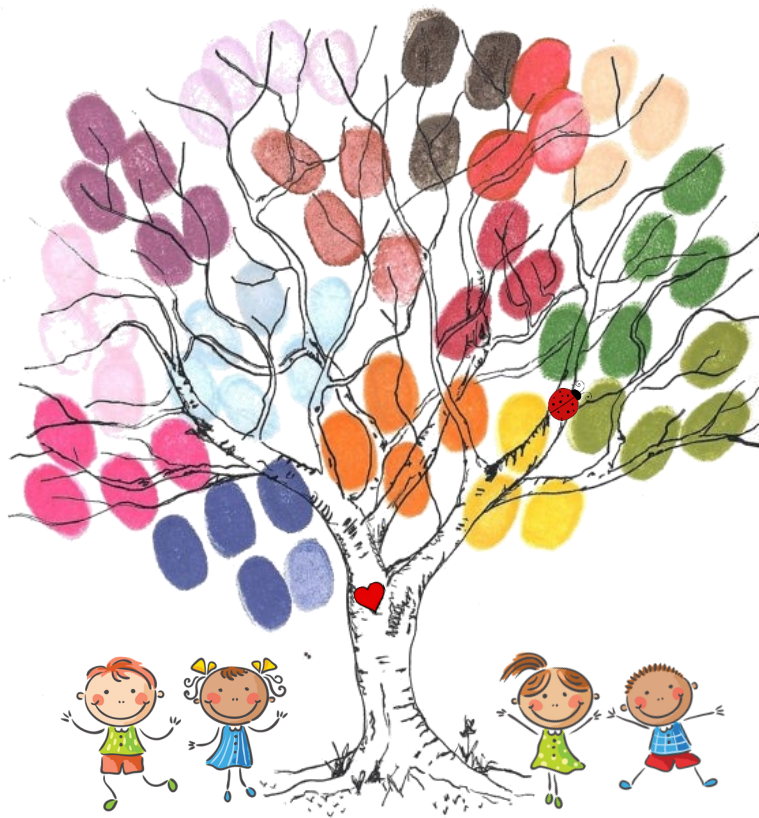


Westminster Learning Tree



Parent Handbook 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Westminster Learning Tree (Formerly Parents Day Out and Preschool) is an outreach ministry of Westminster Presbyterian Church. Our mission is to offer a safe, cheerful, nurturing place for young children while providing respite for their primary caregivers. We have a trained, committed staff that teaches the children the love and acceptance of God while respecting the spiritual tradition of each family.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that each child is a creature of God. Our program strives to enhance self-esteem, promote positive skills, and encourage the natural curiosity and creativity of each child. Attention to self-help skills contributes to a child's feelings of capability and independence. In this environment, children enjoy problem solving and feel free to take risks in their exploration of the world.

PROGRAM GOALS

State Licensed

Westminster Learning Tree (WLT) is a fully state licensed child care center providing care to children aged 6 weeks through 12 years and regulated by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Bureau of Child Care. A copy of the Missouri Statutes and Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers is available in the center office. A complete file pertaining to WLT is available at the Southwestern District office in Springfield. The phone number is 417-895-6541.

**All staff and volunteers of WLT are mandated reporters per state law.*

Early Childhood Practices

In addition to following state licensing regulations to ensure your child's health and safety, we follow the early childhood practices as recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These practices include creating curriculum to meet each child's developmental level. Your child's classroom may include the following centers: art, sensory, music, movement, reading/library, writing, math, science, blocks, and dramatic play. Academic concepts such as the alphabet, numbers, counting, shapes and colors are incorporated into the learning centers. Each child will have time to freely choose which center to participate in based on their individual interest. Your child will also participate in gross motor activities in our gym or on our playground.

Teachers use themes to develop lesson plans. Themes stimulate the child's interest by keeping fresh learning materials in the classroom. When teachers plan lessons, they consider each child's level of development in five key areas: spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. Teachers then set up a child-directed, integrated learning environment in the classroom. Each child's uniqueness is encouraged. Group activity times are also planned into each day. Children discover that learning can be fun!

Daily Schedules

Research shows that routines give children a sense of security. Children learn best when they are relaxed and feel safe. Therefore, each classroom follows an age appropriate daily schedule that is posted in each classroom.

Infants and toddlers (0-24 months) have a schedule to engage the children in creative activities. However, each infant's sleeping and feeding times determine when teachers should introduce other activities into the classroom. Toddlers enjoy interaction with their teacher through stories, finger plays, and songs. Outdoor play, lunch, and naps are also a part of their day.

Preschoolers (2-5 years) have a schedule that incorporates small and large group activities. Group activities teach children to be an integral part of community by learning to follow directions, follow rules, take turns, show and take responsibility, and respect adults and peers. Group activities also promote cognitive development in pre-reading, language, math, and science. These experiences are very important to your child's social development. Daily schedules also offer free choice play, learning centers, story time, music and movement, gross motor/outdoor play, and lunch.

ADMISSION

The following steps must be completed to enroll a child:

- 1) Participate in an interview with the Director to exchange information and arrive at a mutual decision about admitting the child- which includes a tour of the center.
- 2) Fully complete the enrollment form and submit the registration fee to reserve your child's space. Your child's start date will be determined at this time.
- 3) Complete any additional paperwork still needed prior to your child's first day of attendance. *Your child's immunization record must be submitted prior to their first day of attendance.
- 4) Complete the state-required medical examination form.

This form must be submitted within 30 days of your child's first day of care, per state Licensing regulations.

Tuitions

**See separate sheet for complete listing of tuition rates and (non-refundable) registration fees.*

**See also separate sheet for detailed tuition payment policy.*

Families with more than one child enrolled pay full price for the first child, but will receive a 10% discount for each additional enrolled child. If you refer a family that enrolls, you will receive a \$50 referral fee when they begin care. Tuition and fees are due and payable the first day of each month prior to care. Payments may be dropped off in the locked tuition box outside the WLT office. Payment is preferred through the 'brightwheel' childcare app, which provides online payment options. You will receive an invitation to join 'brightwheel' when your child has been entered into the system.

The full tuition payment is due regardless of the number of days your child is present as we maintain your child's space when not in class. Monthly fees are not reduced when the center is closed for holidays or inclement weather. August is a prorated month, due to the start of the school year. The first month of care will be prorated also, if applicable.

HOURS OF OPERATION and ATTENDANCE

Westminster Learning Tree is open Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 2:00pm. We offer 2, 3, 4 or 5 day schedules each week. We do require children attend a minimum of 2 days per week for a quality and rewarding preschool experience. Each classroom's curriculum and goals are designed to build on the prior classroom's curriculum and goals so that each child moves on from our program to kindergarten fully prepared.

WLT also offers AfterCare Monday through Friday from 2:00pm to 5:30pm. AfterCare is a separately scheduled/enrolled class open to families who need care after the preschool day ends. This program is a limited space program. It is not hourly or drop-off care.

On your child's first day of school, you will be provided with a security code to enter the building. We reserve the right to change to code at anytime during the school year... Safety first!

Drop off is from 9:00-9:10am and pick up is from 2:00-2:10pm. Pick up is before 5:30pm for AfterCare. Late pick up fees apply after 2:10pm and after 5:30pm.

Our yearly calendar roughly follows Springfield Public School's district calendar. If SPS are closed for inclement weather, we will also be closed for inclement weather. We do not dismiss early when SPS has a scheduled early dismissal day. Please also refer to the yearly (and summer) calendar provided at enrollment time. You can also view calendar announcements (and more!) via brightwheel.

Infant and Toddler Classes

For drop off and pick up, you must enter the building, bring your child downstairs, and take your child to their classroom. There will be a small form for you to complete about your child's previous night and morning to help us best plan their upcoming day. You must use your security code to enter the building each time.

2s Class, 3s Class, 4s Class and Pre-K Class

For drop off and pick up, you must enter the building, bring your child downstairs, and take your child to their classroom. If need to speak with your child's teacher, you may do so at this time. You may also message them via brightwheel. (If you would like a conference, please email the Director to set up a time.) You must use your security code to enter the building each time. Please make sure to check your child's cubby at each pick up time.

If the classroom door is closed when you arrive, please wait in the hall until the teacher opens it. The teachers prepare for the day's activities prior to class and would appreciate your patience. Likewise, please wait until the teacher opens the door at pickup time to ensure that all the day's activities are complete and all the children are ready to go.

**If someone else will be picking up your child, they MUST be registered in the office and show photo identification- no exceptions to this rule will be granted to ensure your child's safety.*

Withdrawal and Discharge

If it becomes necessary to withdraw your child(ren) from the center, please give a minimum two week notice. This notice makes the transition easier for everyone. We will also work with you in every way we can to remedy any problems that might arise. If efforts are unsuccessful, the director reserves the right to follow through with discharge. If at all possible, you will be given notice in order to make other arrangements.

Late Pick Up Fee

Children must be picked up by 2:10pm from the preschool day or by 5:30pm for AfterCare. This is very important as teachers have duties and responsibilities required of them prior to their day being complete. We ask you to please respect their time.

The late pick up fee is \$1 per minute for each minute you are late will be charged to your account. Staff will notify the Director of any late pickups.

Yearly Enrollment

Currently enrolled children and their siblings will have the first opportunity to claim classroom spaces for the upcoming summer camp and next school year. Families on the waiting list will have the next opportunity. (Westminster Church families do receive priority on waiting lists.) Families are wait listed in chronological order by the date of their first inquiry. Both summer and fall enrollment periods occur at the same time, and enrollment information will be available by the last week of March of each year. Children are placed in upcoming classes in the order completed enrollment information is received. Please see the Director if you have any further questions about yearly or future enrollments, or wait lists.

SUMMER CAMP

Our summer program is called "Camp West" and accepts children aged 6 weeks - 5 years, just as we do during the school year. We also have the ability to add a school age classroom for children aged kindergarten-12 years. This is a great opportunity for older siblings to attend the same program as younger siblings. It is also an opportunity for WLT graduates to return. Our goal is to meet for a minimum of 8 weeks each summer, and camp will be scheduled similarly to SPS summer classes. Enrollment information for "Camp West," will be available each year by the end of March. Please see the Director if you have any further questions about summer enrollments.

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

Our center does practice the "safe sleep" recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Consumer Product Safety Commission in our Infant classroom— per state licensing regulations. A complete description of this policy is provided to all infant parents for their acknowledgement and signature prior to their child's first day of attendance. State regulations also require all staff, regardless of age taught, to participate in Safe Sleep training every 3 years.

**An infant is defined as a child aged 12 months or younger.*

**For more information, you can visit www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS.*

**See also: Children's Personal Needs— Infants and Toddlers*

COMMUNICATION

We must be partners to best benefit your child's development and growth, so communication is essential to our center-parent relationship. We encourage you to express any comments, suggestions or concerns you have regarding your child's experiences here at WLT. Likewise, we will discuss any concerns with you that we have regarding your child. We will also utilize various means to help us accomplish effective communication including brightwheel messaging, texts, emails, calendars, notes, and conferences. Please remember to view our private parent Facebook page as well.

MEALS

Menus (and AfterCare snacks) are provided by WLT via nutritional guidelines and serving sizes in the Missouri state licensing regulations, and will be posted in 'brightwheel' daily. It is also a state licensing regulation that all children receive the same meal (all plates of food must match). Therefore, if your child has a food allergy or reason to be served alternative foods (milks included), there must be a note from their doctor on file stating the allergy. If the food allergies require that you must bring your child's lunch, the note from the doctor must specifically state that as necessary. Birthday treats and party treats are the only allowed exception, and such treats must be commercially prepared to be allowed into the center. (NO peanuts please!) Infant and toddler classes will have snack times based on their own schedules and children's needs, whereas AfterCare children will receive a full snack daily prior to their naps.

**If alternative food needs are for religious reasons, please see the Director.*

PERSONAL TOYS

Toddlers (12-24 Months)

Please do not bring personal toys to the center. Toddlers are too young to fully understand the concept of sharing and personal toys tend to create conflict.

Preschoolers (2-5 Years)

Please do not allow your child to bring personal toys to the center UNLESS the teacher has specifically scheduled a "Show N Tell" sharing time for your child. In this case, your child will be asked to leave their toy in their backpack until the designated time. Please avoid toys that foster aggression, and under NO circumstances are toy weapons of any kind allowed in the center. We would suggest stuffed animals; favorite books or music; pictures of family, vacations, or pets; etc. This type of sharing promotes language development and positive emotional growth. We will do all we can to see that these items are cared for, but WLT is not responsible if these items are lost or broken.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

We know how very important families are to the education of children! We invite parents and extended family to participate in the various functions we have each year including open houses, holiday programs, grandparent days, birthdays, etc. There may also be specific things your classroom teacher would like family members to help with such as read or tell stories, share a craft or cooking experience, share cultural events, share your area of expertise, etc. Please let your child's teacher of your talents! We welcome your suggestions also!

CHILDREN'S PERSONAL NEEDS

Infants-Toddlers (0-24 Months)

You are responsible for providing disposable diapers and disposable wipes. Diaper creams and powders need also be provided, if desired, but cannot be applied without a signed Medical Authorization form. This also applies to teething medicines (please refer to the medicine section). Any baby foods and/or formulas needed must also be provided for your child's use. Plastic containers only are allowed into the classroom, no glass. Any pacifiers used at school cannot have clips, "leashes" or stuffed animals attached. Lastly, TWO complete extra changes of clothing are also required.

2-3 Years

You are responsible for providing disposable diapers, training pants, and disposable wipes. For children this age, TWO complete changes of clothing are required. We recommend placing each set in a Ziploc-style baggie with your child's name clearly written on the outside. Please dress your child in play clothes as the children will engage in hands-on, "messy" activities while in class. We do use vinyl aprons/paint shirts, but sometimes children will still get paint, markers, etc., on their clothes. Please have your child wear closed toe, appropriately fitted shoes.

4-5 Years

Please dress your child in play clothes. The children will engage in hands-on, "messy" activities while in class. We use vinyl aprons/paint shirts, but sometimes children will still get paint, markers, etc., on their clothes. For children this age, ONE complete change of clothing be left in class. We recommend placing the clothes in a Ziploc-style baggie with your child's name clearly written on the outside. Please have your child wear closed toe, appropriately fitted shoes.

Backpacks and Bags

The children should have a backpack or bag to transport all of their papers, projects, artwork, etc. We ask that it be full size, as the smaller toddler-sized ones do not often allow such treasures to be transported without damage. Also, any items brought in that require a signed Medical Authorization form MUST be given to the TEACHER. These items must NOT be left in the backpack/bag. This can include medicines, lotions, teething ointments, etc. This is a state licensing regulation as other children passing in the halls could come in contact with these items.

Sunscreen

If you want sunscreen applied to your child, you will need to provide it and sign a Medication Authorization form. The container must be clearly labeled with your child's full name.

HEALTH and EMERGENCIES

The state requires TWO medical forms for enrollment. The first is a copy of your child's immunization record. It must be on file BEFORE your child can attend. The second is a medical examination report that must be completed by your child's doctor (the center will provide the required form) and is due within 30 days of your child's first day of attendance.

If you need staff to administer medication to your child (this includes sunscreens, lotions, diaper creams, teething ointments, etc.), you must fill out and sign a Medication Authorization form for EACH medication. Prescription medication MUST be in the original container and clearly labeled with your child's first and last name, instructions for administration- including times and amounts of dosages, and the physician's name. All non-prescription medication must be in the original container and clearly labeled with the child's first and last name and instructions for administration- including times and amounts of dosages. (WLT staff cannot determine times and dosages of medications for your child. You will need to fill out this section of the form with specific instructions. "As needed" is not acceptable.)

You will be contacted if signs of illness are observed. If your child should exhibit one of the following symptoms, they must be sent home: fever over 100 degrees on the forehead (or 99 degrees under the arm), vomiting more than once, diarrhea more than once, difficult or rapid breathing, yellowish skin or eyes, ANY type of eye discharge, unusual spots or rashes, sore throat or trouble swallowing, an infected skin patch, dark or tea-colored urine, grey or white stool, headache with stiff neck, or severe itching of the body or scalp.

If your child has been ill, they must be free of all symptoms for 24 hours without the aid of medication before being allowed back into care. This is for the health of ALL our children and staff. **If the illness is pink eye, due to its extremely contagious nature, your child will need to be on medication for a full 48 hours prior to being accepted back into care. No exceptions.**

If your child has been exposed to a contagious disease, please notify us so we can inform other parents. Likewise, you will be notified if other children in our care have potentially exposed your child to a contagious disease.

If your child has an accident while in our care, you will be notified immediately. You will receive a written accident report, and a copy of that report will be placed in your child's file. If your child requires emergency medical care, we will follow the written instructions that you provided at the time of enrollment. If emergency/medical information should change, you will need to notify the WLT office immediately.

Emergency Plan

State licensing regulations require all fully licensed centers to have an emergency plan on file. This plan is to ensure each center is ready in case of an emergency that would require the children to be sheltered on-site OR off-site for extended periods of time. We have food and activities stored and ready should we need to remain in our building, and we have 3 off-site locations within walking distance should we need to evacuate the building. There is a complete copy of the emergency plan in each classroom, the center kitchen, and the center office. All teachers have been trained and know what to do to carry out the varying aspects of the plan. We also have battery powered walkies in each room, the center kitchen, and the center office to ensure staff have the means to communicate in an emergency. If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to ask.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our goal is to assist your child in making good decisions that lead toward independence, personal responsibility, and self-control while respecting the uniqueness of each child. We accomplish this through redirection and positive reinforcement. Teachers will get down on the child's level and speak politely and directly to the child. Children will receive positive reinforcement for good choices. Children will receive appropriate consequences for poor choices. Time-outs can be used after redirection combined with allowing children "take a break" to breathe, refocus, and/or reflect. (Time out can be used sooner if appropriate.) It will also be of short duration (one minute for every year of age once the child has calmed and when possible, accompanied by a visible timer for the child to track their progress). The WLT office may also be used for short breaks or time outs, as well as positive reinforcement. Simply allowing the children to step away from the classroom to for a few moments can be extremely beneficial for them. We will communicate with you if we have a behavioral concern with your child. Together, we will strive to find a good solution.

All preschool classrooms are also designed with "quiet cubes" stocked with calming and quiet activities for children to use at their discretion. During classroom activities, staff will also encourage use of the "quiet cubes."

Under no circumstances will corporal punishment be used. We do not use discipline practices that humiliate, threaten, or frighten a child. Children are not shamed, ridiculed, or spoken to with profanity.

CONCEALED WEAPON LAW

You cannot have/carry a concealed weapon on the premises of Westminster Presbyterian Church (even if you have a permit) without consent from the Session and Pastor. If you do not have a permit, it is illegal to carry a concealed weapon. Thank you for your cooperation.