



Family Handbook

Mind-Builders provides an exciting, nurturing and challenging learning environment that develops skills in a variety of art disciplines.

MIND-BUILDERS CREATIVE ARTS CENTER
3415 Olinville Avenue | BRONX, NEW YORK 10467
Tel: (718) 652-6256 | Fax: (718) 652-7324 | Web: www.mind-builders.org

FAMILY HANDBOOK

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FAMILY HANDBOOK

Welcome to Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center!

Our goal is to provide an exciting, nurturing and challenging learning environment that develops skills in a variety of art disciplines.

PURPOSE AND USE OF THIS HANDBOOK

- As part of our commitment to maintain a high standard of excellence, this booklet is designed to familiarize students and parents with the basic policies and values of Mind-Builders.
- The information, policies and procedures in this handbook are intended as guidelines for the Mind-Builders Community.
- Mind-Builders reserves the right to revoke, change or supplement any information provided within this handbook at anytime and without notice.
- Parents/guardians are required to read this handbook carefully and keep it for future reference.
- Clarification of any information provided in this handbook may be obtained by contacting Mind-Builders.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

We show respect—for ourselves, for others, for our space, and for our work—in all we do and say.

Each of us will let our light shine, pay attention, and always do our personal best.

We help each other, work together, and welcome everyone to build a more perfect community.

At Mind-Builders We...

Create a community where youth and families appreciate differences

Celebrate talents and uncover possibilities

Develop artistic, professional and life skills

Empower youth to be artists, advocates and leaders

Inspire creativity and encourage self expression

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Executive Director	Madaha Kinsey-Lamb	madaha@mind-builders.org
General Manager	Betsy Hastedt	generalmanager@mind-builders.org
Fiscal Manager	Natasha Richards	fiscal@mind-builders.org
Dance Coordinator	Melvada Hughes	dance@mind-builders.org
Music Coordinator	Waldo Chavez	music@mind-builders.org
Positive Youth Troupe	Imani Douglas	pyt@mind-builders.org
Folk Culture	George Zavala	folkculture@mind-builders.org

GENERAL POLICIES

- Parents should encourage their children to practice their instruments or dance steps, providing only positive encouragement and support, which leads to better progress.
- We strongly encourage all students to participate in recitals to experience the joy and fulfillment of diligent work and ensemble performance.
- **Parents/guardians of students under 8 years of age must remain in the building while the student is in class.** Students ages 8+ can be dropped off for their classes. However, the student must arrive just before his/her first class and be picked up immediately after his/her final class. Mind-Builders does not have staff available to supervise unattended children outside the classroom. Please be sure your student has sufficient food/drinks for the time he/she will be in the building
- Mind-Builders is a place of nurture, instruction, joy and community. We have zero tolerance for physical or verbal violence, or any other kind of bullying, directed toward another student, individual or staff member. Such behavior will result in suspension and/or permanent termination.
- If there is a dispute between students, immediately bring the situation to the attention of a MB staff person. We'd like to maintain a safe, community-oriented environment where everyone feels welcomed.
- Students should arrive 15 minutes before the class and must sign in when entering the building.
- Eating or drinking are allowed only in the café or other designated areas to maintain a clean environment.
- Cell phones should be turned off, placed in bags, and kept with student at all times. Electronic games, expensive jewelry and laptop computers should be left at home. **Mind-Builders will not assume responsibility for any loss or theft of cell phones, other mobile devices, or valuables.**
- For safety, students should take the stairs at all times. Riding in the elevator is allowed only when accompanied by a parent/guardian.

Attendance

Research shows that attendance has a direct effect on academic achievement, graduation rates, and social-emotional factors like grit and perseverance.

- **Regular attendance is required for all participants and all are expected to arrive on time.** The attendance policy at Mind-Builders is based on the belief that we can only provide the quality programming and attention your child deserves if s/he attends the program regularly and on time.
- Reasons for attendance policies include, but are not limited to:
 - There is often a wait list for the class and we want to accommodate students that will participate.
 - The program's success and the student's success depend on student attendance and participation.

Absence and Tardiness

- Students are expected to attend each class and arrive for class on time.
- Students should arrive 15 minutes before the class, so they can enter the classroom at start time.
- If a student will be absent or late, please notify the office at (718) 652-6256 and do so at least 24 hours in advance if possible.
- Make-up classes or credit will be arranged only in the event of teacher absence or class cancellation. There are no make-up classes for student absence or lateness.
- After 3 consecutive absences, we reserve the right to withdraw the student from the class.

Visitors

- In order to maintain student focus and attention to learning, visitors and parents are allowed to observe classes **ONLY** during Open House. For special circumstances, you may speak with a Supervisor in order to visit the classroom. Some Music classes require parent participation and are exempt from this guideline.
- Parent conversations with teachers should be had either before or after class, so that the teacher's lesson is not interrupted.

Tuition Payment

As a not-for-profit organization, Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center uses tuition fees, donations and grants to support the cost of staff salaries and operating costs such as electricity, telephone, heat, copier rental, office supplies, insurance, and repairs.

- To maintain a student's space in class, tuition payments are due on the 1st day of the month. Monthly tuition must be paid in full even if a student has been absent from class during the previous month.

- Payments are accepted in the form of credit/debit cards, checks, or money order. NO CASH.
- Mind-Builders will charge an additional \$25.00 for returned checks.
- If an account is more than 2 months in arrears, we reserve the right to suspend or terminate the student from class. **If there is a circumstance that prevents payment of fees on time, it is the account holder's responsibility to discuss the circumstances with a Mind-Builders administrator.**
- Parents/students are strongly encouraged to apply for Tuition Assistance if they are having difficulty making tuition payments.
- Dance Recital production fees are due on or before December 1st. Students who register after December 1st must pay the Dance Recital fee within 30 days.
- All account balances and fees must be paid in full prior to recital performances.

Tuition Assistance

Mind-Builders provides financial aid for those who qualify, in the form of tuition assistance, merit scholarships, and work-exchange. Student and families who could not participate without assistance may apply. Applications are available in the office.

Withdrawing from a Class

If you wish to withdraw from a class, you must give two weeks notice, complete a written withdrawal form (green drop form), and submit it to the main office. Verbally informing the teacher is not sufficient. Account holders will be responsible for all payments due up to the date that the withdrawal form is received.

Feedback

Feedback is an essential part of progress. Once a year, students receive a progress report from their instructors. Parents may also sit in on classes and observe their child's progress during fall and spring Open House weeks. Finally, parents are encouraged to speak with instructors and program directors after class or by phone if needed.

We also ask parents and students to fill out a **Survey** twice a year to help us to evaluate and improve our services.

PARENT-BUILDERS ASSOCIATION/VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Mind-Builders is a community, and we welcome parent volunteers! The Parent-Builders Association (PBA) is a volunteer group of parents/guardians of students attending Mind-Builders who are committed to helping facilitate and create productive programs for Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center. Parents are encouraged to join the following committees:

Cafe Committee: Coordinates activities to engage and stimulate students on Saturdays in the cafe.

Costume Committee: Help to distribute costumes before recitals.

Food Committee: Plan and provide refreshments for special events and recitals.

Backstage Volunteers*:

- Works under the direction of the stage manager.
- Helps entertain and coordinate groups of children during dress rehearsals and performances whenever the performers are not on stage.
- Maintains order in their assigned area back stage, lines up students to come on stage and make sure they have all needed items for performance.
- Never leave their designated students unsupervised.

Outreach Committee: Distributes flyers and obtains donations of needed items or funds.

Other Volunteer Opportunities: Some particular needs include promotion of student enrollment, fundraising/events, renovation, marketing, printing, graphics design, public relations and grant writing.

DANCE DEPARTMENT GUIDE

CLASS GUIDELINES

Levels

- Mind-Builders reserves the right to place students at their appropriate level to promote maximum learning. It is common for students to remain in the same class level for 2 or 3 years.

Arrival time

- Please arrive for class 15 minutes early. Dance students more than ten minutes late for their scheduled class must enter quietly, sit and wait for directions from the instructor. This is to prevent possible injury to the late student, and further disturbance of the class already in progress.

Make-up classes

- Classes are ONLY made up if the class is cancelled.

Withdrawing from a class

- If you wish to withdraw from a class, you must give two weeks' notice, complete a written withdrawal form (green drop form), and submit it to the main office. Verbally informing the teacher is not sufficient. Account holder will be responsible for all payments due up to the date the withdrawal form is received.

Dance Uniform

- In order to promote a sense of community and discipline, students must wear the proper dance uniform and dance shoes. All jewelry must be removed for safety reasons. Only small earrings (studs) may be worn. **All dancewear and accessories should be labeled with the student's name.**
- Leotards and tights may be purchased at Mind-Builders. Dance shoes should be purchased elsewhere.

Visitors in the classroom

- In order to develop confidence and independence in our students, we ask that parents and guardians ***only observe classes during scheduled OPEN HOUSE days.***

Parent/Student responsibility

- Parents and guardians are responsible for any property damage caused by their child.

RECITAL GUIDELINES

Fees and payments

- Recital production and costume fees are due on or before December 1st. Fees for those who register on or after December 1st are due within 30 days of registration. Recital fees cover costumes for the recital. However, but students are responsible for appropriate foundation garments and footwear.
- All fees must be paid in full prior to the recital in order for student to perform in the recital.

Student attendance and arrival times

- If a student does not attend recital rehearsals, it is at the Dance Director's discretion to decide if that student can perform in the recital.
- Students must arrive 1 hour before recital start time to ensure a smooth running show. Late students will only be allowed to perform at the Dance Director's discretion.

Costumes

- Students should arrive dressed in the first costume, with other costumes on a hanger. Please do not forget additional accessories. All costume pieces should be labeled with student's name and class.

Parents Backstage

- In order to ensure an organized and smooth run of show as well as for the safety of all performers, only trained Parent Volunteers are allowed back stage during the rehearsals and recitals. No other parents or visitors are allowed back stage.

DANCE DEPARTMENT DRESS CODE*

***All dance students must adhere to dress code in order to be permitted to participate in class**

***For all dance classes, students may add a dark form-fitting t-shirt or sweater for warmth.**

MUSIC DEPARTMENT GUIDE

Dance Type	Females	Males
Ballet/Creative Movemnt/Mommy & Me	<p><u>Lt. Blue Leotard:</u> Fundamentals, Pre-Ballet, Level A, Ballet Basics, Creative Movemnt, M&M</p> <p><u>Black Leotard:</u> Levels B, C, D, and Teen</p> <p>Suntan Color Tights - Convertible</p> <p>Pink Ballet Slippers</p>	<p>White form fitting t-shirt</p> <p>Black cotton sweat pants or stretch pants</p> <p>Black slippers</p>
Tap	<p><u>Lt. Blue Leotard:</u> Fundamentals, Pre-Tap, Level I</p> <p><u>Black Leotard:</u> Level II and Teen</p> <p>Suntan Color Tights – Convertible</p> <p>Black Tap shoes</p>	<p>White form fitting t-shirt</p> <p>Black cotton sweat pants or stretch pants</p> <p>Black tap shoes</p>
Hip Hop	<p>Dark blue or black T-shirt</p> <p>Black sweat pants or stretch pants (NO JEANS)</p> <p>Black non-marking sneakers or jazz sneakers</p>	<p>Dark blue or black T-shirt</p> <p>Black sweat pants or stretch pants (NO JEANS)</p> <p>Non-marking sneakers or jazz sneakers</p>
African	<p><u>Lt Blue Leotard:</u> Fundamentals, Pre-African, Level A</p> <p><u>Black Leotard:</u> Levels B, C, D, and Teen</p> <p>Black stretch shorts</p> <p>Lapa (a tied-skirt of 1 –2 yards of fabric that wraps 1½ times around the waist and reaches below the knee)</p> <p>Students work in bare feet to prevent slipping and maximize articulation of feet</p>	<p>Form fitting t-shirt</p> <p>Loose fitting black sweat pants, or dabbas</p> <p>Students work in bare feet to prevent slipping and maximize articulation of feet</p>
Modern /Jazz	<p><u>Lt. Blue Leotard:</u> Pre-Modern, Level A</p> <p><u>Black Leotard:</u> Levels B, C, D, and Teen</p> <p>Suntan Color Tights Convertible</p> <p>Students work in bare feet to prevent slipping and maximize articulation of feet</p>	<p>White form-fitting t-shirt</p> <p>Black sweatpants or stretch pants</p> <p>Students work in bare feet to prevent slipping and maximize articulation of feet</p>
Praise	<p>Dark colored loose fitting top</p> <p>Dark colored skirt (optional) or sweat pants</p> <p>Students work in bare feet to prevent slipping and maximize articulation of feet</p>	<p>Dark colored loose fitting top</p> <p>Dark colored sweat pants</p>
Adults	<p>Adults may wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing of choice and appropriate footwear for dance class.</p> <p>For adults in African dance classes, please see guidelines for lapa skirt above.</p>	<p>Adults may wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing of choice and appropriate footwear for dance class.</p>

Instruments and Music

- Students provide their own instruments. Instruments can be rented or purchased from music stores.
- Students are responsible for purchasing music books chosen by teachers.
- Students should always bring their instrument and music to class.

Instrument Rental or Purchase

- Bronen's Music ~ 2462 Webster Ave. (at 188th St. near Fordham Rd.) ~ (718) 364-3350
*Mention Mind-Builders and receive a special discount
- On-Line Stores : <http://www.musiciansfriend.com/> <http://www.sweetwater.com/>

Arrival Time

- Students should arrive at least 15 minutes before the lesson begins.
- Music lessons begin and end on time. If you arrive late, your lesson time will be reduced, so that the next lesson will begin on time.

Music students more than 10 minutes late for their group lesson must enter and sit quietly until the teacher is ready for them to enter the group.

Visitors in the Classroom

- For students under 8 years of age, parents are encouraged to sit quietly and observe the class so that they can assist the child with practice at home. All parents are invited to observe classes during scheduled Open House days.
- For Suzuki Violin, parent/guardian presence and active participation as directed by the teacher is required. This promotes the family's ability to reinforce the weekly lesson at home. Parents and students are required to meet with the instructor prior to the start of classes.

Practicing your instrument at home

- In general, a student who has a 30-minute lesson should practice 30 minutes a day; a 60-minute lesson, at least 60 minutes, etc. It is very important that students practice every day, even if their schedule does not allow them to practice for the full desired amount of time.
- Practice time can be divided up into ten or fifteen-minute intervals, with the student setting a specific goal to be accomplished in each time period.
- Try practicing at different times of the day, and find the time that is most productive for you.
- The student should strive for beauty, no matter how elementary the musical task.
- Strive for tone quality and smoothness of rhythm by practicing slowly, then gradually increasing the tempo. Make up little games to make practice more fun.
- The student should be patient with him or herself. With practice, results will come over time.

Our music lessons

- Music lessons should spark the interest of students by being fun and well-balanced.
- Lessons will include improvisation and playing together.
- Lessons will include music theory and the history of the piece or the composer.
- Music lessons will be varied and diverse—with contemporary music as well as classical.
- Teachers will strive to appeal to the learning style and interests of the students.

Recitals

- We strongly encourage all students to participate in recitals to experience the joy and fulfillment of diligent work and ensemble performance.

MARTIAL ARTS/KARATE PROGRAM

The Martial Arts Program at Mind-Builders features Goju Ryu Karate for students ages 5-18. The program helps students develop the skills to enhance their lives through the discipline and challenges of martial arts training.

Classes are offered for beginners and more advanced students, and allow students to safely advance to whatever level they wish to achieve in martial arts.

- Students should arrive for class on time wearing the karate “gi” or uniform.
- The uniform or “gi” is a white jacket and pants, bare feet, and an “obi” or belt in the color signifying their karate level. Beginners wear a white belt.
- As students achieve higher levels, they are awarded the colored belts for those levels.
- Students are encouraged to do the basic stretching and class techniques every day to increase flexibility and martial arts skills.
- The program year will close with a Presentation and Belting/Certificate Ceremony.

POSITIVE YOUTH TROUPE (PYT)

Positive Youth Troupe (PYT) is a free theater program for youth between the ages of 14 and 24.

Workshops meet Wednesdays and Thursdays 5:00pm to 7:00pm during the school year. Free training is provided by professional actors, directors, writers, composers, and choreographers who strengthen students’ performance skills and support them in the development of compelling theater productions that bring today’s issues and hope to other young people in performances throughout the city. Classes also introduce students to the works of master playwrights.

Joining PYT

Students are recruited in October and workshops begin in early November.

Guidelines for PYT Students

- PYT students are required to maintain passing grades in all school subjects in order to continue in the PYT program. Academic support and/or tutoring will be provided for students who are experiencing difficulty in any school subject.
- PYT students must maintain good attendance and effort in order to participate in performances and receive a stipend for the program.

DR. BEVERLY ROBINSON COMMUNITY FOLK CULTURE PROGRAM

Cultural Internships

The Dr. Beverly Robinson Community Folk Culture Program at Mind-Builders trains young people ages 14 to 19 to identify, document, and present the traditions and folk artists “discovered” in their families, community, the borough, and city. Workshops take place 3 days/week for 5 weeks during the summer, and continue two evenings per week from November to May.

Guidelines for Folk Culture students

New applications are accepted April through June for the intensive summer program. Students who complete the program and assignments satisfactorily are paid a stipend.

We thank you for your cooperation in ensuring you and your children will have an enriching, fun-filled and memorable experience with the Mind-Builders community.

www.mind-builders.org

