities, policies, Parent handbook, Student conduct policy, and the Parent Advisory Committee. The second meeting is in June and it refers to the summer program. All other meeting will be given with ample time to attend however **if you do not attend a mandatory meeting your child will not be able to attend MARC until such information is received by parents.**

## **Early dismissal**

If there is ever an early dismissal, we will communicate to the parents the time and date of the dismissal in advance. We will communicate the information through the Parent bulletin board and signs posted at the entrance of the school.

## **Absences**

Each absence, lateness, and early dismissal will be recorded as excused or unexcused. All excused absences must be followed by a note. Excused absences are defined as: an absence due to illness or death in the family, required court appearances, or mandated after school programs.

Please be advised that **mandated** after school programs are required programs to enhance a subject area not to be confused with a talent like music or dance. All other absences, lateness, or early dismissals will be considered unexcused. All students must maintain a minimum attendance rate of 85 percent to remain in good standing as a member of MARC. Notice will be given to those parents who fall under the minimum requirement without an excuse. Families that do not comply with the minimum attendance standards as required by MARC may be subject to discharge in order to include families in need who require the full range of service MARC provides.

## **Calling In and Excusing Absences**

Parents are required to call MARC in the event their child will be absent. Some form of notice is required for all absences. This can be done by just a simple phone call to us letting us know your child is ill and will not be attending school that day. If the child is absent due to illness, for more than 3 consecutive days, a doctor's note is required in order to allow the student back into the program. We ask parents to provide 1-2 weeks written notice prior to your child leaving on vacation. Please indicate how long your child will be away and when he/she will be returning. This is just the procedure needed to let us know that your child will be away for a while, and will be returning.

## **Emergencies & Illness**

Students who are ill are encouraged to stay home. Students who become too ill to continue classroom activities should notify the appropriate adult in the class. The student's parent or guardian will be notified and will be expected to make appropriate arrangement for the student to leave MARC. **It is critical that all emergency numbers be kept up-to-date in the event of student illness or emergency.**

Please inform us if your child has been ill during the night or is not feeling well upon arrival. **We will not take children who are severely ill. For example, oral temperature over 101 degrees, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, chicken pox, continuous coughing, yellow or green runny nose, draining eyes, rash, contagious skin condition.**

There are a number of immunizations required by law before your child(ren) attends school. Please make sure your child(ren) are up-to-date with their immunizations. When a child has certain symptoms, he/she should be kept at home until they are given written consent by a doctor that the child is able to return to school.

## **Enrollment/Fees**

To enroll your child, you must complete: (1) Enrollment Form, (2) Medical Form, (3) Report Card/Grow report request form. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to update these forms. Families are subject to suspension of service if all requirement documents are not updated. You will be given ample time to require such documents. Please refer to our fee sheet enclosed with this handbook.

## **Field trips**

The purpose of field trips is to enhance learning. All field trips are age-appropriate. We occasionally go on field trips by school bus or on foot away from the premises of school. We will talk to you about this in advance. A consent form signed by the parent is required before transporting children. If we do not have your permission, we cannot and will not take your child out of the building. Seat belts and car seats are used whenever transporting children on a school bus. All traffic and safety laws will be followed. No child will ever be left unattended. We welcome participation of parents on field trips. If you would like to become involved in field trips, please tell your child's teacher. There is a waiver signed during the enrollment process.

## Holidays/Vacation

MARC is open all year round and during some holidays. We are closed eleven days of the year.

MARC will be closed during the following holidays:

- New Year's Day – January 2
- Martin Luther King Day- Third Monday in February
- Memorial Day- Fourth Monday in May
- Teacher's conference for the summer- Last week of June
- Independence- July 4
- Teacher's preparation week for the fall – Last week of August
- Labor Day – First Monday in September
- Columbus Day- October 10
- Veteran's Day- November 11
- Thanksgiving Day- Fourth Thursday in November
- Day after Thanksgiving Day- Fourth Friday in November
- Christmas holiday- December 25 & 26

When New Year's Day, Independence, or Christmas Day fall on Sunday, the following day shall be considered the official holiday; when these holidays fall on a Saturday the preceding Friday shall be considered the official holiday. We reserve the right with prior notification to close the agency for professional development of our staff. **\* If the New York City Department of Education closes public schools due to snow, then MARC will be closed.**

## **Hours**

*UPK/ Full Day Classes:* MARC's UPK classroom is open from 8:30 AM until 11:00 AM and 12:30 PM until 3:00 PM. MARC's full day classrooms are open from 8:00 AM until 6:00 PM. Monday through Friday. We will not accept children before 8:00 AM, this is the time for the teacher to prepare for arrival of your child(ren). Pick up time is 6:00 PM, if you arrive to pick up your child after 6:05 PM you will be charged a late fee. This late fee is due at the time your child is picked up or on the next day.

*After-School:* MARC runs the after school program from 3:00pm to 6:00pm during regular school days. During half days After-school runs from 11:30am to 6:00pm. During the summer session we are open from 9AM to 5PM. (As long as funding is available)

## **Parent Involvement/ Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)**

MARC has a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) elected every year. The election process occurs during the month of October and candidates are selected during the month of September.

Candidates for the committee are selected at the first Parent meeting of the year. Parent meetings are held before the child's first day. Signs will be posted to announce the meeting. We welcome all parents interested in the PAC. We also encourage parents to participate in workshops available at MARC. These workshops educate parents in matters that may slip through the cracks because of busy schedules and lifestyles. All parents who participate are appreciated.

## **Personal Belongings**

Personal belongings are the responsibility of the child. MARC is not responsible for any lost or stolen artifacts or clothing; every attempt will be made to retrieve lost or stolen artifacts. We encourage all students to keep valuables at home to avoid problems.

## **Release of children**

We assume responsibility for your child only while he/she is in our care. No child will be allowed to leave with anyone except the parent who enrolls the child and any one who is an emergency contact on the enrollment form. If parents choose to elect another person to pick up their child, a letter must be submitted to document the inclusion of additional persons prior to release. Anyone unfamiliar to us will be required to show proof of identification. Please make the alternate pick up person aware of the requirements. Please be in control of your child during drop off and pick up times. This is a time of testing when two different authority figures are present (parent and teacher) and this situation will be tested at one time or another to see if the rules still apply. In the event children are capable of walking themselves home a proper release must be signed.\* **If there is a court order keeping one parent or guardian away from a child, we must have a court paper to this effect in our files.**

## **Rights and Responsibility of children and parents**

MARC recognizes that parents play an important role in their child's education. Parents and guardians are strongly urged to understand their rights and responsibilities.

### **Parents have the right to the following:**

- Advocate for their children and be given respect by all MARC employees.
- Examine all student records pertaining to their children.
- Receive regular official report of any breach of discipline that results in removal from the classroom.
- Visit classrooms to observe the classes. Parents must sign in at the office before their visit begins.
- Request an interpreter for all school-related meetings, conferences, and activities if they are limited or non-English speaking, or require cued speech and sign language.
- Appeal disciplinary actions such as suspension. Request a conference with the principal/designee to reduce the number of days of suspension.
- Make a complaint if their children have been discriminated against or harassed in anyway.
- Expect that information about their children will be protected and treated in the confidential way,
- Request curriculum modifications.
- Request information regarding teachers' credentials.

## **Students conduct policy**

### ***The code of conduct***

Students are responsible for their behavior and are expected to follow the rules of MARC. These rules are established to maintain order and a favorable academic atmosphere at MARC. Conduct that is dangerous, disruptive, unruly, or interferes with a teacher's ability to teach is a violation of MARC's code of conduct.

### ***Levels of disciplinary action***

The following summarizes the actions that can be taken by MARC staff to address a student's violation of MARC's Code of Conduct. There are two levels:

#### ***Level One: Conference and Intervention***

In taking disciplinary action at Level 1, staff members may conduct a conference with any combination of the following: students, parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff. The conference may result in an intervention, such as, a contact with a student for better behavior, or a warning to the student and the parent. These are some other things that can happen:

- Exclusion from extracurricular activities for a specified period.
- Payment for school property that is damaged.
- Collection of inappropriate personal property
- Referral to a counselor, social worker, or collaborative support team.

#### ***Level Two: Suspension***

After three warnings and/or conferences dealing with behavior issues and misconduct the child will be suspended. We reserve the right to suspend the child right away depending on the severity of the action. Suspension is temporary removal from MARC. A notice will be given to the parent indicating the length of the suspension and the reason. After significant attempts to resolve misconduct through conferences and suspensions the child can be discharged and/or expelled from the program.

### *Student reinstatement*

If a child has been expelled from MARC due to behavior, to be reinstated the child must attend a conference with the Program Director and Executive Director of MARC to discuss future involvement with the program. The child must begin the enrollment process from the beginning. The parent must also adhere to new enrollment procedures and will not have priority over those presently enrolled.

## **Pick up Policy**

Children must be picked up at the proper dismissal time for all programs. Failure to pick up child on time will result in a late fee that will be collected at the time of pick up or will be posted on your bill.

**After school dismisses children at 6:00 p.m. on regular scheduled days and at 5:00 for schedules that run full day.**

**After two hours of no response from any guardian or emergency contact ACS will be called.**

## **Procedure**

If a child is not picked up at the dismissal time the home is called immediately and if there is no response from the home number then the job number must be called. Both of these numbers are called seeking some information as to where the parent or guardian is and how the child will be picked up.

In the event that neither number is serving a purpose then the emergency numbers are called. If the emergency numbers are no good then a social worker at ACS ( The Agency for Children Service), is called. In this case the social worker comes to pick up the child and takes the child to the proper authorities. We are required to call ACS when there is neglect of this nature by the parents.

## Other After-School Programs

Children Enrolled at MARC are allowed to go to **mandated programs while being marked present at MARC**. These programs help ensure a passing grade on New York State exams. **Any other program, for example music, dance, chess, choir, etc are, unless mandated, excusable with regard to attendance requirements at MARC.** Consistent attendance at MARC is essential to our securing the necessary funding to keep our doors open. Only families who are on a private pay program are exempt from attendance requirements.

## Performances

MARC has four performances to raise funds a year:

1. The Martin Luther King Celebration in January.
2. The end-of-the-year show in June.
3. A summer fundraiser in August.
4. A winter fundraiser in December.

The performances require a lot of practice. They include dancing, theater, poetry, nutrition awareness, and singing. Everyone is included in the performances.