

# Little Learners

## Early Childhood Center

*Making Memories, Marking Milestones*

# Parent Handbook 2023-2024

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### Early Childhood Center

*Making Memories, Marking Milestones*

Welcome to Little Learners. We are so excited to be enrolling your child in our program. At Little Learners, your child will have the opportunity to explore, create, and imagine while developing academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. These opportunities will take place in a safe, nurturing environment under the guidance of loving, experienced teachers who are professional, positive, and passionate about the care and education of young children.

#### **Our Founders**

Little Learners has been independently owned and operated by Christi Eaton and Kim Maples since it was founded in 2006 with the vision to help every little learner not just be *ready* for kindergarten, but *ready to shine*. This vision has developed into a program that emphasizes literacy development and mathematic foundations while remembering that children learn best through fun and engaging activities. At every stage of development, from toddlers to pre-K, our teachers are dedicated to making sure each little learner is *Ready for Tomorrow*®.

Christi Eaton serves as our Executive Director and has been teaching for 24 years. She has worked with preschool children and school-age children through fifth grade. Christi graduated from the University of Missouri in 1998. She also holds a master's degree in Teaching and Leadership as well as a Reading Specialist Certification. In addition, Christi received her National Board Certification in 2006.

Kim Maples serves as our Executive Operating Director and has been teaching for 28 years and in that time has had the opportunity to teach preschool through fifth grade. She graduated from the University of Kansas in 1993 and completed the teacher certification program in 1994. Kim has a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and received her Reading Specialist Certification from KU in 2000.

Kim and Christi were Reading Specialists together at Starside Elementary in De Soto and enjoyed helping learners who were struggling to improve as readers. Through this experience, they learned what early skills children need before beginning kindergarten. They love teaching preschool and especially enjoy providing on-going training for their staff to ensure they are always guiding children through experiences that will prepare them for a successful start in elementary school.

## **Our Director**

Theresa Waniska is our Program Director. She has an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood and a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Ottawa University. She also has her teaching license from the state of Kansas. She has over nine years of experience working with children. Ms. Theresa joined our team in 2013 as a Lead Toddler Teacher and Closing Assistant. In 2015, she became our Events and Compliance Director and was promoted to Program Director in 2020. Theresa is dedicated to the children, staff, and parents at Little Learners. She has experience in all areas of our program and is committed to ensuring uncompromising quality in the care and education of every little learner.

## **Little Learners' Operating Information and Program Descriptions**

Little Learners is currently licensed to provide care for no more than 108 children at one time at LL-West and no more than 52 children at one time at LL-East. Child care will be available Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Fridays. Our program is built on a **full day model** with half of the day focused on early academics and half of the day focused on arts/crafts, science/social studies and music/movement. Enrolling children all day ensures our students benefit from the full program. Four programs are offered at Little Learners to ensure that all children are engaged in activities that are developmentally appropriate and specifically designed for them. Our "waddler" program is for children ages 12 months to 2 years and our toddler program is for children 2 to 3 years old. For our older children, we have two programs. Our preschool program is for 3 and 4 year olds and our pre-K program is for 4 and 5 year olds who will be going to kindergarten the following year. With these programs, we are able to find the perfect placement for your little learner. We operate an academic school year from mid-August to the end of May and a summer session from June to mid-August. These two sessions allow us to transition children in June and August as our older children graduate and go to kindergarten.

### Waddler and Toddler Programs:

Your child will be engaged in research-based curriculum that is developmentally appropriate. Toddlers will remain in one room with the same teachers each day. Within the "waddler" and toddler rooms, your child will be engaged in enriching activities related to the current theme. Your child will also have a special activity each day which will include one of the following: Arts/Crafts, Cooking, Science or Sensory Experiments, Social Skills, Sign Language, and Music and Movement. "Waddlers" and toddlers will have the opportunity for outside play daily when weather permits or they will participate in gross motor activities in The Clubhouse, which is our indoor playroom, if the weather keeps them from going outside.

## Preschool and Pre-K Programs:

Children attending preschool and pre-K will have an Academic Classroom and a Learning Extensions Classroom. Children will spend half of the day in one classroom and then switch with their whole class to the other classroom after rest time. In the academic classroom, your child will be engaged in a research-based curriculum that is developmentally appropriate in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Within the Learning Extensions room, your child will enjoy enriching activities related to the current theme. Your child will also have a special activity each day which will include one of the following: Arts/Crafts, Cooking, Science Experiments, Social Studies Exploration, Computers, Spanish, and Music and Movement. Children will have the opportunity for outside play daily when weather permits or they will participate in gross motor activities in The Clubhouse, which is our indoor playroom, if the weather keeps them from going outside.

The teachers in the preschool and pre-K classrooms will be focusing on academics to prepare our little learners for a successful start in kindergarten. To be sure that our teachers can focus on the curriculum and guide children through their learning, children enrolling in these classrooms will need to be independent in the restroom.

We understand at this age that children may need help cleaning up after using the restroom, but children will need to be wearing underwear and able to indicate his/her restroom needs before starting our academic year. Pull-ups during rest time are still acceptable as we know some children have not yet learned to wake up if a restroom need arises.

### **Little Learners Curriculum**

The curriculum at Little Learners is based on science and social studies themes and has a strong academic focus on reading and math skills. Children will be engaged in activities that can best be described as "learning disguised as fun." The themes will capture children's interests and they will be invited to learn about their world through songs, games, stories, and creative play while developing the important cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills that they need before entering kindergarten.

Children will often participate in some very messy fun in the classroom and on the playground! While we will always encourage good hygiene and will clean up after our activities, children may occasionally get their clothes dirty despite our best efforts. Because of this, school may not be the best place for their best clothes 😊.

Little Learners will celebrate traditional holidays by reading books and making crafts. We will have parties for Valentines Day, Easter, Halloween, and Christmas. If you do not wish for your child to participate in these activities, please let a director know. Little Learners welcomes parents to visit and observe our activities at any time.

**Birthday Celebrations:** We enjoy celebrating birthdays at Little Learners and know that it is a very special time for the children. Birthday celebrations will be kept short and will take place during snack time to not disrupt the regular routine. Parents are welcome to send birthday treats such as cookies or cupcakes to share with the class; however, we ask that parents not send goodie bags with toys. These types of toys often get lost during the day which can cause hurt feelings. If sending treats, we ask that you not send hard candy, popcorn, or items containing peanuts or peanut butter.

**Birthday Invitations:** You are welcome to pass out invitations at school if you plan to invite the whole class. However, if you are not inviting everyone, we ask that you use the Little Learners' Directory for addresses and mail the invitations.

**Breakfast, Snacks and Lunch:** Little Learners will provide breakfast and one snack in the morning and one snack in the afternoon. A delicious and nutritious lunch will be served at 11:30. Because of allergies and the potential for severe allergic reactions if food is shared, we ask that children do not bring their own food for breakfast, snacks or lunches. Accommodations will be made for children who, due to medical reasons with a doctor's diagnosis, need to bring their own food.

### **Picture Policy**

We love to capture memories of the children through pictures that are shared with parents by email and on daily notes so you can enjoy snapshots of your child's day. We also share a special picture slide show during our annual graduation ceremony. Pictures of celebrations, special events, student art, and fun daily happenings will be shared on social media. Parents are encouraged to contact the office if they would like to opt-out of having their child's picture taken or shared by Little Learners.

### **I Care Rules**

At Little Learners, fun activities, games, songs, and puzzles from the Peace Education Foundation will be used to teach children the "I Care Rules" and important skills like listening, cooperating, and sharing. Below you will find the five "I Care Rules" that the toddlers and preschool children will be learning:

1. We listen to each other.
2. Hands are for helping, not hurting.
3. We use I-Care-Language.
4. We care about each other's feelings.
5. We are responsible for what we say and do.

### **Problem Solving Technique (F.R.I.E.N.D.)**

**Face-to Face** (The teacher will face the children at eye level and speak in a calm and gentle manner.)

**Recognition** (The teacher states observation: "You look very angry.")

**Inquire** (The teacher asks each child to tell him/her what happened.)

**Echo** (The teacher will repeat each child's statement: John you are saying Chris took the tricycle from you. Chris you are saying that John doesn't want to share with you.)

**Negotiate** (John wants to let you ride the tricycle for 10 minutes and then he can ride it for 10 minutes. The teacher may have to help with negotiations in the beginning.)

**Down Time** (The teacher praises the children for solving the problem and then follows-up to make sure the problem has been solved.)

### **Rewards/Consequences**

Your child will be rewarded daily with smiles, hugs, and constant praise for good choices.

Children may also earn trips to the "treasure box" for consistent, positive behavior.

**Waddlers/Toddlers:** When necessary the techniques listed below will be used to encourage children to follow the "I Care Rules." Consequences will be determined by the situation and by what is developmentally appropriate for each child. Corporal punishment will not be used at Little Learners.

1. **Redirection:** Children will be redirected to another activity and encouraged to try again at another time.
2. **Natural or logical consequences** may be used to encourage positive behavior.
3. **Ignoring:** Behaviors that are not harmful may be ignored so that they are not reinforced with undue attention.
4. **Time Out/Safe Spot:** Time Out will be used sparingly with waddlers/toddlers; however, if a child is having trouble regaining self-control or is being harmful to other children he/she will be separated from the group. The child will be encouraged to rejoin the group when he/she is ready to show appropriate behavior. Time out will not be used as a punishment but as a way to provide the child with time to regain self-control and make good choices.

**Preschool and Pre-K:** When necessary the techniques listed below will be used to encourage children to follow the "I Care Rules." Consequences will be determined by the situation and by what is developmentally appropriate for each child. Corporal punishment will not be used at Little Learners.

1. **Redirection:** Children will be redirected to another activity and encouraged to try again at another time.
2. **Natural or logical consequences** may be used to encourage positive behavior.
3. **Ignoring:** Behaviors that are not harmful may be ignored so that they are not reinforced with undue attention.
4. **Conflict Resolution:** When appropriate, children will be asked what "I Care Rule" is being broken and will be encouraged to think about positive choices and to solve the problem with the "F.R.I.E.N.D." technique.
5. **Time Out/Safe Spot:** A child who is having trouble regaining self-control or is being harmful to other children will be separated from the group. The child will be encouraged

to rejoin the group when he/she is ready to show appropriate behavior. Time out will not be used as a punishment but as a way to provide the child with time to regain self-control and make good choices.

A private meeting with parents will be requested if a child's behavior is continuously inappropriate or dangerous. Parents are encouraged to schedule a time to meet if there is ever a concern about behavior or any other issue at Little Learners.

### **Biting, Aggressive, Disruptive Behavior Policy**

Biting is a natural, developmental stage for many children. It usually does not last for an extended period of time if the appropriate action is taken to help reduce the occurrences. Children bite and are aggressive or disruptive for a variety of reasons: frustration, anger, joy, overwhelmed, over-tired, (emotions they cannot yet express), teething, or just experimenting and testing limits. Our teachers will assess each incident to help better understand why a child is biting or showing aggressive behavior. This will help us respond to each individual child's needs. Below is a timeline of steps to be taken when a child bites, is aggressive, or disruptive.

#### **Steps taken for Preschool and Pre-K Children:**

For each occurrence, appropriate first aid and care for the child who was bitten will be applied and documentation of each incident with both sets of parents being notified.

1<sup>st</sup> incident: Time out in classroom (No biting, biting hurts, hands/feet are for helping), talk to both sets of parents, assessment of why child might be showing the behavior.

2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> incident: Removed from classroom, assessment of why child might be biting/showing the behavior and plan of action developed and implemented based on child's development (share plan of action with parents of child biting/showing aggressive behavior).

5<sup>th</sup> incident: One day suspension. Parents will be encouraged to consult their pediatrician, school district, or other professional resource for additional support.

6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> incident: Behavior plan of support continued

9<sup>th</sup> incident: One day suspension

10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> incident: Behavior plan of support continued

12<sup>th</sup> incident: Parents will be encouraged to explore options and programs that might be a better fit for the child's current social/emotional development, and the child will be dismissed from enrollment.

#### **Steps taken for Toddler Children:**

1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> incident: The child biting/hurting will have a time out in classroom (The teacher will say No biting, biting hurts, or our hands/feet are for helping), the incident will be documented, the parents of the child biting/showing aggressive behavior will be notified in writing, an ouch note will be created for the parents of the child hurt if an injury has occurred.

3<sup>rd</sup> incident: The above procedures will be followed and the parents of the child biting/showing aggressive behavior will also receive a phone call to discuss the behavior. An assessment of why the child might be biting/showing aggressive behavior will be made and a plan of action based on the child's development will be created and shared with the parents of the child biting/showing aggressive behavior.

Additional Incidents: The above procedures will be followed and the plan of action will be continued. Progress will be monitored and reviewed. Action taken based on individual child's development and severity of bites/aggressive behavior.

Since biting and some aggressive behavior is a natural developmental stage for many toddlers, the staff at Little Learners will help guide children through this developmental stage with love and patience and the understanding that it takes time to unlearn a behavior. However, if a child is not showing progress after two months of intervention, it may be necessary for Little Learners to dismiss the child for the safety and well being of the other children in the classroom.

Additional information on responding to biting and developmentally appropriate practices is available upon request.

**Non-Discriminatory Policy:** Children will not be discriminated against regarding race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, or gender.

### **"Outside Babysitting" Waiver**

Little Learners does not promote or sponsor private babysitting services for children outside of any services offered or approved by Little Learners ("outside babysitting"). Parents will be asked to sign a waiver to acknowledge that Little Learners is not a party to any outside babysitting agreement reached between any parent and/or legal guardian and any individual, including an individual who is currently employed by Little Learners Early Childhood Center.

### **Holidays**

Little Learners will be closed in recognition of the following paid holidays:

2 Days for New Year's	*Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Two Days in March (TBA)
Memorial Day	Fourth of July	*One Friday in August (TBA)
Labor Day	2 Days for Thanksgiving	3 Days for Christmas

If a holiday falls on a weekend, Little Learners will announce which weekday(s) it will close in recognition of the holiday. An updated list will be provided each August with exact dates for holiday closings. \*These days will be used for staff development.

### **Inclement Weather**

Little Learners will make every effort to be open during inclement weather. However, it may be necessary at times to close due to extreme ice and snow conditions. Under these circumstances, if the Olathe School District closes, Little Learners will either have a two hour late start and open at 9:00 a.m. OR Little Learners will close. We will not have a late start if we believe Olathe is closing **ONLY** due to temperatures and a Wind Chill Warning has not been issued. This decision will be **emailed to parents through our Tadpoles software by 6:00 a.m.** If you do not have access to the internet after 6:00 a.m., please feel free to call Christi at 913-484-4051 or Kim at 785-766-3464.



Regular rates will apply on days when Little Learners is closed due to inclement weather or any other unforeseen circumstance that would force the center to be closed. However, parents will receive credit for any day beyond the third unscheduled closing occurring within a school year (September through August).

### **Sick Children and Accidents**

The Health Department prohibits a contagious child in group care and clearly defines when children should be kept at home due to illness. Little Learners will follow the Health Department guidelines for determining attendance. Please notify Little Learners if your child has a communicable disease or contagious illness (strep throat, flu, etc.) so that other parents can be notified to watch for symptoms in their children. If a child becomes ill while at Little Learners, parents will be called and will need to pick up the child within one hour. If parents cannot be reached, Little Learners will contact the first person on the child's emergency contact list and work down the list until someone is reached who is able to take the child home.

Children with a fever of 101 degrees may not return to Little Learners until they are fever free (without the aid of fever reducing medication) for 24 hours. Children with diarrhea, unexplainable rashes, head lice, eye infection, or vomiting should not be sent to Little Learners. Children must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before returning to Little Learners. Children with head lice will need to be treated and nit free before returning to Little Learners. This illness policy was created using the *Exclusion of Ill Children* form from the Health Department. This form is included in the Forms and Handouts and may be referred to for more information about when children should be kept out of group care. Little Learners may request a doctor's note to confirm a child is well and able to be in child care after an illness.

For the health and safety of all and out of consideration for those who are too young to have yet received all their immunizations, Little Learners requires children in attendance to be current on (or on a catch-up schedule for) all the immunizations required by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

### **Tuition Rates**

Rates at Little Learners are based on the room in which your child is enrolled and not on the age of your child. The difference in price is due to the ratio, as younger classrooms have lower teacher to child ratios than our older classrooms. Priority is given to full-time children and those enrolling MWF or TR. Classroom placement will be determined by Little Learners and will be based on birthday and days of attendance.

Payment is due on the first day your child is scheduled to attend each week. Weekly Direct Payments can be arranged. A \$10 charge per day will be assessed for late or incomplete payments. Returned checks will be assessed a \$35 service charge. Consistent failure to make timely payments may result in the requirement of Direct Payments or termination of services. Two returned checks will result in a cash only requirement or termination of services.

Little Learners will be open from 7:00 a.m. - 5:45 p.m. M-Th and 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. on Fridays. We understand that there may be times when being late is unavoidable; however, in these situations please provide Little Learners with a courtesy call. If early drop-offs and late pick-ups become a consistent problem, we will reserve the right to implement a late fee of \$1 per minute.

### Classroom Rates (Beginning January 1, 2024)

Classroom	Ratio	Full Time Rate	Part Time/Daily Rate
Orange Ovals or Orange Octagons "Waddlers")	1:5 OR 2:10	\$340 (12 - 30 months and stable walker)	\$80/day
Purple Diamonds ("Waddlers")	1:5 OR 1:6	\$340 (12 - 30 months and stable walker)	\$80/day
Yellow Stars, Yellow Hexagons, and Yellow Crescents (Toddlers)	1:7 or 1:10 2:14	\$310 (2 - 3 ½ years)	\$80/day
Red Hearts and Red Arrows (Transitional Preschool)	1:9 1:10	\$305 (2 ½ - 4 years)	\$80/day
Greens (Preschool) Squares/Circles/Clovers/Spades	1:12	\$280 (3 - 4 ½ years)	\$75/day
Blues (Pre-K) Rectangles/Triangles/Trapezoids/Green Spades	1:12	\$280 (4 – 6 years)	\$75/day
Super Kindergarten (after finishing Knd)	1:16	\$280 (summer only)	\$75/day (summer only)

### Registration/Enrollment Fee

A nonrefundable registration fee of \$150 will be due at the time of enrollment. This fee secures your child's placement and helps cover the cost of supplies, provides the use of a rest time pillow and cot, and holds your child's place until he/she begins attending Little Learners. Little Learners offers a Military Discount, which waives the registration fee, with valid ID. A refundable deposit equal to one week's tuition is also required at the time of enrollment to secure your child's placement. This deposit is refundable with a two-week notice before your child's last day at Little Learners or with a two-week notice prior to when your child was scheduled to start. A yearly continuing enrollment and activities fee will be assessed each year and will be due August 1<sup>st</sup> for the following academic school year. The annual fee is \$75/child. This covers the cost of replenishing supplies and activities throughout the year.

### Termination

Little Learners may ask that another provider be found if there are unresolved behavioral issues or issues involving noncompliance with stated policies. Whenever possible, parents will be given two weeks to find another placement. However, Little Learners may terminate care without giving notice if a child's behavior is consistently inappropriate and/or dangerous or if timely payments are not made. Parents will also need to give a two-week notice when

terminating child care. If a two-week notice is given, the deposit will be returned on the child's last scheduled day of care or may be applied to the final week of services. If a two-week notice is not given, the deposit will be forfeited.

## **Enrollment**

The documents listed on the following page are included in the Forms and Handouts packet. Please take note of the forms that will need to be signed and returned. We ask that these forms be returned at least one week before your child's first day at Little Learners. A signed agreement must be returned with the enrollment fee before an opening will be considered filled.











*Thank you for considering Little Learners. We look forward to having your child in our care. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call. We would be happy to visit with you more about the experiences your child will have at Little Learners.*

## Forms and Handouts Checklist

- Parent-Provider Agreement\*
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Care\*--Must be notarized—children can not attend until this form is on file
- Medical Record and Health Assessment\*--Must be signed by a doctor—children can not attend until this form is on file
- Child Profile\*
- Permission to Administer External Non-Prescription Preparations Form\*
- Permission to Photograph Form\*
- Walking Field Trip Permission Form\*
- "Outside Babysitting" Waiver\*
- Child Pick Up Form\*
- Direct Payment Authorization
- Guidelines for Exclusion of Children Who are Ill
- Checklist for items to be left at Little Learners
- Emergency Plans

(\*must be signed and returned)

## Little Learners' Sample Daily Routine

* The times listed are based on our Pre-K program. Preschool and Toddler times will vary slightly in each classroom.			
7:00-8:15		Breakfast	Children arriving after 8:15 a.m. should eat breakfast at home.
8:15-9:00		Free Play	Children will have time to play and explore while learning to share and interact with others.
30 minutes in the morning		Outside Play	Weather permitting, each morning children will play outside otherwise, we will play inside.
9:00-11:30	<b>Academic Activities</b> Children will participate in whole group, small group, and individual choice activities. Through songs, games, stories and creative play, children will learn the skills described below when appropriate to their development. Children will also have the opportunity for an outside play break during this time.		
	<b>Social Skills and Activities</b> Manners "I-Care" Rules Conflict Resolution Self Care (zip, snap, tie, button) Dramatic Play Singing Unstructured Play Time Outdoor Play Time	<b>Math Skills and Activities</b> Shape Recognition Patterning Number Recognition Basic Counting Skills Calendar Skills Spatial Awareness Comparing Math in the Environment	<b>Reading Readiness Skills and Activities</b> The Alphabet Letter Sounds Blending & Segmenting Sounds Rhyming Awareness Print Awareness Identifying Beginning Sounds Literature Appreciation
11:30 - 12:10		Lunch	A nutritious and balanced meal will be provided daily.
12:10-12:30		Read Aloud	A read aloud time will be used to share great stories and help children prepare for rest time.
12:30-2:00		<b>Nap/Rest Time</b> A rest mat will be provided for each child. They are also welcome to bring a special blanket or stuffed animal (please label). Children who aren't tired or have out grown naps may look at books or work on puzzles but will be asked to stay on their rest mats during this time. The length of nap/rest time will be based on the needs of the children. Please be sure to let your child's teacher know if you feel your child is getting too much or not enough time to rest.	
2:00-4:15		Learning Extensions	Children will enjoy a snack followed by a theme related craft, special of the day, a story, and unstructured play.
4:15-5:00		Outside Play	Weather permitting, each afternoon children will play outside otherwise, we will play inside.
4:00-5:30		Free Play	Children will have another opportunity to play and explore.



We promise you every day  
Your children will learn something.

Some days they'll bring  
it home in their hands.

Some days they'll bring  
it home in their heads.

And some days they'll bring  
it home in their hearts.

By Valerie Welk