

Little Explorers Academy

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Family Handbook

Welcome to our center. As part of the Little Explorers family, we're proud to offer one of the nation's highest-quality education programs for infant, toddler, preschoolers and school-age children. We're honored that you have chosen us for your child's care, you can be confident that we will live up to your trust.

Much more than just child care, our program provides a rich, nurturing environment for your child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. Here, learning is fun, children are respected, and our teachers work in partnership with families to meet the unique needs of each child.

Our staff members welcome the opportunity to meet with you at any time to discuss your child's progress, growth and development. We also invite you to share your suggestions and concerns with us. You know your child better than anyone else and we value your ideas and insight.

Of course, when starting a new program, it's natural to have questions. You may find answers to many of these on the following pages, which describe our policies and procedures. These guidelines are designed to ensure that your child and all of the children in our care receive the best education and experience possible.

Please take a few minutes to review and become familiar with this information. We suggest that you keep this handbook as a reference source for the future and remind you to complete and return the Acknowledgement of Receipt Form (on the preceding page) to your Center Director prior to enrollment.

We're looking forward to getting to know you and your child. If there is anything we can do to improve our program or services, or if you have any questions, please feel free to speak to your Center Director or Assistant Director. Again, thank you for entrusting your child to our care. It is a privilege to be a part of your lives.

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OUR MISSION and OUR VALUES

We strive to develop the “whole child” so that the children are fully blossoming physically, emotionally, intellectually, mentally, and spiritually. We endeavor to create a safe, pleasant and enriching experience for children to play, explore, grow and learn. We believe that each child is unique, and the unleashed potential can be stimulated and nurtured by caring educational professionals. An atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging, mutual affection, respect and trust is the nurturing ground for our little explorers growing into their full potentials.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Because the family has a need, we have a job to do. Because the family has a choice, we must be the better choice. Because the family has sensitivities, we must be considerate. Because the family has urgency, we must be quick. Because each family is unique, we must be flexible. Because the family has influence, we have the hope of new families through your good words.

STANDARDS

Little Explorers Academy is licensed by the **Pennsylvania Department of Human Services**, complies with all the standards put forth by that department. Little Explorers also participates in **Keystone STARS** program to increase early education quality.

DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

We are open at 7:00 AM and close at 6:00 PM.

We are closed on the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day and the week of Fourth of July. You will be notified in advance for additional holidays.

Also, we reserve the right to open late, close early, or close for the day if we feel that due to extenuating bad weather or building emergencies, we are jeopardizing the safety of the children, our staff and our families.

Making your First Days Easier

Becoming accustomed to a new environment can be challenging for any child. We’ve found that some children will adjust quickly while others may take a little longer to feel at ease in their new environment. Our teachers make every effort to be aware of circumstances that can challenge your child when beginning our program, and they will work with you to help ensure a smooth adjustment.

If possible, we suggest that you spend a little extra time in the classroom during the first few days. This will help both you and your child ease into the routine and feel more comfortable.

We encourage you to call anytime during the day to see how your child is adjusting. Some separation anxiety is normal and expected, and your Center Director will be happy to provide suggestions that will minimize any possible stress for you and your child. Please remember that your child will soon feel comfortable in our center and look forward to attending every day.

Child Care and Health

ADHERENCE TO THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

We comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable regulations pertaining to providing services to individuals with disabilities. We carefully consider each child’s individual needs in order to determine if our program can accommodate a child’s unique needs. If your child is disabled or has any other special needs, please communicate this to your Center Director.

INCLUSION OF ALL CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Little Explorers Academy welcomes all children and is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early learning and development experiences that support the full access and participation of each and every child. We believe that each child is unique and work in partnership with families and other professionals involved with the child to provide the support every child needs to reach their full potential.

Admissions/Waiting List

Children of all abilities are accepted in our program and families interested in having their child attend the program will be given an equal opportunity for admission. A waiting list may be maintained and children will be accepted from the list on a first come first served basis.

Inclusive Environment

Early childhood educators here use developmentally appropriate practices and consider the unique needs of all children when planning. Staff will make every attempt to make any adaptations or modifications necessary to meet the needs of the children. Schedules, routines and activities are flexible and early childhood educators will work with therapists, special educators and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications and strategies into classroom routines and activities. Any adaptations will be reviewed with families and other professionals supporting the child.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling and previously enrolled children and their families. All staff will be briefed on the need for confidentiality and will be expected to fulfill their obligation to respect the protection of privacy.

Written records will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the director and the child's teacher. No information will be released about a child and the parent/legal guardian during enrolment or transition to another receiving program or school without first receiving the written permission of the parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility held by early childhood educators as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect as outlined when information is subpoenaed by the court.

Family Centered Practices

Little Explorers Academy acknowledges and respects the priorities each family has for their child. Families are encouraged and supported to collaborate with staff to ensure that each child has an opportunity for optimum success. Little Explorers Academy has communicated with each family daily and has regular meetings to discuss the child's successes and challenges.

Professional Development and Support for Staff

Training and support is provided to ensure that all staff are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the developmental and educational needs of all children. All staff receives an orientation on inclusion policies and attends training focused on effective inclusion and/or other disability topics whenever possible. The director provides additional support and resources as appropriate.

Collaboration with Other Professionals

Many children with disabilities or other special needs are supported by developmental and educational professionals such as therapists, teachers and others. Little Explorers Academy welcomes those professionals and works with them to assure the child's success. The service provider is encouraged to provide services to the child in the context of the early childhood classroom environment and the child's teacher and the service provider work collaboratively to determine the best strategies to support the child in the group setting. Little Explorers supports the teacher's participation in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.

Families with IEP needs can notify the center director at the beginning of their enrollment or at any time they recognize the needs. We will support the families through service requests, referrals, and follow up meetings.

BITING

Biting is not uncommon among young children. During early childhood, children are sensory learners and often explore orally. In addition, immature language skills and imperfect impulse control can lead children to

bite as a means of making their needs known. We do realize that biting can be a concern to parents, and we strive to minimize biting at the center. The following strategies help prevent, manage and/or minimize biting incidents;

- When children bite out of frustration or during confrontation they will be redirected to some other activity, or they will be shown an alternative way, to get what they need. We will encourage the use of language in expressing wants and needs.
- If a child bites frequently staff members will use a more intensive approach that involves carefully observing the child to determine reciprocating events and maintaining a log to help track the behavior. Conference with parent/guardian may also be arranged to discuss the child's actions at home, search for outside resources, and discuss other positive opportunities and guidelines.
- You will be notified if your child is bitten at our center. However, in order to protect the privacy of all at our center, you will not be informed of the identity of the biter.
- For the safety of all the children, if all attempts to stop the biting fail, such as probation, suspension; we reserve the right to remove the biter from our program.

CELEBRATIONS OR BIRTHDAYS

Seasonal and cultural celebrations and birthdays are special days for children. If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday or another special occasion at the center, please make arrangements with your Center Director. In most cases we are unable to serve foods prepared at home at the center. Please discuss with your Center Director any plans you may have to bring special foods to the center before making any purchases or preparations.

CLOTHING

We want to be sure your child has fun while playing and learning at our center. Therefore, we recommend easy-fitting, comfortable, washable play clothes. Clothing that is simple for your child and/or our teachers to put on or take off is best.

- Please provide 2 complete sets of labeled clothes for your child. Clothes should be sent in the center in a sealed plastic bag. Please dress your child in loose fitting clothing.
- Please dress your child in footwear that is appropriate for the prevailing weather conditions and safe for running and playing (sneakers or closed footwear)
- In hot weather dress your child with hats, visors and tightly woven clothing.
- In cold weather provide appropriate layered clothing to create insulation, including mittens or gloves, caps, hoods, sweaters or sweatshirts, socks, warm or waterproof outerwear.
- For their safety, children will not be permitted to wear any shirts, jackets, sweatshirts, jewelry or articles that are tied around the neck or waist. Please remove all drawstrings.
- For the children's safety, jewelry, especially earrings or chains, any other valuable (money) are not permitted.

We are not responsible for lost, stained, soiled or damaged clothing, jewelry or valuables.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Our program is very active, and children need proper nutrition to maintain a high level of interest and energy throughout the day. We provide nutritious meals and snacks through the CBS food program of Philadelphia in the right quantity to meet your child's nutrition requirements. (Meal services vary. See your Center Director for details.) Menus are sent home as well as displayed throughout the center so you know what your child is being served. We encourage the selection of foods that reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the children in our care.

ALLERGIES

If your child has allergies, please discuss them in detail with the teacher and director. For food allergies, a written description signed by parent and doctor must be on file and updated every year. The staff of the center will take appropriate precautions. If at any time your child develops an allergy, please let us know immediately.

Nut-free zone: Due to an increase in children with nut allergies, we attempt to be a nut-free zone. Please keep this in mind when packing a lunch for your child, or providing snacks for the classroom during special occasions. This includes peanuts as well as tree nuts such as almonds, cashews, walnuts, pine nuts.

Our staff members are available to talk with you about your child's nutrition and eating patterns.

- Please bring your child on time, so they can receive the proper nutrition.
- No breakfast will be served after 9:30

ILLNESS

Children need to be in good health to get the most out of their early education experience. We understand that children may occasionally become sick during the day or show signs or symptoms of illness prior to arrival. In order to reduce the spread of illness and maintain the health of all of the children at our center, your child may not be allowed to attend the center or participate in certain activities for the following reasons.

- A reportable condition that the local health department or physician determines to be contagious and the child has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the risk of others.
- An illness or symptom as described below that prevents participation in routine daily program activities outdoor activities.
- An illness that requires more individual care than our center staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.

The following symptoms or signs of illness may also prohibit your child from participating in our program

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Blood in stool | • Respiratory distress |
| • Diarrhea | • Ring Worm |
| • Eye Drainage | • Runny Nose |
| • Fever over 100 degrees (taken axillary) | • Unusual color of skin, eyes, stool or urine |
| • Infestation, bites | • Unexplained irritability, lethargy, and/or persistent crying |
| • Sores | • Vomiting |
| • Persistent abdominal pain | |
| • Rash | |

If your child becomes ill, while in our care we will notify you immediately. Children may not return to our center until the symptoms or signs are treated and the child is symptom free for 24 hours.

We value your child's health and recognize that preventing the spread of infectious diseases is an important and necessary component of quality child care. We actively strive to monitor the health and well-being of all children in our care. If a child is recognized to have certain communicable diseases, control measures may require:

- Sending the child home from the center
- Evaluation and treatment by the child's health care provider
- Notification of the parents/ guardians of other children in our center
- Notification of local health authorities (i.e. health department)
- Notification of staff members
- A Doctors note is needed

If all attempts have been made to contain the spread of a contagious disease, and the child has recurring symptoms for same disease, for the safety of all the children as well as our staff, we reserve the right to terminate the child from our program.

INFANT OR TODDLER SUPPLIES

- Clothing

Please provide your infant, toddler and preschooler with

- 2 complete sets of clothing (labeled with your child's name).
- Diapers/Wipes/Bibs/Bottles for Infants/2 Cups for Young Toddlers

Please provide diapers and wipes for your child. If Little Explorers has to provide your children with either Diapers or Wipes you will be charged a fee of 5.00 per diaper, 5.00 for a pack of wipes and 10.00 for pull-ups.

- **Cloth Diapers**

Our ability to accommodate cloth diapers is governed by licensing and health regulations. Please check with your Center Director regarding cloth diaper usage at your center.

- **Food**

When it comes to the nutritional needs of infants and toddlers, different parents have a variety of preferences. Our food program accommodates most common food restrictions; see your center director for specifics. You will be provided with a monthly menu. If you choose not to participate in our food program, you will have to bring all food for your infant/toddler/preschooler.

- **Bottles and Breast Milk**

Bottles must be brought to the center each day already prepared. They should be clearly labeled with the date and child's name. Please do not leave bottles at the center overnight. The contents of bottles left overnight will be discarded. Please bring breast milk in liquid form, not frozen.

Parents are encouraged to bring a number of smaller bottles rather than a few larger bottles. This way, Staff members can warm and use just the amount of formula needed, and less formula will be wasted each day. For the safety of all of our infants, we are unable to use glass bottles in our programs.

- **Sleep**

Infants sleep according to their needs and the individual plan prepared by you and coordinated with our teachers. Unless otherwise indicated on your enrollment papers, please provide all bedding for your child's crib and wash and return the bedding on every week.

In keeping up with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, all infants will be placed on their backs unless a documented medical condition requires alternate sleeping position.

MEDICAL RECORDS

We follow state licensing regulations regarding medical examination and immunization records for your child. Medical examination and immunization records must be provided within 30 days of enrollment and kept current. Medical check-ups need to be updated every 6 months for Infants and Toddlers, and every year for children over two years old. Failure to provide the adequate records will result in termination.

MEDICATION

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities- We will administer both prescription and non-prescription medication, the Medication Consent Log has to be completed by the parent for each medication. All medication must be in their original container, showing prescription label with the child's name, and dosage instructions. Each individual piece of medical equipment must be labeled with the child's name, and will be stored in a sealed container to prevent cross contamination.

Little Explorers will not administer medication to any child whose parent has not given written consent on a medication consent log.

Children who require medication as needed such as for asthma, the parent need to clearly state what symptoms warrants the administration of the drug, as well as clear instructions on dosage, all on the medication log. In turn, we will update you with a daily report which will state if any medication was administered.

The medication is handed to the teacher, and will be stored properly, that is away from access to any children. Do not leave medication in the children's backpacks. If the medication is shared with home use, we will return it to you at night. Please make sure it stays in its container labeled with your child's name. Please, note that as a policy, our staff will not administer injections. The only exception is the "Epi Pen" in the case of extreme allergic reactions which our staff is trained to administer.

If you have additional questions about medication administration, please see your Center Director.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Fresh Air and exercise are an important part of any child's day. To gain the full benefit of our program, your child should be able to participate in all activities, including outdoor play.

Please be sure your child has adequate outdoor clothing and footwear for all weather conditions. The Department of Public Welfare states that children have to go outdoors, the guidelines are in temperature ranging from 25° to 90°F.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Because children often find comfort in special objects, your child may bring his/her favorite blanket or cuddly, a special soft toy, or a stuffed animal for nap time. However, please do not let your children bring other toys or belongings from home. It can create tension and jealousy from other children when a child brings a treasured object to the center.

Each child's personal space is limited. It can be distressing for children and staff members when things are lost or misplaced. We strongly discourage wearing earrings, necklaces, or bracelets for children attending school. We cannot assume responsibility for loss or damage to any belongings.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE

Part of what children are learning in their early years is how to get along with others and what behaviors are appropriate for different situations. We help children learn these skills by providing a good example and by gently redirecting them when their behavior needs to change. We take a preventive approach to discipline that teaches children positive behaviors rather than punishing them for misbehaving. Most importantly, we keep children actively engaged in fun and challenging activities.

Preventive discipline improves a child's self-esteem and problem-solving skills and encourages positive social behavior. This helps our center maintain an atmosphere of warmth and understanding, and helps children develop as individuals and as part of a group. In this positive atmosphere, most behavior problems are avoided.

However, in extreme situations and as a last resort, separation from the group may be necessary for the benefit of the child and the rest of the group. Teachers use this time to help the child calm down before returning to group activities, and children are allowed to re-enter the group when they feel ready to do so. Separation is not used with infants and toddlers unless they are hurting other children.

Corporal punishment is always forbidden.

We welcome parents as partners in teaching children about socially acceptable behaviors as your child's most influential teacher; we may occasionally ask you to work with us to help extinguish a challenging behavior. We understand that these issues are sensitive and that there are many different parenting styles reflected among our families. In the event that the child's behavior becomes too disruptive to the classroom, we will put the child on probation, then suspension for 1, then 2, and then 3 days. If all attempts are of no avail, and the behavior remains disruptive, we reserve the right to terminate the child from our program. We also ask that, while on our grounds, you refrain from using any form of guidance that is not consistent with our LEA policy or our licensing requirements. Our staff members, who witness any form of physical or corporal punishment, even if administered by a parent, are required by law to report their observations to the appropriate local authorities. This mandated reporting responsibility is expected of all staff members.

REST TIME

It is important for a young, growing child to have time to rest or enjoy quiet activities during the day. At our center, your child will nap in the afternoons for one to two and a half hour, depending on his or her individual needs. Children who don't sleep are encouraged to read a book, play with puzzles, or participate in other quiet activities midday as a means to recharge and rejuvenate, but they are not required to nap.

We provide cozy cribs, mats or cots. You are responsible to bring rest time items, such as sheets, blankets and any bedding your child needs. Please label all items with your child's name. And please, make sure you launder it once a week, it will be sent home Fridays, and needs to be returned on the following Monday.

TOILETING

Toilet training is most easily accomplished when you, your child and our teachers work together. Children learn toileting skills through consistent, positive encouragement from adults.

Toilet training usually begins around two and a half years of age. When your child shows an interest in toileting, you and our teachers will discuss how we will work together to encourage toilet training. During the discussion we will commit to working with your child in a consistent manner so that toilet training can be accomplished in a developmental manner.

Each child begins toilet training at a different age and at his/her individual pace. Three complete change of clothing should be kept in your child's cubby at all times during the toilet training process.

Safety and Security

Arrival and Departure

We want to make sure your child begins the day on a happy, positive note. When you arrive at the center, please sign in your child, **and wash your child's hand**. Also, since your child may enjoy it when you spend a few moments in the classroom upon arrival, please allow a little extra time in your morning schedule to visit. **Your child's curriculum will begin at 9:30 AM**, it is important for your child to be part of the morning routine, so please make sure you arrive before 9:30 AM. **If you cannot make it on time, you are required to give us a call prior to 9:30 AM, as we finalize teacher/child staffing requirements for the center at that time. If not told about a late arrival we reserve the right to refuse you child in order to maintain our children teacher ratio.** At pickup time, feel free to spend time in the classroom learning about classroom activities and events. Your child welcomes the opportunity to share his or her day with you.

Child Accidents

If your child is injured at the center and needs treatment by a health care professional, we'll make every effort to contact you and/or the health care professional you have identified on the Emergency Contact Form. In the event of an emergency, we will make sure that your child receives any necessary emergency treatment until we can reach you. Upon enrollment, you completed an authorization for emergency treatment as well as an emergency contact form. Please update the information on this form as soon as there are changes.

Emergency Situations and Evacuation Plans

In order to maintain a safe environment for your child, we make every attempt to be prepared for potential emergency situations. We regularly schedule and practice emergency evacuations, they are required by state licensing regulations. In addition, an emergency plan with telephone numbers and procedures is posted in each classroom. Please be aware of the procedures and evacuation locations in the event of an emergency evacuation. An additional copy is provided to you at enrollment. Please see Center Director for more details.

Field Trips and Transportation

Off-site events give children opportunities to build awareness, expand classroom learning, and learn from experience. In order to make field trips both meaningful and safe, we follow these guidelines:

- Children under two years of age are not permitted to participate in field trips that involve transportation in any vehicle unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Parents/Guardians are notified at least one week in advance of each trip with the time, schedule, location, and any extra cost that may be involved in the field trip.
- Permission slips are required for all field trips. Each trip requires a separate form describing the details of the event and we must have your written permission authorizing your child to go. Telephone approval is not acceptable.
- We welcome the participation of parent/guardian volunteers on field trips. Please note however, that you cannot transport other children in your personal vehicle.

Late Pick-up

Children look forward to the arrival of their parents or guardians at the end of the day. Please make every effort to pick up your child on time. If you know that you can't arrive on schedule, please arrange to have your child picked up by another adult who has been designated by you on your Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form. If a late pickup is unavoidable and you can't reach your designated emergency contact, notify the center immediately so that a teacher can supervise your child and minimize any fears he or she may have.

If your child is not picked up, after the normal closing time and you have not notified the Center Director or person in charge of the possibility of a late pick-up, the following guidelines will apply:

- We will attempt to contact you or the persons authorized to pick up your child, or the people listed on your child's Emergency Contact.
- If no contact has been made with you or another authorized person, the Center Director or person in charge will determine whether the police or appropriate authorities should be contacted based on state regulations.
- If police or appropriate authorities are contacted and they place the child into protective custody a note in a sealed envelope will be posted on the center door advising you that the child has been taken into protective custody and will provide the contact person's phone number.

Please note that the Center Director or person in charge may not deliver the child home under any circumstance. Also, an additional, fee for late pickup will apply to children picked up after closing time, that is 1\$ per minute.

Releasing your child

When you first enroll your child, you complete the Emergency Contact/ Parental Consent Form as part of the Tuition/Enrollment Information and Agreement Packet. This allows you to authorize specific individuals to pick up your child, and name emergency contact persons to whom we may release your child. You are responsible for maintaining accurate, complete, and current information. The center will renew these forms every six months. We know you will feel more secure and confident when staff members are aware of who may or may not pick up your child.

Written authorization must be on file at the center prior to your child's release to anyone. This is for the safety and security of your child. Children may not be released to staff members without specific authorization, nor can unauthorized staff members walk or transport children home.

Please inform individuals listed on your Emergency Contact/ Parental Consent Form that they will be asked to verify identity. Staff members will ask for photo identification for anyone who is not positively known to them.

We will not release a child to anyone younger than 16 years of age. If state regulations are more restrictive, the more restrictive procedures will apply. Please check with your Center Director for specific requirements at your center.

Security

Keeping your child safe and secure is our first priority. In addition to the built-in security features for the center, we ensure security by strictly following established procedures for your child's arrival and departure. All children must be signed in and out on our sign in sheets, and other attendance procedures must be followed in accordance with company policy. Please refer questions regarding the appropriate procedure to the Center Director.

Policies and Procedures

Babysitting

Some families may ask staff members to babysit outside of our center. We assume no responsibility for any individual who cares for a child outside of our program, nor are we responsible for the actions of any staff member during the employee's non-work hours.

Center Closures

The center will be open whenever possible during normal operating hours on a regularly scheduled day. Please see your Center Director for the specific procedure used to notify you when severe weather or other conditions prevent our center from opening on time or at all. Should it become necessary to close early, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for your child's early pickup. There is no tuition credit for any time our center is closed-scheduled or unscheduled-unless specifically indicated on the tuition agreement.

Confidentiality and Children's Records

Information contained in your child's record, including your personal information, is privileged and confidential. No one who is not directly related to the care of your child or affiliated with state licensing agencies will have access to the records without your authorization. Parents/guardians may have access to their child's records at reasonable time and upon request.

Upon withdrawal of your child from the center, records will be retained for the minimum period of time specified in the applicable licensing regulations. If you require a copy of your child's records, an administrative fee may be charged to cover copying and delivery charges.

As a parent/guardian you have the right to add and update information, comments, data, or other relevant material to your child's records. Please contact your Center Director if you need to update your child's records.

Holidays

Our centers close in recognition of various holidays throughout the year. See your Center Director for information specific to your center.

Mandated Reporting Information

Everyone working directly with children is required by law to report evidence of child neglect or abuse to certain state licensing agencies or law enforcement agencies. Those who fail to report according to state regulation can be held accountable under the law. It is also prohibited by law for anyone to interfere with an individual's attempt to report child abuse or neglect. Please refer to our child abuse policy or contact your Center Director for more information on the mandatory reporting requirements in your state.

Multiple-Child Discounts

If multiple children from the same family attend the center, a discount from the usual tuition fee may apply. See your Center Director for details.

Registration and Enrollment

All forms provided to you upon enrollment must be completed before your child may attend. To enroll or re-enroll your child, you must complete and sign the **Tuition/Enrollment Information and Agreement Form** and pay a nonrefundable registration fee. Other enrollment forms include health and immunization information, developmental history, and other state-specific forms. Please be sure to update all emergency information as needed, including address, home and work telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, e-mail addresses, any changes in your child's medical information, and changes of individuals authorized to pick up your children.

Tuition includes 10 hours of care per day. The following chart shows estimated drop-off times and pick up times.

Drop Off Time	Pick Up Time
7:00	5:00
7:30	5:30
8:00	6:00

If you need longer hours, **arrangements need to be made in advance** with the Center Director.

- When your child misses a full week of childcare and we do not hear from you, we will assume you have made other childcare arrangements. Your child will be dropped from the enrollment list.
- So please call and let us know if your child is going to be out for a few days so we can make sure there is still a spot available for your child.

Research and Unrelated Activities

From time to time we receive requests from university programs or childcare researchers to observe our classrooms. We do not permit any such activities without first obtaining written permission from the parents of the children in our care. We do not authorize any activities unrelated to the direct care of children or allow individuals to have any contact with your child without your written, informed consent.

State Licensing Regulations

We comply with applicable state licensing regulations and requirements. Our center is subject to inspection by state and city health, fire, licensing, and building agencies. Regulations and inspections pertain to staff qualifications, the facility and playground, nutrition, health and safety matters, record keeping, and child-to-teacher ratios. On occasion, state licensing regulations may vary or differ from the policies outlined in this handbook. If you have questions regarding regulations and other legal requirements applicable to your center, please see your Center Director.

Probation, Suspension and Terminations of Services

According to OCDEL's updated research, high rates of suspensions and termination in preschool are associated with negative educational and life outcomes. Our goal is to prevent and avoid suspension and termination as much as possible. We believe that collaboration between families, educators, and other social service programs serving families with young children can have a significant positive impact on children development. These social service programs include but are not limited to the following: Early Intervention, Early childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC), behavioral health, Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support (PAPBS) Network and other services. Whenever necessary, we will assist families with referrals to an appropriate social service program. We also distribute family oriented resources regarding child development, behavior management, social development, and more. Our staff members receive trainings on behavior management strategies. We encourage all staff members to implement positive behavior reinforcement approach consistently.

Our policy governing children's inappropriate behavior contains probation, suspension, and termination.

- Probation is the period when we recognize inappropriate behaviors of a child, appeal to parents and invite parents to collaborate with us on improving the child's behavior. Referrals to appropriate early intervention programs will also be timely made. Prior to suspensions, we will go through a probation period with a minimum of three warnings regarding inappropriate behaviors.
- Suspension is administered as a consequence of a child's repeated inappropriate behavior, serving as a warning for misconduct that puts staff or other children at risk. If inappropriate behavior continues after multiple suspensions, from one-day, two-day, up to three-day suspension, we may resort to the final termination of service.
- Termination is the complete and permanent removal of a child from our program because of inappropriate behaviors that persist. Termination only occurs after all other options are explored.

While we strive to provide a positive learning experience for all children in our center, in order to protect all children and staff, we reserve the right to suspend or terminate services for any child at any time as deemed necessary or appropriate in our sole discretion, with or without notice.

Tuition and Payment Policy

Your tuition fee is payable in advance of the date of service. Quoted tuition is based on payment by the date due. Alternative tuition schedules may apply to payments made after that date. Repeated failure to pay tuition by the date may result in termination of services. If you have any questions, see your Center Director.

For private pay:

- If you pay per day, you will need to give us a fixed schedule for the whole week, if you do not bring your child on a scheduled day, there will be no refund.
- If you pay by the week, and miss a day, you will not be refunded, unless you give us ample notice (2 weeks' notice) and switch from week pay to daily pay.
- Please ask your center director for any questions or for more information.

No Refunds are given for illness, vacations, or snow days. Also note that tuition will increase annually.

Vacation/Credit Policy

There are no refunds for vacations or sickness. Please see your Center Director for information specific to your center.

Withdrawals

We require a minimum of two weeks advance written notice of your child's withdrawal. You may be charged for early withdrawal without notice.

Your Child's Education

Curriculum

Learning is meant to be a natural, joyful experience. Children learn by playing, experimenting, exploring, and testing. Children flourish when the process of discovery is lovingly encouraged and gently reinforced. This is the philosophy behind our research-based curriculum, which fosters individual growth by providing plenty of opportunities, manipulation, and child-initiated choice.

We believe that each child has unique talents and interests. Our teachers honor these differences by providing children with customized attention and activities so that they may learn and grow at their own pace, in their own style. Specific activities may vary depending on the center and the age of the children. The underlying principles of our program, however, remain the same:

- Children learn through active exploration
- Children imitate their own learning.
- Learning comes from open-ended experiences.
- Adults are facilitators of children's learning.

All children need opportunities to be responsible, to make choices, and to be treated with respect. Our program encourages your child's growth and development, with early learning experiences that build a strong foundation for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills.

The future is built from today. For the greatest benefits of all children and human beings, our curriculum challenges all educators and families to foster the young generation to sustain tremendous technological and scientific break-through and embrace the exquisite artistic mind at the same time. Our future talents shall always be the master of science and technology.

Our STEAM Challenge curriculum expands over all five major categories, science, technology, engineering, art, and math, and infuses them together to create hundreds of hands on and engaging activities and games covering seasonal, cultural, historical, social, and many other topics we encounter every day. We strive to facilitate the precious aptitude of each child and help our children to grow into wholesome, independent, and happy citizens.

Daily Activities

Although your child's schedule will vary somewhat every day, general descriptions of activities he or she will be engaged in during a typical day include:

- Circle Time: Starts right after Breakfast at 9:30 AM
- Learning centers: Child-oriented activities such as puzzles, table games, dramatic play, and blocks are part of their environment.
- Group time: Group sessions are child-centered and participative. They include activities such as read-aloud stories, music and movement, finger plays, discussion, dramatization, games, and experience stories.
- Outdoor play: Weather permitting, each classroom goes for walks or play in the backyard in the first half of the day.
- Snack and Meal Times: Our group snack and meal times give teachers the opportunity to sit with the children while they eat to model good table practices and encourage social skills.
- Rest Time: During the rest period, children nap or engage in quiet activities such as reading a book or playing with puzzles.

Activity and lesson plans for all age groups are posted in each classroom.

Mixed-Age Grouping

Our programs encourage mixed-age grouping of children. This provides a rich learning environment based on the philosophy that all children are unique and develop at their own pace, according to their individual interests and abilities. In mixed-age grouping, children may be placed with other children who are at least two years apart in age. Our staff members understand the value of mixed-age grouping and help ensure that it is implemented with the utmost focus on the children's development and safety. Your Center Director can discuss with you the benefits and use of mixed-age grouping, but generally, through mixed-age grouping:

- Older children learn to be helpful, patient, and tolerant, while developing increased confidence in their skills and abilities.
- Younger children have the opportunity to learn more advanced cognitive and socialization skills from older children, Individual differences in development are more readily accommodated.
- Children are challenged to think through problems in a more creative and flexible way as they observe children of other ages approaching problems differently than they do.

Transition Plan

When children move from one class to the next, we will discuss with you the plan for the child's transition. During the transition time we help children become familiar with the new classroom, staff members, and other children. Flexibility allows us to best meet the developmental needs of each child. Children in our program are considered for transition according to their developmental abilities and maturation levels. You will receive a transition letter prior to the transition of your child into a new classroom. The transition letter will give you information regarding the key milestones in the new classroom.

Family Communication and Involvement

Communication

As your child's first and most important influence, you are a full partner in our program. Open and frequent communication between you, your child's teacher, and our Center Director will strengthen this partnership and help your child have a positive early learning experience. We promote close communication between our staff members and families through:

- An open door policy that encourages you to visit your child anytime, to observe during class time, and to participate in special outings and events.
- Parent/teacher communication to share ideas and discuss your child's progress.
- Daily conversation and frequent written update highlighting each child's development.
- Recommendations for home based learning activities supporting children's learning and enjoyment of the program.
- A parent information board displaying current information about our center and other topics of interest to families.
- Posted lesson plans describing the planned activities to the classroom.

Getting to Know You Meeting

Six weeks after the enrollment, you are invited to meet with your child's teacher or the director to discuss your child's progress in our program. We will review family and personal information of your child and discuss your goals and concerns. This meeting will help us know your child better and help your child achieve in our program.

Parent Teacher Conference

In addition to the above communication, we provide two parent teacher conferences annually to promote joint efforts of parents and teachers in educating all children. The conferences are provided in Spring and Fall semesters. In each conference, you will learn about the most up-to-date development and milestones of your child and please share any concerns you have.

Custody and Visitation

Please review your custody and visitation rights with your Center Director, complete all sections of the **Tuition/Enrollment Information and Agreement Form**, including information about your child's other parent/guardian, if applicable. Incomplete **Tuition/Enrollment Information and Agreement Forms** do not deny access rights for the other parent/guardian. In the case of divorce or custody issues, legal paperwork submitted as part of the child's file dictates child-access rights for non-custodial parents/guardians. Please keep all information current.

Satisfaction and Resolution of Disputes

We are fully committed to your child's well-being and to your complete satisfaction with our program. Experience has taught us that open communication is the key to maintaining a positive relationship. We continually look for your input on how we can improve our program and ask you to share your ideas, suggestions, and concerns.

If you have a problem:

- We encourage you to discuss your concerns with a staff member. Staff members will make every effort to be available to discuss concerns regarding your child or classroom schedule and activities.
- Concerns or questions that cannot be resolved or answered by a staff member should be directed to your Center Director.
- If your Center Director does not resolve the issue to your satisfaction, contact our Board of Director or any other member of the Little Explorers Academy management team.

We communicate with families about their children daily. In addition, we conduct regular surveys to help us continually improve and refine our programs and services and ensure that we are responsive to the changing needs of our families. While these surveys are very useful for communicating concerns and comments, they are not intended to replace ongoing and open communication with the Center Director and teachers. We are always available to talk over your concerns. If, in rare instances, an issue may arise that cannot be resolved to mutual satisfaction, Little Explorers Academy reserves the right at its sole discretion to ask you to seek other child care arrangements.

Special Services

Enrichment Programs

Enrichment programs give children opportunities for expanded learning experiences based on their individual interests, abilities, and ages; the interests and skills of our staff members; and the options available in the community. In addition to the programs integrated into our curriculum, programs such as dance, gymnastics, music, computer, foreign languages, or karate lessons may also be offered through independent providers. These special programs can enhance children's development, and parents appreciate the convenience. Additional fees are charged for such enrichment programs, and participation is optional. Check with your Center Director about specific opportunities available at your center.

Literacy Enhancement

The development of literacy and language skills is an essential component of our program. Our teachers use rich language, read book aloud, play alphabet and word games, sing, use rhymes, and encourage enthusiasm for reading and writing to help children develop a strong foundation for literacy.

In addition, our center encourages "Books Aloud" at neighborhood libraries, a parent involvement program that enhances children's literacy and language development. The program includes literacy activities, a celebration of reading, and most importantly, at-home family activities.

School Portraits

As a special service, we offer school portraits twice a year. You will be notified in advance of portrait day. You can pick and choose what picture you like and would like to purchase, you are under no obligation to purchase the pictures

Dismissal Policy

Children not having the necessary health assessment forms and immunization records on file at the facility will be refused care or dismissed from care.

Failure to provide updated emergency contact information in a timely manner (at least once in a six (6) month period or as soon as there is a change in the information) will result in denial of care.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health requires that children also be excluded from care if they are suspected of having various communicable diseases or exhibit various symptoms of communicable diseases or serious illness.

Little Explorers Academy will not tolerate the use of foul language or disruptive conduct from staff, parents, or children. If this behavior occurs, termination will follow.

Important Information

FINAL REMINDERS, A SUMMARY:

- **HOURS 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM**
- **MEALS INCLUDED**
- **EMERGENCY CONTACT** form update every **6 months** or as needed.
- **CHILD PHYSICAL/IMMUNIZATION RECORDS** due within **30 DAYS** of enrollment.
- **HEALTH INSURANCE** information required.
- **REGISTRATION (\$30.00)** required before service begins unless waived by Director. Fees are **NON-REFUNDABLE**.
- Tuition covers **10 HOURS** of care daily.
- Tuition/CO-PAY **DEPOSIT** required on Monday of the week of care.
- **BREAKFAST** served from **8:30 AM-9:30 AM**. Do **NOT** send in junk food (chips, cakes, cheese curls, hugs- all of which provide no nutrition- just sugar)
- **LATE FEES- \$15.00** for every **15 MINUTES**, or **\$1.00 per Minute**
- Children should wear **PLAY CLOTHES** and have an **EXTRA 2 SET** of clothing.
- Children must bring a **SHEET** and/or **NAP BLANKET** and it must be taken home **EACH FRIDAY** to be cleaned. This is a State regulation.
- We are mandated reporters of suspected **CHILD ABUSE**.
- Daycare regulations state that you are **NOT** allowed to use corporal punishment in this facility.
- Children are **NOT** allowed to be yelled at, hit, smacked or cursed to in this building.
- To **PREVENT** the spread of **germs/disease**, sick children are not permitted into the daycare. **ALL PERSONS, CHILDREN MUST WASH THEIR HANDS BEFORE ENTERING ANY CLASSROOM.**
- **YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED IN WRITING IF A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE** (Pink Eye, a Virus, Ring Worm, etc.) occurs in our facility.
- A **DOCTOR'S NOTE** is required for re-entry into program following a serious illness/condition.
- **INCIDENT REPORTS** will be written if your child gets hurt, shows signs of illness, is without extra clothes, or anytime we need to bring something of this nature to your attention. You will be asked to sign it as an indication that you have received the information.
- **POTTY TRAINING:** let us know we will work with you, 3 sets of clothes.
- Inclement **WEATHER:** We follow the Philadelphia School District's **CLOSING schedule**.