



MECC

Manistee Early Childhood Center

Mini Mariners

Handbook



2026

MECC Mini Mariners Handbook

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MECC Mini Mariners DayCare Handbook

Welcome!

Thank you for choosing the Manistee Early Childhood Center's Mini Mariners program. We are excited to partner with you and your child during these important years. Our mission is to provide a warm, engaging, safe, and nurturing environment where every child can learn, play, create, and grow as a unique individual.

Philosophy of Care

Manistee Early Childhood Center (MECC) fosters a nurturing, trusting, and respectful atmosphere. This environment provides children with opportunities to grow and learn cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally, both as individuals and as part of a group. Our philosophy centers on the belief that children learn through their interactions and play with the physical and social world, where their ideas and explorations are the focal points in the classroom. The teacher's role is to thoughtfully and responsively guide children's interactions with their surroundings, supporting their interests and abilities across all learning domains. In this way, the environment communicates, "Yes, you can be successful."

Program Goals

Our Mini Mariners program uses a warm and nurturing environment and prioritizes creative and developmentally appropriate education for the holistic development of each child. This is achieved through engaging learning experiences and activities, which include purposeful play, child-initiated tasks, social interaction, active participation, object manipulation, free exploration, and skill development, all supported by our dedicated teaching staff.

Program Options and Schedule

Mini Mariners (Ages 3-4)

- **3 Day** Meets Monday - Wednesday 8:00am - 3:00pm all year
- **4 Day** Meets Monday - Thursday 8:00am - 3:00pm all year.
- **5 Day** Meets Monday - Friday 8:00-3:00 all year.
 - High quality 3-4 year old enriched daycare experience designed for school readiness, while meeting the needs of working families.

- The program is designed to nurture early learning through play-based instruction in social-emotional development, literacy, and math.
- Assessment tools are used to measure growth in areas such as pre-academic skills, functional communication, and fine motor development.
- The program includes daily enrichment activities, as well as breakfast, lunch, and snacks provided by the school.

Extended Care

- Morning Care M-Th 7:30am-8:00am
- After Care M-Th 3:00pm - 5:30pm

Summer

Same options as Mini Mariners 3, 4 and 5 day care with extended time options. Our summer program offers a more exploratory, nature-based curriculum

Holiday Breaks/Snow Day

The program remains open during school breaks and snow days, except for the holidays listed below.

DAYS CLOSED

- ❖ New Years Day
- ❖ Memorial Day
- ❖ 4th of July
- ❖ Labor Day
- ❖ Thanksgiving
- ❖ Friday after Thanksgiving
- ❖ Christmas Eve
- ❖ Christmas Day

The center may be closed due to natural or man-made disasters. These include but are not limited to: power outages, water main breaks, gas leaks, or severe weather.

Payment Policies

Registration Fee

A non-refundable registration fee of \$40 is required to secure and hold a child's enrollment. Enrollment is not confirmed until the registration fee has been received.

Tuition Payments

Tuition payments are due weekly and must be paid in full by the designated due date.

Charges and Attendance

Tuition is charged based on enrollment, not attendance. Fees apply regardless of a child's absences or center closures: including but not limited to illness, vacation, holidays, weather-related closures, or school closures. No credits, make-up days, or refunds will be issued for missed or closed days or periods of non-attendance.

Payment Method

All payments must be made through Procure unless otherwise approved in writing by the program administration and are due weekly.

Late or Non-Payment

Failure to submit timely payment, including repeated late payments or non-payment, may result in suspension or termination of enrollment at the discretion of the program. Outstanding balances must be paid in full prior to reinstatement or continued attendance. Failed transactions will result in a \$5.00 fee each time.

Pricing Guide (year round)

3 day Mini Mariners 8:00am-3:00pm \$100.00

4 day Mini Mariners 8:00am-3:00pm \$140.00

5 day Mini Mariners 8:00am-3:00pm \$160.00

Extended Care Mornings 7:30am-8:00am \$3.00 per morning

Extended Care After 3:00pm-5:30pm \$10.00 per afternoon

***We accept DHHS Child Care Credit and Mi Tri-Share**

DHHS and Mi Tri-Share do not cover fees, late pick up fees or for 2 week withdrawal charges. Those fees and charges are the responsibility of the families.

Enrollment and Attendance

Mini Mariners serve children ages 3–4 who are fully potty trained at the time of enrollment.

Enrollment is required, and children attend only on their contracted days; drop-in attendance is not permitted.

Enrollment contracts run from September through the end of May and from June through the end of August.

Required forms include:

- Signed handbook
- Parent/Provider Consent & Agreement Page
- Health appraisal and up-to-date immunization record (due within 30 days of attendance)
- Child information Record
- Written information packet documentation

- Parent Notification of the Licensing Notebook
- Hearing and vision screenings

ProCare is used to sign students in and out each day and is essential for accurate attendance tracking. Parents or guardians may use the provided QR code to complete the sign-in and sign-out process.

Written authorization must be on file for all individuals approved to pick up a child. Proper photo identification is required at the time of pickup.

Families wishing to withdraw from the program must submit written notice at least two weeks in advance. If the required notice is not provided, a fee equal to two weeks of tuition will be charged to the student's account.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Late or missed payments
- Failure to maintain a current account balance
- Repeated late pick-ups or drop-offs
- Rude, disrespectful, or inappropriate behavior toward staff by a parent, guardian, or authorized individual
- Ongoing or severe behavioral issues that are deemed harmful to other children or staff
- Intentional destruction of school property

Health and Illness Policy

Do not send children who are ill. Keep them home if they have:

- Fever (100.4°F or higher or lower if other signs of illness are present) must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning to care
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain
- Unknown rashes, skin conditions, or mouth sores
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- New cough, loss of taste or smell, severe headache, or respiratory difficulty
- Communicable Diseases (Chickenpox, Mumps, Measles, Rubella)
- Head Lice Scabies

Staff observe children daily for signs of illness. Parents or guardians will be notified promptly if any symptoms or health concerns arise during the day.

Any diagnosis of a communicable disease must be reported to the center immediately.

Proper handwashing is required to minimize the spread of illness after restroom use, before and after meals, and at regular intervals throughout the day.

Medication will only be administered when provided by a parent or guardian in its original container, with a valid doctor's prescription, and accompanied by a completed and signed Medication Permission and Instruction form.

Discipline Policy

The program uses positive guidance strategies to promote appropriate behavior. These strategies include praise, gentle reminders, and offering choices to help children learn self-regulation and problem-solving skills. When necessary, children may be redirected or briefly separated from group activities to allow time to calm down and reflect.

In cases of ongoing or serious behavioral concerns, a conference with parents or guardians may be required. Continued concerns may result in dismissal from the program.

For the safety of all children, biting incidents may result in immediate removal for the remainder of the day and parents or guardians will be notified promptly.

Safety Procedures

The center conducts regular fire, tornado, and lockdown drills in accordance with Michigan state regulations. In the event of an emergency, the center's established emergency response plan will be implemented. Children may be evacuated or sheltered in place as appropriate, and parents or guardians will be notified promptly of the situation and location of their child.

Children with special needs will receive appropriate accommodations in accordance with their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Any closures related to pest management will be handled in compliance with safety regulations, and families will be notified in advance whenever possible.

Food Service and Allergies

Nutritious meals and snacks are provided in accordance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.

Any food allergies or special dietary needs must be documented on the child's emergency card and communicated to classroom staff and Nutrition Services. A completed Special Diet Statement, signed by a physician, is required in order for alternative meals or snacks to be provided.

Children are encouraged to participate in age-appropriate meal service and lunch cleanup activities as part of developing independence and responsibility.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is centered on play as the primary vehicle for learning and growth, promoting:

- Motor skills (fine and gross)
- Language development and storytelling
- Early literacy and math skills
- Social-emotional learning through cooperative play and problem-solving

Parent Communication and Involvement

Families receive regular communication through newsletters, classroom communication folders, and annual parent-teacher conferences. Additional updates may be shared as needed to keep families informed of classroom activities and child progress.

Families are encouraged to share their cultures, traditions, and talents with the classroom community. Parent and family volunteers are welcome to support classroom projects, special events, and enrichment activities, in accordance with center policies.

Nap/Rest Time

Rest time is part of our daily schedule and is required under Michigan Child Care Licensing guidelines.

Each child is provided with their own child-sized cot, which is cleaned and sanitized daily.

Families are welcome to send a small blanket and/or comfort item (such as a stuffed animal) to help their child feel comfortable during rest time. These items should be labeled and kept at the center. Items will be sent home as needed for washing.

Children who do not sleep will be encouraged to rest quietly on their cot for the designated rest period.

Potty Training

Children must be fully potty trained at the time of enrollment. This means children should be able to use the restroom independently, including recognizing the need to use the toilet, managing clothing, using the toilet, and washing hands with minimal assistance.

All children are required to have a complete change of clothes available at the center at all times in case of accidents.

Proper Dress/Outdoors

Children should be dressed appropriately for the day's activities and weather conditions. Our program includes hands-on learning and occasional messy projects, so families are encouraged to send children in comfortable clothing that can get dirty.

A change of clothes should be provided and kept at the center at all times.

Children participate in outdoor recess daily, weather permitting. Please ensure your child is dressed for all weather conditions. During colder months, this includes a warm jacket, hat, mittens, snow pants, and boots. On days when boots are worn, a change of shoes should be packed for indoor use.

Proper attire helps ensure children are able to safely and comfortably participate in all activities.

Employment Standards

All staff members and volunteers are required to complete a state-mandated background check prior to working with children.

Staff participate in ongoing professional development and receive annual training in compliance with Michigan Child Care Licensing requirements through MiRegistry.

All staff members are mandated reporters and are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

GSRP Extended Care Options

GSRP Preschool Students can register for extended care throughout the school year. MECC provides a variety of options including:

- | | | |
|--|----------------|---------|
| ● Late Start <i>Monday</i> care | 7:30am -9:00am | \$6.00 |
| ● Morning Care <i>Tuesday-Friday</i> | 7:30am-8:00am | \$3.00 |
| ● After School Care <i>Monday-Friday</i> | 3:00pm-5:30pm | \$10.00 |
| ● <i>Friday</i> Care | 8:00am-3:00pm | \$35.00 |

Please note that extended care does not cover snow days, professional development (PD) days, ½ days, or breaks. Alternative care options may be available through our elementary After school Care Program on those specific days.

Childcare Program Consent and Agreement

By enrolling your child in Mini Mariners you agree to:

- Follow the policies in the MECC handbooks
- Ensure health forms and immunizations are up-to-date
- Comply with payment and attendance policies
- Permit staff to act in the best interest of your child's health and safety

This handbook is subject to change, and families will be notified of updates.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Parent or Guardian)