



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
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MindBuildersCreativeArtsCenter



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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.
- 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.
- Mind-Builders reserves the right to revoke, change or supplement any information provided within this handbook at any time. Parents and students will be informed of all additions or amendments made to the handbook and/or any program processes and policies. Parents/families can contact Mind-Builders for any questions regarding this handbook and program processes/policies at programs@mind-builders.org.

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

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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COVID-19 POLICIES

- As of October 2023, **we no longer require** students, staff, or guests to wear masks while in the building. They are optional and to your personal discretion. We have adult and child sizes available at the front desk if needed.
- If a staff member, student, or anyone in their household feels sick and displays typical COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, they should stay home and away from others while experiencing symptoms and take a COVID test. If a student tests positive but shows no symptoms, they can take class, however mask-wearing until they test negative is highly encouraged. Students can return to Mind-Builders after at least 24 consecutive hours with no fever (without taking fever-reducing medicine). As always, we expect students to practice good hygiene including washing their hands often and wearing a mask when appropriate.

GENERAL POLICIES

- To ensure and support growth and mastery of skills and techniques learned in the classrooms, practice outside of Mind-Builders and on the students' own time is critical. Please support your child(ren) by encouraging consistent practice at home. Consistent practice for each instrument or discipline of study is highly encouraged. For specific guidelines of successful personal practice, we encourage parents/students to ask their teachers for guidance. Parents/students should also ask teachers for access to any learning resources to support their individual practice at home.
- We strongly encourage all students to participate in recitals and ensemble performances to celebrate the joy and fulfillment of diligent work.
- Students must arrive at Mind-Builders at least 15 minutes before their class start time, and scan in when entering the building. Students should arrive in their appropriate attire, and when applicable, with their class instruments. They should arrive in time to change their attire and/or tune their instruments before the start of their class. All students should be picked up or self-dismissed after the end of their class. Mind-Builders does not have staff available to supervise unattended children outside the classroom.
- Cell phones should be turned off, placed in bags, and always kept with the student. Electronic games, expensive jewelry, tablets, 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.**
- Please ensure your student eats a sufficient meal before coming to class. Students can bring a water bottle to class, or they can use the water fountain.
- Parents must wait with their children in designated areas only. We have limited seating in the cafeteria for parents and students.
- For safety, students should always take the stairs. Students are not allowed to use the elevator without an adult or a special condition, injury etc.
- Mind-Builders strongly encourages families with 2 or more students to schedule their classes close to each other. Please note: **all students must be picked up at the end of their class if it is more than a 30-minute wait before their next class.**
- Mind-Builders is a place of nurture, instruction, joy and community. **We have zero tolerance for physical, verbal, social media, or any other kind of bullying or shaming, directed toward another student, individual or staff member. Such behavior can result in suspension and/or permanent termination.**
- Bullying/shaming includes harassing/talking negatively about someone based on their body, clothing, footwear, culture, appearance, language, etc. This is not acceptable behavior from Mind-Builders students. Staff will address any instances and contact parents/guardians of all students impacted.
- We'd like to maintain a safe, community-oriented environment where everyone feels welcomed. If there is a dispute between students, immediately bring the situation to the attention of a MB staff person.

ATTENDANCE

- **Regular attendance is mandatory 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 waitlist for classes, 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 should arrive 10-15 minutes before class begins, so they can enter the classroom at the start time. The class end time means students will have instruction until that time. It does not include dismissal. Please be patient and anticipate 10-15 minutes after the end of class for students to arrive downstairs.
- **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. Speak with the enrollment coordinator or the receptionist.**
- Make-up classes or credit will be arranged only in the event of a teacher absence or class cancellation. There are no make-up classes for student absences or lateness.
- **After 3 consecutive absences, we reserve the right to withdraw the student from the class.** MB staff will notify parents/guardians or students upon being withdrawn from a class. Withdrawal from classes does not void owed tuition balances. If a child is withdrawn, an updated invoice on the student account will be generated and sent to the account holder.

VISITORS

- Visitors can call to make an appointment to come inside for a tour or to speak with a staff member.
- Parent conversations with teachers should be had either before or after class, so that the teacher's lesson is not interrupted. If there is an issue or concern, parents should contact the Program Directors first to schedule a meeting.

TUITION PAYMENT

Mind-Builders is a non-profit community organization. We strive to maintain the affordable costs of our programs and classes for all our members. Timely payments of tuition and program fees are critical to ensuring we can keep Mind-Builders affordable and accessible to all.

- Payments are accepted in the form of credit/debit card, check, or money order. NO CASH.
- To maintain a student's space in class, the seasonal tuition payments are due upon enrollment after September 1st and installment payments are due on the 1st of every month. Tuition and program fees can be paid in full or in installments (monthly payments, or installments of 2-3 payments). Parents should request monthly payment plans at the time of registration. All monthly installments are due on the 1st of the month, and in full.
- Mind-Builders will charge an additional \$50.00 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, we strongly urge the account holder to discuss the circumstances with a Mind-Builders administrator and make payment arrangements.**
- Starting December 1st, dance recital fees will be posted on invoices and accounts. These fees are essential to support costume and performance costs for the year-end performances. Recital fee payments are due by February 1st. Students with outstanding balances in their accounts will not be able to pick up their recital costumes in the spring and cannot enroll in future programs.
- 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. Students and families who could not participate without assistance may apply. Applications are available online. We also have free classes year-round:

- **Fit4Life Community Fitness Classes:** Instructors teach Soca, Zumba, and Stretch classes throughout the week. Ages 16+
- **PYT (Positive Youth Troupe) Theater:** Acting and theater training program for young adults ages 9-18. Perfect for students interested in drama.
- **Folk Culture Internship:** Research folk traditions and interview folk artists in their community. Participants receive stipends.
- **Music Theory:** To supplement music lessons, students 5 and older can enroll in our music theory classes to learn how to read music. Beginner and intermediate classes available.
- **Stage Band (must audition):** Preparing students with at least one year of music experience for an ensemble setting. Available to students 7 and older, including adults!

WITHDRAWING FROM A CLASS

If you wish to withdraw from a class, **you must give two weeks' notice and inform our main office.** Email kseymour@mind-builders.org or call 718-652-6256 to withdraw. Verbally informing the teacher is not sufficient. Account holders will be responsible for all payments due up to the date that they withdraw.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is an essential part of progress. Twice a year, students receive a progress report from their instructors. Finally, parents are encouraged to communicate with instructors and program directors by phone or email to schedule a meeting.

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

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We welcome parents/guardians of students attending Mind-Builders who are committed to helping facilitate and create productive programs for Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center. Remote volunteers should have Wi-Fi capabilities to complete tasks. Parents are encouraged to join the following committees:

Family Ambassador: Ambassadors share our programs with community members and prospective families at special events and within their networks. Should be comfortable tabling and talking to new people.

Clerical Support: Volunteers with administrative experience can help staff with creating reports, answering phones, on-site support, and other tasks as needed.

Production Assistant: Support events and productions by helping with costume distribution, escorting guests and children, assisting space set up and organization, preparing and distributing event materials, managing select equipment/gear, running errands to support production crew, event staff, and performers, assisting in a variety of administrative tasks, and more.

Other On-Site Volunteer Opportunities: Some needs include enforcing safety protocols, sanitizing, monitoring the halls, supporting front desk staff and different departments.

DANCE DEPARTMENT GUIDE

CLASS GUIDELINES

Levels

- Mind-Builders reserve 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 10–15 minutes prior to the class start time in the proper attire. Dance students more than fifteen minutes late for their scheduled class must enter quietly, warm-up and wait for directions from the instructor. This is to prevent injury to the late student and further disturbance of the class.

Absences/Make-Up Classes

- Parents MUST call the office (718-652-6256) if their child will be absent.
- **Classes are ONLY made up if the class is cancelled.**

Dance Uniform

- 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, tights, and dance shoes may be purchased at Mind-Builders.

Dance Shoes

- Appropriate dance shoes must be worn for ALL dance classes. Wearing socks for class is not allowed. Students must “BRING” their dance shoes in a bag and change their shoes before entering the dance studio. Appropriate dance shoes include: Ballet slippers, Jazz, Tap shoes, or a pair of sneakers (for hip hop classes) with light colored soles that are ONLY worn in the studio.

Parent/Student Responsibility

- Parents and guardians are responsible for any property damage caused by their child.
- Volunteer parent communicators keep parents in each class informed with current events.

RECITAL GUIDELINES

Recital Guide

- Once we start preparing for the dance recitals, parents, caregivers, and students will receive a comprehensive guide outlining specific dates, schedules and important details needed to successfully prepare for their performance.

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. Students are responsible for providing appropriate undergarments and footwear.
- All fees must be paid in full prior for students to perform in the recital.
- Parents and family members must purchase tickets online to attend the recitals. MB students are free.

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 at their designated call-time to ensure a smooth-running show. Please anticipate call times being one hour prior to rehearsal/show start times. 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 the student's name and class.

Parents Backstage

- To ensure an organized and smooth run of show, as well as for the safety of all performers, only trained parent volunteers are allowed backstage during the rehearsals and recitals. No other parents or visitors are allowed backstage.

Fall/Spring 24-25 Dance Uniform Guide
**MB T-Shirt Suggested to fulfill Black T-Shirt Requirement*

Dance Type	Clothing	Footwear
Acro	Female: Light blue leotard and skin-tone tights Male: MB Black t-shirt and loose-fitting black sweatpants	<i>Barefoot, no shoes necessary</i>
African	Female (Levels - A, Basics, Fundamentals, Pre): Light blue leotard, Lapa, and skin-tone tights Female (Levels - B, C, D, Teen): Black leotard, Lapa, and skin-tone tights. Male: White form-fitting t-shirt and loose-fitting black sweatpants or dabbas pants.	<i>Barefoot, no shoes necessary</i>
Ballet	Female (Levels - A, Basics, Fundamentals, Pre): Light blue leotard and skin-tone tights Female (Levels - B, C, D, Pre-Pointe, Teen): Black leotard and skin-tone tights Male: White form-fitting t-shirt, black jazz pants or tights.	Female: Fundamentals, Basics, Pre - Pink ballet slippers A, B, C, D, Pre-Pointe, Teen - Flesh colored ballet slippers Males: Black ballet slippers
Creative Movement/ Young Dancers	Female: Light blue leotard and skin-tone tights Male: Black form-fitting t-shirt and loose-fitting black sweatpants or jazz pants.	Female: Pink ballet slippers or caramel jazz shoes Male: Black ballet slippers or jazz shoes
Jazz/Modern	Female (Levels - A, Basics, Fundamentals, Pre): Light blue leotard and skin-tone tights Female (Levels - B, C, D, Teen): Black leotard, black jazz pants and skin-tone tights Male: White fitted t-shirt, black sweatpants/jazz pants	Female: Barefoot/ Caramel jazz shoes Male: Barefoot/Black jazz shoes (Modern – Barefoot)
Hip Hop/ Mind Your Beat Freestyle	Female: Black/white t-shirt and black sweatpants or jazz pants. Male: Black form-fitting t-shirt and loose-fitting black sweatpants or jazz pants.	Clean dedicated pair of sneakers with light soles (sneakers not worn anywhere else)
Tap	Female (Levels - Basics, Fundamentals, Pre): Light blue leotard and skin-tone tights Female (Levels – A, B, C, D, Teen): Black leotard and skin-tone tights Male: Black form-fitting T-Shirt and loose-fitting black sweatpants or stretch pants	Females: Basics, Fundamentals, Pre - Black Mary Jane A, B, C, D, Teen - Black Oxford Lace-Up Male: Black Oxford Lace-Up

Prices (vary by size) – Items Available at Mind-Builders
 Shoes: \$25, Light Blue Leotards: \$16-22, Black Leotards: \$22-29, Tights: \$13-18

Important Dress Code Notes

- All dance students **MUST** adhere to the dress code to be permitted to participate in class.
- Absolutely **NO** Jeans for anyone in any class.
- For their safety, all male students are required to wear an athletic supporter or a dance belt.
- For all dance classes, students may add a dark form-fitting t-shirt or sweater for warmth.
- If a student is in a combination class, select uniforms from each dance type.
- A Lapa is a tied skirt of 1-2 yards of African fabric that wraps 1 ½ times around the waist and reaches below the knee.
- Non-marking sneakers have white soles or are sneakers that do not mark the studio floors. All dance shoes must be worn only during class in the studio. Street shoes or any kind of shoes worn anywhere outside of our studios are **NOT** allowed. Students should bring their shoes exclusively for our classes in a separate bag and change before entering the studios.
- The Mind-Builders t-shirt is suggested for classes requiring a black t-shirt. These can be purchased in the first-floor office.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT GUIDE

Instruments and Music

- Students provide their own instruments. Instruments can be rented or purchased from music stores listed below.
- Families are responsible for purchasing music books chosen by teachers. Music books, drum pads, and drumsticks can be purchased at Mind-Builders from the Main Office.
- Drums and piano students do not have to bring their instruments to class. All other students should always bring their instruments and music to class.

Instrument Rental or Purchase

- Bronnen's Music ~ 2462 Webster Ave. (at 188th St. near Fordham Rd.) ~ (718) 364-3350
*Mention Mind-Builders and receive a special discount
- Online 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.

Absences

- Parents MUST call the office (718-652-6256) if their child will be absent.
- **Classes are ONLY made up if the class is cancelled.**

Visitors in the Classroom

- 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.
- Teachers will announce recital dates once the dates are solidified and students and parents will be informed.
- Parents, family members, and friends must purchase tickets online to attend the recitals. MB students are free.

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 “G” or uniform.
- The uniform or “G” is a white jacket and pants, and an “obi” or belt in the color signifying their karate level. Karate shoes are optional. 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 Year-End Demonstration and Ceremony.

POSITIVE YOUTH TROUPE (PYT) THEATER

Positive Youth Troupe Theatre Program provides free professional theater training to youth/young adults ages 9 and up. Whether you are a novice who is curious about acting, or a pre-professional desiring to hone your skills, there's something for everyone in PYT. Our 2024-25 season convenes October through May, consisting of weekly classes, public performances, field trips, professional training and networking opportunities with industry professionals.

DR. BEVERLY ROBINSON COMMUNITY FOLK CULTURE PROGRAM

The Dr. Beverly Robinson Community Folk Culture Program at Mind-Builders trains young people ages 14 to 21 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. 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