

# Mulberry School

1101 Douglas  
Normal, IL 61761

## PHILOSOPHY & HISTORY

### *Statement of Philosophy*

The Mulberry School is a parent cooperative school for children 3 years old to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The students, parents and teachers of Mulberry School are guided by three important principles.

1. *Open Discussion:*

The Mulberry School advocates open discussion. If a child introduces questions or expresses concern, we feel it must be dealt with on an immediate basis in an honest, sensitive manner. The School gives the teachers permission to use their professional discretion in guiding discussion appropriately.

2. *The Value of Individual Differences:*

The Mulberry School values individual differences and welcomes parents and students from a variety of backgrounds. We view diversity of religions, ethnic heritage, racial heritage, and social and economic situations as enrichment for our children.

3. *Stereotype-Free Atmosphere:*

The Mulberry School believes in an atmosphere free from traditional stereotyping so that each child will be able to pursue his or her own interests as an individual.

The Mulberry School is proud of its excellent teachers and their teaching methods. One of the reasons for this high standard is the School's ability to keep the number of students in each classroom small. The ratio of teacher per students in each class is approximately 1:12. This enables teachers to give each student the personal instruction they need to comprehend ideas and understand concepts.

The Mulberry School mission is further described in the Bylaws and Policy Statements, included in this packet.

### *History*

The Mulberry School, formerly the New School, was founded in 1971 by a group of parents and students who were interested in establishing an alternative school which would offer an individualized, open program modeled after the British Infant School concept. The fact that the school did materialize and has functioned without interruption since 1971, is a tribute to the dedicated teacher and parents who actively participate in the School's functions. Despite the many obstacles that our school has encountered, the ever-present needs and successes of the children took precedence over those obstacles and provided the motivation to overcome them.

## GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

The school is located at 1101 Douglas, Normal, Illinois, 61761.

### *Hours of Operation*

School Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, during the academic school year. There is before and after school childcare from 7:30 a.m. - 8:50 a.m. and 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. Cost is \$2.50 per half hour or any portion thereof. If your child(ren) is/are not participating in before school care, then they should not arrive to school prior to 8:50 a.m. All children must be picked up promptly at 3:00 p.m. Parents are responsible for transportation of their child(ren) to and from the School. Please inform the School as to who will be delivering and picking up your child(ren) on a regular basis. If there is a change, a written notice is preferred, but a telephone call will suffice if plans change during the day.

### *Financial Base*

The School's operation is funded by tuition and fund raising. The uniqueness of Mulberry School can be seen through the cooperative contribution of the parents who give their time.

### *Scholarships*

Mulberry School provides need-based financial assistance and scholarships to eligible families. Financial assistance and scholarship applications can be obtained by contacting the Mulberry School Office or by going on-line at [www.mulberryschool.org](http://www.mulberryschool.org). Each application is considered on an individual basis with consideration given to expenses and family needs in addition to income. All complete applications submitted by the deadline will be considered.

### *Illness Procedures and Health Records*

All new students entering Mulberry School must have a physical examination prior to admittance. If your child is transferring to Mulberry School, an up-to-date examination will be obtained from his or her former school. Illinois State Law requires the Mulberry School to have all student immunization forms completed and on file prior to admission. The State also requires that all four (4), five (5), and six (6) year olds new to the school must have a lead poisoning screening. Please be prompt in submitting all health forms/records so your child's admission is not unnecessarily delayed.

Parents are responsible for notifying the teacher if your child has contracted a contagious disease. If your child appears to be ill or has a fever or vomiting, keep him or her at home. Do not send your child back to school until he or she is fever and symptom free for at least 24 hours.

**Please Note: SICK CHILDREN WILL BE SENT HOME.**

**Children sent home, from school, with a fever will not be allowed at school the next day.**

**Emergency Information**

An Emergency Information Form must be completed and returned to the Mulberry School for all new students prior to the first day of school. It is essential we have this information on file before you place your child in the care of the Mulberry School. If a returning student’s form requires updating, please request a new form from the school.

**Food Allergies – Especially Peanut**

All new students entering Mulberry School must let the academic director, secretary, and teacher know if a child has a food allergy (especially peanut). Please indicate on your child’s emergency card of the allergy and severity, and we ask that you give us a copy of your child’s “Food Allergy Action Plan” which will be attached to the emergency card.

For any child who has peanut allergies and is enrolled all day and eating lunch at Mulberry will have the right to these following accommodations during their enrollment at Mulberry School.

- A peanut free table will be set aside at one of the lunch areas. The student will have separate lunch scissors, books, and any other items that may come in contact with peanuts available for his/her use.
- During a year when a child has a severe peanut allergy, we will set aside a table for all children who have peanut products in their lunch. They will all wash their hands when they are finished with their lunch before they do any follow up activities.
- During whole school functions where children are present, we will not offer peanut products or hand out food items that were processed in plants that process peanuts.
- The parent population will be notified of any children who have severe allergies.
- Peanut products will be banned from the individual classroom in which the child is enrolled, and a sign that indicates a peanut free classroom will be posted near the room. Therefore, no snacks, cooking, or birthday treats may contain peanut products.

**Parent Participation**

The survival of the Mulberry School is contingent upon the efforts of the school parents. Each family is *required* to devote a minimum of fifty (50) hours of work towards the School, or pay the set fee in lieu of contributing time to support the needs of the school.

Classroom involvement of the parents is extremely important, and parents are requested to share their talents in enrichment activities on a regular or one-time basis. Some parents in the past have contributed in the following activities:

- |           |           |         |           |                                |
|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Crafts    | Sports    | Music   | Games     | Field Trip Supervisors/drivers |
| Art       | Languages | Science | Childcare | Teacher Aide                   |
| Gardening |           |         |           | Substitute Teaching            |

There are also other activities that parents can participate in to achieve their fifty (50) hours. Some suggestions are as follows:

- |                       |                   |                      |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Playground Supervisor | School Renovation | Building Maintenance |
| Janitorial Duties     | Repair Person     | Lawn Care            |

At least one parent from each family is *requested* to attend the parent meetings to not only keep informed, but to become involved in the direction and needs of the school to ensure our children are receiving the best overall education possible.

Fund raising is a very crucial aspect of our school's operation. The annual school budget is dependent on successful fund raising to cover our operational expenses. Please be aware that tuition represents only a portion of our operating budget, the remainder is derived through successful fund raising that requires the total involvement of our parents. Fund raising projects have included survival kits for Illinois Wesleyan students during finals week, the Mulberry Gala and the annual art auction. Parents may be occasionally asked to sell raffle and event tickets to support the school.

Parents are highly encouraged to volunteer for the Mulberry School Board of Director positions that are available annually. The member parents elect their Board of Directors from the membership group as specified in the Mulberry School bylaws. Scheduled meetings for the Directors do count as parent participation hours.

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **POLICY I. DECLARATION OF RIGHTS**

The Mulberry School is an alternative school that stresses the growth of the whole, individual child. We cherish our differences and our uniqueness as individuals, but we are also a community. The children's understanding of the concept of community and their responsibilities as individuals within a community are an important part of their education and growth. Adults have a special responsibility to help children with these group expectations. Any adult who works in the school has a right to object and to control behavior, which is not in the best interests of the community. It takes time to form relationships of trust and leadership with children. We assume that the child is reasonable and will exert self-control if she or he understands what is expected, and the reason why these expectations exist.

All individuals in the Mulberry community have the right to:

1. work without disruption.
2. express oneself without interruption.
3. work cooperatively within a group.
4. play quietly.
5. live safely.
6. be different and/or unique without fear or humiliation of censure.
7. have one's work and property respected.

Behavior must preserve these rights. Examples of specific behavior that deprive other members of the community of their rights include but are not limited to:

1. demeaning or profane language directed at another person.
2. threatening, menacing or intimidating behavior.
3. destruction of another person's work or property.
4. destruction of community property.
5. disruptive or noisy behavior that infringes on another's right to concentrate and work.

### **POLICY II. PARENT PARTICIPATION**

Each Mulberry School family is required to contribute a minimum of fifty (50) hours of volunteer time to the school, an average of five to six (5-6) hours per month. The time contributed is a necessity to

facilitate the proper operation of the Mulberry School. Families may only be exempt from the Parent Participation policy by contractually agreeing to pay an annual fee of \$1500.00 (50 hours x \$30/hr) to be paid in addition to the contracted tuition payment. Families who fail to achieve the fifty (50) hour minimum requirement by May 1<sup>st</sup> of the academic year will be assessed a fee equivalent to \$30.00 per hour for each hour less than the fifty (50) hours required. Failure to do so is a breach of contract. Attendance at parent &/or board meetings may be counted towards parent hours by only one family member. Any hours completed beyond the contracted 50 hours will be considered a donation to the school and will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Due to the emphasis and priority of parent participation projects, all families will be encouraged to contribute time, as directed by the Project chairperson and/or Board of Directors, to at least one of the following projects:

Survival Kits

business contacts  
typing & labeling  
pick-up of products  
packaging & delivery

Art Event

publicity  
set up & clean up  
preparation of facility  
food arrangements

Gala

Planning  
business contacts  
mailing lists  
clean up

School Maintenance & Events

|                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| field trips     | repairs and maintenance |
| holiday parties | clean up                |
| yardwork        | playground monitor      |

**POLICY III. ADMISSIONS**

Admission priority will be given to all students in the following manner, contingent on the capacity of the Mulberry School.

1. Currently enrolled students in good standing.
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students.
3. Siblings or children of formerly enrolled students.
4. New students on a first-come, first-contracted basis.

The Mulberry School does not exclude children with severe physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral disabilities unless these disabilities prevent their complete and unimpeded participation in the school program. Enrollment of children with special needs will be conducted with consideration by the Academic Director and the teaching staff.

Children must be three (3) by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the academic school year in order to apply for the 3K program; four (4) by January 1<sup>st</sup> of the academic school year in order to apply for the 4K program; four (4) by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the academic school year in order to apply for the Pre-K program; and five (5) by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the academic school year in order to apply for the Kindergarten program. Children must be potty trained in order to be considered for enrollment.

Notice of Nondiscrimination: The Mulberry School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, handicap, or sex in admission to and participation in its educational programs, school activities and services, or in its employment policies.

#### **POLICY IV. DELINQUENT PAYMENT OF TUITION**

It is the sole responsibility of each Mulberry School family to assure tuition payments are made in accordance with their contractual obligations. The Mulberry School budgetary cash flow is dependent on prompt payment of all tuition and fee schedules. Therefore, a late fee of \$25.00 shall be charged if a tuition installment is not paid the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) day after the specified contractual date when such tuition or fee installment is due. A notice will be sent after the 2<sup>nd</sup> day has passed reminding the family of the overdue payment and the late fee. If 30 days after the payment due date the payment has not been received, the board, at its sole discretion, may suspend the student until the payments are current. Payments that are 30 or more days overdue will be turned over to collections and are subject to a 1.5% monthly interest charge. The family is responsible for any expenses related to the collections process.

A Non-Sufficient Funds fee of \$25.00 shall be charged if a check payment of any form (tuition, before/after school, apparel, etc.) is returned to the school for lack of funds. Failure to pay such tuition and/or fee installment as due may result in the immediate suspension of the student. This suspension is at the sole discretion of the Mulberry School Board of Directors.

#### **POLICY V. HOLIDAY POLICY**

Mulberry School is made up of children from a wide variety of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Mulberry School teachers attempt to portray all cultural, ethnic, and religious groups with self-worth, dignity, and value. A portion of this portrayal may involve description or enactment of a variety of religious or cultural festivals. In particular, major Cultural Holidays, practiced by a large number of Americans, will be recognized and special activities may be organized (for example, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas). These festivities will be presented objectively, (no indication that people whom participate are inferior or superior to others) as part of the "Common American Culture". (effective in 1995).

*These events will be noted on the school calendar and parents will be notified prior to their child's participation. Any parent who does not wish their child to participate may send a note to the child's teacher and alternative activities will be found. In addition, any parent wishing to present information on cultural, ethnic, or religious activities not covered by the school, is welcome to work with the teacher to set up an appropriate presentation.*

#### **POLICY VI. POLITICAL STATEMENT OF SCHOOL**

The Mulberry School will neither advocate nor condone "Political Statements", such as boycotts, picketing, marches, solicitations, or rallies. The Mulberry School will not participate in these events as an organization. (Effective 1996)

Justification:

1. The goal of the school is to educate our children. To achieve this goal requires cooperation and support of all parents. Political statements by an organization are divisive. Because the statements do not reflect the feelings of all members, the individuals that do not support the statement may feel like outcasts.
2. Mulberry School already has a very diverse set of families. The only thing they may have in common is the school. If we start politicizing the school, parents are more likely to drop out or not participate in school activities.
3. The Board would be forced to act as referee. The Board would have to ensure that both sides of the issue would be presented, and then the Board would have to determine which issues to act on. Serving on the Board takes enough time and the members do not need the extra burden of this type of political decision.

#### **POLICY VII. FIELD TRIP DRIVERS**

Each Mulberry classroom takes multiple field trips throughout the school year. These field trips rely upon parent volunteers for transportation to and from the destinations. Any parent wishing to drive students on field trips must have on file at the school, copies of proof of current insurance card and a current driver's license. These are to be given to the administrative assistant to keep on file.

#### **POLICY VIII. BUSINESS POLICY**

The conducting of all business of the corporation shall be done according to the policies established by the Board. The policies are the articles contained in the bylaws and the statements approved as policy and reported in the minutes of the corporation. Such policies shall be added to the Handbook. In the absence of a policy covering a matter of concern, the membership as a whole can function to reach a resolution of the matter. Any action of the corporation not covered by policies requires membership approval.

#### **POLICY IX. BUILDING USE**

In an effort to protect the Mulberry School property and its contents, the following policy regarding use of the physical building for non-school related functions has been established.

If an interested party would like to request use of the physical building for a non-Mulberry school purpose, the following steps must be taken:

1. A written proposal must be submitted to the Chairman of the Board of Directors so that it can be placed on the agenda for the upcoming Board meeting.
2. The person proposing use of the building will appear in person in front of the board to make the proposal to the board members present and to allow for discussion among the party making the request and the board members.
3. Discussion among the board members will be allowed
4. It is recommended that the board give a timely response to the interested party making the request.
5. Simple majority vote will prevail in decisions regarding building use.
6. Regardless of the proposal for building use, the following contracted stipulations must be met:

- a. Independent insurance coverage (when warranted) by the responsible party for the intended use.
- b. Payment to Mulberry School will be \$50.00 per hour (for for-profit organizations) and \$25.00 per hour (for non-profit organizations) for the use of the building. Payment for building use must be received at least one week before building is used.
- c. The interested party is responsible for maintaining the cleanliness and security of the building immediately before, during and after the approved use.

Building use is at the sole discretion of the board and requires a majority vote for approval.

## **JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MULBERRY SCHOOL**

### **President**

The President of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and of the Corporation. The President of the Board may authorize the Treasurer to sign any deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments which the Board of Directors has authorized to be executed, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Board of Directors or by policy to some other officer or agent of the Corporation. The President of the Board shall serve in a leadership capacity, instilling a cooperative spirit in the teachers and staff of Mulberry School. The President of the Board will oversee all committees and perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors and by policy.

Vice President (Director of Facilities),

The Vice President will serve all duties of the President of the Board when he or she is absent. The Vice President (Director of Facilities) will be responsible for the physical plant and recruiting parent members to assist him/her in the building maintenance and renovation. The Vice President will keep cleaning supplies available and replenished on a regular basis as well as coordinating the removal of snow off the premises, mowing the grass, and the maintenance of the school van. The Vice President will perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors and by policy.

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### **Secretary**

The Secretary shall be the custodian of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Policies and meeting minutes of the Board of Directors and Corporation. The Secretary will tally and record voting issues and policies. The Secretary shall be responsible for internal communications keeping members informed of the workings of the school. The Secretary will take and record attendance at both the Board of Directors and the parent membership meetings. The Secretary will be responsible for writing and distributing the Board's and the parent meeting minutes within one (1) week of the meeting date. In his/her absence, a temporary secretary shall be appointed to the Board to record proceedings. The Secretary may perform other such duties prescribed the Board of Directors and by policy such as sending flowers, cards, and other forms of communication to parents, teachers and children for specific occasions such as births, illness, and bereavements.

**Director of Marketing/Recruiting**

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The Director of Marketing/Recruiting will be responsible for increasing public awareness of the Mulberry School and its activities. The Director of Marketing/Recruiting will be responsible for coordinating public relations events such as upkeep and updating of the schools web site, contacting the media for upcoming fund raising, school or alumni events, and preparing documents for press releases. The Director of Marketing/Recruiting should work closely with the Director of Fundraising and the Building Fund Chairperson, assisting them with media releases and media interactions. Additional duties may include submitting grants or special projects, applying for special awards for teaching, school activities, potential scholarships, etc. The Director of Marketing/Recruiting may recruit other Mulberry parents to assist him/her in these duties. It will then be the Director of Marketing/Recruiting's responsibility to coordinate and oversee activities of any sub-committee.

#### **Director of Fund Raising**

The Director of Fund Raising will be responsible for coordinating fund raising throughout the academic year. The Director of Fund Raising will coordinate the parents in helping to raise funds for the school operations and initiate plans for the next academic year's fund raising events. The Director of Fund Raising shall perform other duties that may be prescribed by the Board of Directors and policy.

#### **Director of Parent Participation**

The Director of Parent Participation shall be responsible for assessing donated time by parents, taking appropriate action when necessary, while encouraging equitable parent participation and a cooperative spirit. The Director of Parent Participation will work closely with all other Board members to coordinate sufficient and equitable distribution of parent participation hours to each project undertaken by the Board. The Director of Parent Participation will record and tally all parent participation hours for each family, and distribute this total to each family and the Board at least quarterly throughout the academic year. The Director of Parent Participation will perform other duties as directed by the Board and policy.

#### **At-Large Members of the Board**

At-Large Members of the Board will have the responsibility of assuming leadership roles for the Board on special projects as well as providing support to other Board members. They will perform other duties as directed by the Board and policy.

#### **Academic Director**

The Academic Director is employed by the Mulberry School Board of Directors and is directly responsible to the Board. He/she must have educational administrative abilities and experience.

*The primary responsibilities of the Academic Director are as follows:*

1. improve the student's academic and social skills through involvement.
2. the purchasing and distribution of all academic materials.
3. keep informed of current trends and developments in the elementary educational field by attending meetings, conferences, workshops, and visiting other schools, not to exceed two (2) days per academic year. In the case where the Academic Director is also a teacher at the Mulberry School, these two days are in addition to the 2 days allowed for the teaching position.

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4. to register and orientate all new students and their parents.
5. make recommendations to the board on hiring and firing of school staff, and to monitor the staffs' performance levels.
6. to establish and distribute the Mulberry School calendar of events, prior to the beginning of the academic year.
7. to coordinate and distribute information to parents on upcoming events, fund raisers, parent/teacher conferences, contracts for upcoming school year, student physical updates, etc.
8. to coordinate all relevant information with teachers about their respective students.
9. to update and maintain academic records pertaining to both previously and currently enrolled students.
10. to coordinate with parents about teacher/student relationships, concerns, and emergencies.
11. to arrange and be responsible for all work-study students, before and after care program, and teacher specialists.
12. to establish and update a list of substitute teachers and advertise and interview applicants when required.
13. to arrange for the use of non-school facilities.

The Academic Director shall maintain a good working relationship with the Board of Directors, insuring that the policies as authorized by the board are followed. The Academic Director will also keep the Board informed of current needs, developments, and trends in the elementary education fields as well as the Mulberry School staff and the hiring of new staff members. The Academic Director will be available for public relations in regards to speaking, writing, and distributing of information pertaining to the Mulberry School as requested by the general public or the Board of Directors.

*The Academic Director also has summer responsibilities, which are as follows:*

1. *Recruitment:* To show the school and explain educational philosophy and processes when needed. Make call backs to interested people. Process applications.
2. *Supplies:* To work with teacher(s) on lists of supplies needed for fall session. Compare teacher lists, prioritize items based on cost efficiency, and place orders.
3. *Orientation:* Secure health, permission, and release forms for each student entering or returning to Mulberry School in the incoming academic year.
4. *Logistics:* Handle daily mail, keep up with summer correspondence, in terms of forwarding records and report on alumni children, updating forms needed for Regional Office of Education and the State Board of Education.

5. *Office:* Inventory remaining textbook/workbook supply and reorder materials. Handle all telephone correspondence, and establish and maintain record keeping procedure with Director of Finance and Bookkeeper concerning all financial transactions over summer.

### **Bookkeeper / Administrative Assistant**

Under the direction of the Board of Directors, maintains all financial transactions/records related to Mulberry School. Under the direction of the Academic Director, provides administrative support to ensure the smooth day-to-day operations of the school.

#### ***Bookkeeping Responsibilities:***

- 1.** Maintain all financial records relating to Mulberry School.
- 2.** Generate and present an annual operating and capital budget to the Board of Directors; generate monthly financial reports for presentation to the Board of Directors; alert Board about significant financial issues.
- 3.** Administer Accounts Receivable function:
  - a. Collect and post payments to appropriate student accounts in QuickBooks;
  - b. Allocate all payments received to appropriate ledger accounts.
  - c. Audit accounts for adherence to credit policy; pass on to the Board of Directors those accounts with past due balances for follow-up.
- 4.** Prepare bank deposits; reconcile bank accounts. In compliance with Board directive, maintain Brokerage Account, including monitoring incoming gifts of stock and selling said gifts immediately upon receipt.
- 5.** Administer Accounts Payable function:
  - a. Pay and record all bills in a timely manner so as to avoid any service/late fees;
  - b. Allocate all money disbursed to appropriate ledger accounts; reconcile and balance all ledger accounts;
  - c. Track expenses for adherence to budget.
  - d. Oversee payroll / wages / and benefit function:
    - Assist in generating and ensuring for accuracy all teacher contracts;
    - Supply all payroll and benefit information to Striegel Knobloch and Company; ensure timely and accurate processing of such;
    - Audit and distribute semi-monthly payroll checks;
    - Pay all appropriate payroll taxes;
    - Distribute cafeteria plan election forms to teachers, communicate with them on provisions of the plan and reimbursement request deadlines, and assist with the submission of cafeteria plan reimbursement claims;
    - Set up and administer 403B plan for payment of teacher annuities.
    - Ensure compliance with Human Resource law, i.e. completion of I-9 forms, etc.

#### ***Administrative Assistant Responsibilities:***

1. Assist Academic Director in all aspects of school administration, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Enrollment and registration;
  - b. Correspondence, including composition of letters, bulletins, memorandums, etc.
  - c. Maintenance of all student records, including collection and auditing of student physical forms for compliance with state immunization requirements;
  - d. Arranging for substitutes in teacher's absence; tracking professional and personal days taken;
  - e. Tracking / shopping for / ordering of all school, office, and janitorial supplies;
  - f. Computer maintenance and support;
  - g. Copy machine maintenance and service arrangements as needed;
  - h. Maintenance of current mailing list of alumni and patrons of Mulberry School.
2. Greet visitors to school, determine nature of business, and direct visitors to destination.
3. Answer and direct all incoming phone calls in professional manner.
4. Stay informed of all activities relating to field trips, special events, school calendar, etc., in order to answer any and all questions from parents.
5. Administer to sick children by taking their temperatures, making them comfortable, and notifying parents if/when the illness is deemed to be of a serious nature.
6. Demonstrate professionalism and integrity and maintain confidentiality at all times.
7. Perform other duties as assigned by Academic Director and/or Board of Directors.