



Little Explorers Preschool
PARENT HANDBOOK
2023-2024 School Year

WELCOME!

Dear Parents, Guardians & Other Classroom Volunteers,

Thank you for choosing Little Explorers Preschool for your little explorer! We are so thrilled to have the opportunity to be a part of your child's growth and early interest in learning.

In this Handbook, you will find detailed information on our curriculum, the cooperative aspect of our program, parent involvement requirements and expectations, school policies and procedures, classroom setup and tips on working with children, tuition and financial assistance, and more. We ask that all parents, guardians, and others who will be volunteering in the classroom this year read the Handbook thoroughly and sign the Parent Handbook Agreement.

If you have further questions or concerns after reviewing the Handbook, please feel free to discuss them with your child's teacher or contact our Director, Amy Whalen, or our Board President, Brittany Blakesly. See directory.

We look forward to having a wonderful year with your child, full of joy, laughter, play-based learning, and exploration!

Best,

The LEP Team

NOTE: For simplicity, we use the term "parent" throughout the handbook. However, we understand that families can be much more diverse than this. In our handbook, "parent" also refers to a child's guardian(s), other main caregivers, or any adult who may fulfill the cooperative elements of our program, such as parent volunteer days. Please share this handbook with any other adult who may be involved in your child's education at LEP. These may include, but are not limited to, nannies and sitters, grandparents and other family, and close family friends.

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ABOUT LITTLE EXPLORERS PRESCHOOL

1. Mission Statement

Little Explorers Preschool (LEP) engages teachers, parents and children in an educational, child-centered, play-based cooperative environment specifically designed to cultivate a child's natural excitement for learning.

2. Aims & Objectives

Our program is flexible and encourages independence yet is structured around a few well-defined routines and rules. Our goal is to develop positive social skills by helping each child to be resourceful, so that he or she can work or play alone or with other children. Our program helps children to increase their understanding of self, other people, and the world around them. We strive to cultivate joyful, active learners who become confident and ethical citizens.

3. What is a *Cooperative Preschool*?

In a cooperative preschool, parents actively contribute to the educational program through their commitment, talents, and skills. The cooperative aspect of LEP is designed to enrich the preschool experience for parents, teachers, and children by laying a groundwork of parental involvement in each child's budding educational career and by ensuring the smooth operation of a high quality program. Through consistent involvement in your child's education, you can learn a great deal about your child and how to better meet their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Parents are required to participate in the classroom as a parent volunteer and are encouraged to participate in committees, fundraisers, and any other preschool happenings. Parents are also welcome to join our Board of Directors!

4. Board of Directors

LEP is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors that plays a huge role in helping our school run smoothly. Board meetings are held each month, August through May, and are open to all current parents or guardians. If you wish to be added to the agenda or are interested in serving on the Board, please contact the Board President.

Amy Whalen, Director | 360-239-1432 | littleexplorerscody@gmail.com
Brittany Blakesley, President | 307-254-0106 | brittanyblakesley@gmail.com
Allie Ashworth, Vice President | 630-442-9014 | allieashworth23@gmail.com
Sarah Chadd, Alumni Rep | 307-272-8999 | sarahchadd315@gmail.com
Hailey Hauck, Treasurer | 307-262-9671 | hauck.hailey@gmail.com
Secretary | Brianne Phillips | 307-899-5383 | briannecphillips@gmail.com
Members at Large: Shirley Garbush, Kelly Phillips

5. Teachers & Staff

The LEP team includes four teachers and one teacher/director. There is no front-desk secretary at our school. Aside from working with your children, our teachers handle all lesson planning, classroom arranging, curriculum development, etc. Our director is in charge of student enrollment and other administrative duties.

Amy Whalen, Director & 3-Day Teacher | 360-239-1432 | littleexplorerscody@gmail.com

Katie Dollard, 2-Day Teacher | 530-250-7799 | katharinees@gmail.com

Bailey Herritage, 2-Day Teacher | 214-914-6778 | herritage2019@gmail.com

Hannah Goodwin, 3-Day Teacher | 307-254-4121 | hannahsmaddox@gmail.com

Danielle Blankenship, 4-Day Teacher | 307-250-1070 | danielle.ondler@hotmail.com

CURRICULUM

1. The Creative Curriculum

The educational foundation of LEP is The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool. This comprehensive, research-based curriculum features exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. This curriculum guides our *play-based* environment and helps our teachers plan and implement a quality, content-rich preschool program for our students (source: Teaching Strategies). And, the most exciting part for our little explorers is that they get to play and explore while learning and growing!

The daily schedule of each class includes whole group activities, circle time, learning center time, snack, and outdoor/gross motor playtime. The LEP classroom is equipped with a variety of learning centers, including art, a building table, a sensory table, dramatic play, unit blocks and puzzles, and language and literacy.

2. Zoo Phonics & Handwriting Without Tears

We also draw from the Zoo-phonics® and Handwriting Without Tears® curricula, which are used in our local public school district. We have found that incorporating these into our program helps better prepare our students for language and literacy learning in Kindergarten and beyond because the techniques and skills are familiar.

The Zoo-phonics® Multisensory Language Arts Program is a kinesthetic, multi-modal approach to learning all aspects of language arts, including vocabulary development and articulation, based on phonics and phonemic awareness (source: Zoo Phonics).

The Handwriting Without Tears® curriculum provides developmentally appropriate, multisensory strategies for early writing. Through playing, singing, and building letters, students develop the important skills they need to print words. Lessons address grip, letter and number recognition, and capital and number formation (source: Learning Without Tears).

For more information, check out these resources:

- The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool
<https://teachingstrategies.com/solutions/teach/preschool/>
- Zoo-phonics®
<https://zoo-phonics.com/>
- Handwriting Without Tears®
<https://www.lwtears.com/hwt>

3. Benefits of Our Curriculum & Play-Based Program

- Sets the stage for abundant sensory experiences.
- Provides many opportunities for self-selected learning activities, especially of the manipulative, experimental, and imaginative type.
- Directs children to learning opportunities they may otherwise miss.
- Helps children develop self-confidence and self-esteem, curiosity, the ability to cooperate with peers and adults, eagerness to ask and answer questions, and the ability to use materials appropriately and creatively.
- Emphasizes the development of language and literacy skills, mathematical and scientific thinking, and an understanding of social studies through play-based activities, learning centers, lessons, stories, songs, and field trips.
- Encourages children to use toys, other play accessories, conversations, and art materials to symbolize their experiences and thoughts.
- Encourages language development and communication by giving children opportunities to express themselves and interact with others both verbally and non-verbally.
- Provides opportunities for children to spend time in the community by taking learning off-site once a month with LEP on the Move.
- Ensures that children are well-prepared for Kindergarten by helping them develop an initial love of learning and equipping them with the tools to be confident and competent learners as they grow.

4. 10 Signs of a Great Preschool

If your child is between ages 3 and 6 and attends a childcare center, preschool, or Kindergarten program, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) suggests that you should look for these 10 signs to make sure your child is in a good learning environment.

- Children spend most of their time playing and working with materials or other children. They do not wander aimlessly, and they are not expected to sit quietly for long periods of time.
- Children have access to various activities throughout the day. Look for assorted building blocks and other construction materials, props for pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards, and puzzles. Children should rarely all be doing the same thing at the same time.
- Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend all their time with the whole group.
- The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.

- Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. The natural world of plants and animals and meaningful activities like cooking, checking the weather, or serving snacks provide a basis for learning activities.
 - Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Worksheets are used little if at all.
 - Children have an opportunity to play outside every day, weather permitting. Outdoor play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
 - Adults read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group story time.
 - Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children's different backgrounds and experiences mean that they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way.
 - Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel secure about sending their child to the program. Children are happy to attend.
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LEP POLICIES & PROCEDURES

IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to COVID-19, some of the information in this handbook may be subject to change. We will keep you abreast of any important changes to our policies and procedures as they arise. Thanks in advance for your flexibility and patience!

1. COVID-19 Safety Protocol

In the event that COVID-19 is again on the rise, we may have to implement a more detailed COVID-19 Safety Protocol. We have worked closely with public health and our licensor to build our plan and ensure that our classrooms and facilities are safe for our students. While we don't currently have to require masking and can allow parent helpers into the classroom, we may have to revert back to some of these practices if the COVID-19 situation changes. We will monitor the situation closely and will update you regularly throughout the year.

For reference, below is the COVID-19 Safe Start Plan we implemented at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. We continue to follow aspects of this plan, including but not limited to: having a deep-clean custodian maintain our facilities, always encouraging good hygiene, maintaining distance when possible, and having our classrooms set up in a way that reduces germ-spread.

*** COVID-19 Safe Start Plan from the 2020-2021 School Year. We may have to go back to some of these practices if the need arises.*

- *No Parent Helpers: While we are a cooperative preschool and parent volunteering is the cornerstone of our program, we will not be able to have parents volunteer in our classrooms at this time. This may be subject to change during the school year, but, for now, this measure will also help reduce the number of people who enter the building and classrooms.*
- *Check-In: We will be checking student and staff temperatures and symptoms before entering the classroom each day. If fever or other symptoms of illness are detected, the student or staff member will not be able to attend school.*

- *Drop-Off and Pick-Up: We will not have parents enter the classrooms to drop off or pick up children. We will greet children at drop-off in a designated "kiss-and-go" lane outside of the building to reduce the number of people who enter the building and classrooms. We will do something similar for dismissal/pick-up.*
- *Classroom Re-Do: We are completely restructuring our classrooms to reduce cross-contamination of sensory table items, shared supplies, etc.*
 - *Students will each have their own school supplies and designated cubbies to reduce the likelihood of contamination from sharing.*
- *Custodial: We will have a designated custodian assisting us with deep-cleaning our rooms and sterilizing manipulatives and other play-based learning materials after each class.*
 - *Students will be able to place used toys and manipulatives in a designated "used" bin for immediate or after-class cleaning.*
- *Hygiene: We are installing a new hand washing station in one of our classrooms, in order to make hand washing more accessible.*
 - *We will have each student wash or sanitize hands upon entering the classroom, before/after snack, before/after recess and centers, and as needed throughout the day.*
 - *We will lead by example and regularly remind all students to practice good hygiene at school and beyond, such as washing and sanitizing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, keeping hands off of face and out of mouth and nose, etc.*
- *Face Coverings: Our teachers will wear face shields or masks at school when social distancing cannot be easily maintained. Students will not be required to wear masks at school at this time. However, if public health later requires our students to wear face coverings, we will have special face shields for them. Face shields are plastic full-face coverings that allow for the face and mouth to be fully visible. This will help ensure that early language learning and communication will not be inhibited. We will notify you of any changes to masking requirements ahead of time.*
- *Compliance: We will be complying with and following the guidance of Park County Public Health, Wyoming Public Health, and state licensing on all of the above and any other public health requirements and recommendations that come up. We will keep you abreast of changes as they arise.*

2. Health & Safety

All adults are responsible for the safety of the children. Please be alert to any possible dangers or hazards and remedy them immediately or report them to the teacher. If you see any broken or unsafe toys or equipment, remove them and tell the teacher. If you see unsafe behavior, stop it immediately and then discuss it with the child. A first aid kit is available in the kitchen area of the Centers Room and above the white shelf in the Blue Room. Emergency contact names and phone numbers for each child are posted in the kitchen area of the Centers Room and near the door in the Blue Room. Parents need to remember to update this information immediately if changes occur.

- LEP does not administer medication. Emergency medication can be administered by a trained staff member only.
- Parents will be responsible for notifying LEP of any known allergies or health issues and a specific plan will be developed for the specific need of that child. All staff working with that child will be informed of the health care plan.
- LEP does not use swimming or wading pools.
- LEP does not have weapons on the premises.
- LEP does not provide sleeping or napping.
- LEP does not provide transportation.
- LEP does not have animals or pets living on the premises.
- LEP does not provide infant care.

3. Snack Guidelines & Nut-Free Policy

Some of our students have allergies ranging from minor to life-threatening. Your child's teacher will make you aware of any allergies in the class. Due to the severity of nut allergies, in particular, we have established a strict Nut-Free Policy. We ask that snacks or lunches brought to and eaten at LEP contain NO peanuts or tree nuts. This includes the following:

- Peanuts, almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts, etc.
- Any homemade food item that contains added nuts
- Any packaged food item that has nuts listed in the ingredients or says one of these on the label:
 - "May contain peanuts or tree nuts."
 - "Made on equipment that also processes peanuts or tree nuts."
 - "Processed in a facility that also processes peanuts or tree nuts."
- Any food cooked in peanut oil or another nut oil
- Any food that has come into contact with nuts during preparation, storage, or transportation

Visit littleexplorerscody.org/parents for a list of nut-free snack ideas. If your child has any allergies or other medical concerns, please list them on your child's medical information form and notify your child's teacher. Please also provide an EpiPen with a doctor's prescription if your child needs one.

4. Emergency Procedure

Each class will hold an emergency fire drill monthly. In the event of a real emergency evacuation, students and teachers will meet in the grassy area underneath the trees across from the playground. In the event of a catastrophic occurrence, the secondary pick-up point will be Cody High School. Reunification of children will be at the designated safe area by contacting parents by phone. Students will only be released to parents or emergency contacts that have been provided by parents, the person picking up will need to bring identification if the staff does not know them.

5. Accident Procedure

Practice Prevention: The main thing we can do to prevent an accident at school is to keep a watchful eye on the children. Be sure to intervene to stop unsafe behavior. If you are unsure whether an activity is unsafe, err on the side of caution and then discuss with the teacher and other parent helpers. As a diverse group of adults, we may all differ in our comfort level with children's risk taking and our definition of what is unsafe. However, we need to respect each other's viewpoints and work together to ensure the children's safety.

Report Any Accident to the Teacher: Parents who witness an accident are to report all details immediately to the teacher. This holds true even if you and the teacher both witness, as the accident vantage points and perceptions of what happened often differ. Parents are responsible for informing the teacher fully, and the teacher is responsible for soliciting all necessary information in order to make the best possible decision regarding the child's care. It is the teacher's responsibility to determine the course of action, using her judgment on a case-by-case basis.

Call the Child's Parents: Immediately upon learning of a child's serious injury or medical condition, the teacher will turn over the direction of the class to a parent helper. The teacher will then stay with the child until the arrival of a parent, emergency contact, or medical personnel. The parent helper will call the child's parents or emergency contacts, if necessary, and then pull the child's emergency information sheet from the file so it is ready if needed. If the parents or emergency contacts cannot be reached, the parent helper will contact the child's physician and follow his or her instructions. This may include transporting the child to an emergency room or a doctor's office.

When to Call 9-1-1: The teacher will call 9-1-1 under the following circumstances or others deemed life-threatening: seizures, respiratory distress (blue around lips, unresolved choking), anaphylaxis, cardiovascular event (no breathing, no heartbeat), head injury with altered consciousness, or other major traumas. Other accidents for which parents will be called (but not 9-1-1) include: apparent broken bones, head injury without loss of consciousness, severe cuts, bleeding or bruising, fainting, rapid or labored breathing, severe wheezing, minor allergic reactions, and other situations deemed serious by the teacher.

Accident Report: In the case of serious accidents (requiring immediate and/or subsequent medical attention), an accident report is to be filled out as soon as possible by the teacher, with input from the parent helper as a witness as needed. A copy will be given to the child's parents and will be placed in the child's file in the classroom.

For minor accidents (scratches, slivers, bumps, etc.), the teacher will give the parent an informal verbal report at pick-up time, with further discussion later if needed. Parent helpers are encouraged to assist the teacher in the informal reporting, especially if they were the main witness or chief comforter after the incident.

6. Illness Policy & Guidelines

In order to protect the health of all children and staff attending school, LEP follows illness guidelines from the State of Wyoming and Centers for Disease Control, which define the conditions that should keep a child home from school. A child or teacher is considered "sick" and should not attend school if he or she exhibits one or more of the following symptoms:

- A **temperature** of 100 degrees or higher that occurred within the past 24 hours. The child should be kept out of school for at least 24 hours after they are fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- **Vomiting** or **diarrhea** that has occurred within the past 24 hours.
- **Feeling too ill** to come to school or remain in class.
- **Uncontrolled cough.**
- **Strep throat.** The child may return to school 24 hours after starting an antibiotic.
- **Pink Eye** with thick white or yellow drainage and eye pain. An exam by a doctor is recommended. The child may return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotic drops.
- A **rash** that has not been identified and treated.
- **Head lice.** We have a "no-nit" policy, which means that any student with active head lice and/or nits (lice eggs) will be sent home from school.
- **Pain** that requires a narcotic/controlled medication for relief. If necessary, please discuss the management of chronic pain with your child's teacher.

Please also pay special attention to symptoms of COVID-19 and keep your child home if you suspect that he or she has the virus. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

A child suffering from the common cold may attend school if he or she is able to participate in the activities planned for the day, including outdoor play. If you choose to send your child to school with minor cold symptoms, please also send your child with a mask to reduce the spread of cold germs to other students.

LEP staff can determine at any time before or during class that a child is too ill to attend. A child who is presumed healthy upon arrival but later exhibits signs of illness will be separated from the group while his or her parents are contacted. Parents are responsible for having their child picked up immediately.

7. Non-Discrimination Policy

LEP admits students of any race, color, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, and gender to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. LEP does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, or gender in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial assistance program, and other school-administered programs.

Children with disabilities are welcome. Due to licensing requirements, parents of children with disabilities who have additional classroom needs may be required to provide a suitable companion for their child at school. As a non-profit private school, LEP does not have the budget to provide such a companion.

8. Grievance Procedure

Although it is rarely used, the grievance procedure is an important part of our communication system. In general, any concerns should always be raised directly with the individual. If you have an issue with or a suggestion regarding school administration or policy, please contact the LEP Board President. If you have an issue with or a suggestion regarding the curriculum or management of the classroom, please contact your child's teacher and/or the director.

If direct contact proves unsatisfactory, you should bring your concerns, suggestions, or ideas in writing to the LEP Board of Directors. The Board meets monthly. Contact the President if you wish to be placed on the agenda. If it appears that resolution of any issue may require it, an outside facilitator can be called on for assistance.

9. Guidance, Discipline & Expulsion Policy

LEP uses a proactive and positive approach to guidance and discipline. Our teachers and staff use methods that are developmentally appropriate, such as redirection, natural and logical consequences, modeling of positive behavior and other non-violent, non-abusive methods of discipline.

- When a time out is used it shall enable a safe space for the child to regain control of themselves, shall keep the teacher in visual contact at all times, and be a last resort technique for a child who is harming themselves or others. It shall be used infrequently and for brief periods of time using 1 minute per each year of the child's age.
- LEP will never allow punishment associated with food, rest, or toileting, rough handling of children (spanking, pushing, pinching), or inappropriate use of language. We do not tolerate any form of humiliation, emotional maltreatment, or confining or restraining a child as a form of punishment.
- Teachers will be solely responsible for the guidance and discipline of students.

Expulsion Policy: Occasionally a situation may arise in which a child is having difficulty adjusting to day-to-day life at preschool. This can lead to having a child removed from the classroom or facility. Our teachers work diligently to avoid these circumstances. In order to prevent a suspension or expulsion from happening at LEP, our teachers are committed to the following:

- Creating a positive environment to nurture self expression and opportune learning.
- Modeling positive behaviors to ensure children are treated with respect and kindness.
- Be consistent and clear with expectations and rules of the classroom.
- Use redirection and positive guidance and praise appropriate behaviors.

If a child is having a difficult time maintaining appropriate behaviors in the classroom the following steps will be taken:

- Thorough account of the child and teacher's actions will be documented and shared with parent/guardian.
- Parent/guardians will be notified of disruptive behaviors and a conference will be scheduled to discuss improving behaviors.
- Local resources such as developmental screening opportunities, mental health consultants, and behavior specialists will be shared during the conference.
- Teacher and parent/guardian will develop a plan of improvement to help improve the child's behaviors.
- If there is no improvement in the child's behavior after these steps have been taken, parent/guardian will be advised in writing about the parent or child's behavior warranting an expulsion. The length of expulsion will be provided and the expected behavior changes required in order for the child or parent to return to LEP will be discussed, documented, and shared with parent/guardian.

10. Department of Family Services

Through the Wyoming Department of Family Services, you may obtain inspection reports and complaint and compliance history. You may also take any complaints or concerns to the Department of Family Services.

Park County Department of Family Services (Cody)
 1501 Stampede Avenue, Suite 2095
 Cody, WY 82414
 307-587-6246

PARENT INVOLVEMENT & EXPECTATIONS

1. Parent Help Days

Requirements: Parent involvement at LEP is the cornerstone of our program. Parents and guardians are required to participate in the classroom as volunteers a certain number of times per semester, usually once per month, depending on their child's class. Nannies, sitters, grandparents, or other family members or close friends are also welcome to volunteer in place of a parent on any or all help days. Any person who wishes to volunteer in the classroom must read this handbook, attend fall orientation, and complete a background check. Parents will sign up for their fall semester help days at orientation.

We strongly encourage fathers or other male role models to assist in the classroom on help days or at any other time that is convenient. Even a half-hour visit is welcome. Younger and older siblings or children may NOT accompany an adult on help days, as this may interfere with the helper's ability to fully participate with the class. Helpers should arrive at least 10 minutes before class begins to receive instruction and prepare and plan to stay for an extra 10 minutes after class to help with a quick classroom cleanup.

Trading Days or Finding a Substitute: It is your responsibility to trade days with another parent or find a substitute if you cannot make it on your help day. It is very important that you keep track of the days you signed up for and attend when you're on the schedule. Your child's teacher relies on parent assistance every day and may need to cancel class if a helper fails to show up. **Failure to show up or find a replacement will result in a \$35.00 charge.** If, due to unforeseen circumstances, you are repeatedly unable to fulfill your parent volunteer obligation, please contact your child's teacher to present the matter to the LEP Board of Directors.

Bringing a Snack: The helper is required to bring a healthy snack for the entire class on their scheduled help days. This may not apply to the 4-day class, as students may bring their own lunches. Healthy, nut-free snacks such as sliced fruit, cut veggies, cheese, crackers, meat slices, and the like are preferred. It helps to bring items from at least two food groups like cheese sticks and oranges or crackers and meat. Birthdays are special and we look forward to celebrating them during the year, but we ask that birthday sweets are kept small. And, while we encourage students

to try everything, we do not force them to eat their snack. Water, cups, plates, and napkins are provided at school.

2. Committees & Parent Sharing

While we always encourage parents and families to attend preschool-related fundraisers, performances, and activities, parents are only *required* to serve on one preschool committee during the year, ranging from helping to organize one of our annual fundraisers to baking for events. Parents will sign up for a committee role at orientation. Only one parent or adult from each family is required to sign up, but more volunteers are always welcome!

We also encourage parents to share their unique insights, skills, talents, and careers in the classroom to help broaden our students' exposure to the world-at-large. If you have traveled extensively, consider bringing in your pictures and stories. If you are a yoga instructor, photographer, musician, farmer, police officer, or baker, consider sharing what you do with our students. If you speak another language or enjoy reading aloud, come help us learn!

3. Parent Expectations

Cubbies & Hallway: Be sure to check your child's cubby, mailbox, and backpack every day for artwork, school information, etc. If you are carpooling, check all the cubbies of children you are driving. Also, be sure to check the bulletin boards every time you are in school, and relay urgent information to the other parents. When talking to the other parents at drop-off or pick-up, please do so outside of the classroom so that class procedures are not interrupted.

Parent-Teacher Conferences & Communication: Parent-teacher conferences will be held twice during the year in the fall and spring. This is an opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss a child's "glows" and "grows," to set goals, to talk about the preschool experience, and to cover anything else as needed. However, conferences alone don't allow parents and teachers enough time to establish the kind of teamwork that is so important to a child's development. So, we encourage parents to maintain strong communication with their child's teacher by regularly touching base, asking questions, and making sure the teacher is aware of anything important like illnesses, changes at home, vacations, etc.

4. Working with Children in the Classroom

Little Explorers Classroom Management Philosophy We believe it is vital for young children to have clear, consistent, and appropriate limits on behavior. We are committed to developing a positive sense of self-esteem and encouraging independent, responsible and caring behavior on the part of the children. We approach setting limits or discipline in a predictable manner with inner discipline as our primary objective. Positive redirection and guided problem solving are our first courses of action. At times, a child will need to be removed from a situation until he or she feels ready to participate in an appropriate matter. Staff/Teachers will be responsible for discipline and guidance of all students.

Classroom Rules

- Children may not harm themselves or others.
- Children may not destroy materials.
- Children need to participate in classroom clean-up at the end of Center Time.
- Children may not engage in weapon play.

Guidelines for Parents Assisting Students in the Classroom Learning Centers

Imagination Station & Floor Games/Puzzles

- Encourage the children to work quietly alone or in a small group. Honor a child's need to play with a toy alone if he or she prefers.
- Help a child who wants to play with an unavailable toy find another toy or activity. Assure the child that he or she will get a turn later and make sure they do.
- Facilitate cooperative play: "I wonder if there's a way you can do it together?" Table toys may also be used on a rug nearby to allow for more room to play.
- Allow the creative and imaginative use of toys beyond their normal use (except as weapons).
- Children should return table toys, games, puzzles, and other toys to the shelf after use.
- Discourage children from randomly dumping toys onto the floor.

Art Center

- Assist children in putting on paint smocks/shirts. If a child doesn't want to wear a smock, try offering options like: "Would you like to wear the red or blue smock?" This is more likely to help than giving an ultimatum.
- Display an interest in the children's work, but do not ask what they have made. Young children are often more involved in the process than the product. You might say, "Tell me about your picture," or "I like the colors you are using."
- Encourage children to leave used brushes and art utensils in the correct container when they're finished. Children should put away their smocks and wash and dry their hands.
- Do not paint pictures for children. This discourages their creativity, as they cannot imitate your models.
- Encourage children to use small amounts of glue, but realize that there is a fascination with squeezing and that it takes time to learn. "Dot, dot, not a lot" is a fun and gentle reminder.
- If the child wishes, after you write their name on their work, you may label paintings or write comments made by the child. Older children may want to write their own names.

Sensory Table

- Encourage children to keep water, sand, rice, and other sensory materials inside the table.
- Assist children when sweeping or mopping spills. The floor gets very slippery when wet or covered with cornmeal or other materials.

Dramatic Play Area

- You may facilitate play by supplying needed props or making suggestions when you sense the play breaking down, but then withdraw and let the children play out their own themes.
- Children may need help putting on or taking off costumes. Encourage children to take turns with dramatic play items as needed.
- This center can become very congested as the children enjoy exploring new props and costumes. Help the teacher make sure this center and all centers have no more than 4 students playing there at one time.

Reading & Writing & ABC 123 Corner

- Encourage children to work quietly alone or in a small group and feel free to read to them if you'd like.
- Assist children with audio books.
- Encourage children to treat books with care.

Outdoor Time

- There must be an adult outside before children go out. Every few minutes, take a headcount to ensure that all children are present.
- Be firm about boundaries. Children may not play outside the fenced area.
- Riding toys may not crash into people or things. Children get one warning then "lose their license" for the day. If this happens, help the child find something else to do.

Quiet Zone

- Our "Quiet Zone" is set up as a safe, comfortable place for a child to remove themselves from the group for some quiet time. This space is for one child at a time.
- A child may choose to go to that area on their own, or if the teacher senses that a child is feeling overwhelmed, she may encourage the child to spend a little time there before returning to a group activity.

Additional Suggestions for Working with Children

- Your child's behavior may be different when you are at school. Don't be surprised if your child "acts up" more or stands around and wants to cling to you.
- Children model behavior. If adults sit on tables, interrupt, etc., then children will do the same.
- All feelings are valid to the person who has them. Help a child identify his or her feelings and express them in ways acceptable to you and others.
- Let children solve their own problems whenever possible. Help them learn to do this by deciding not to give adult-imposed solutions. Children develop their own resources for problem solving and decision making primarily by doing it. This does not mean adults should allow destructive responses. Children develop their own comfortable feelings with adults who define sensible limits and stay consistently within those limits.

- Make positive statements whenever possible. Instead of, “Don’t climb on the fence,” try: “The fence isn’t for climbing. Why don’t you try climbing the ramp?” Directions defining “rules” can be done privately and quietly with the child.
 - Respect the child as an individual. Children, like adults, can feel deeply embarrassed if they feel they have done something wrong. Be as courteous and diplomatic as you would be with an adult.
 - Anticipate problems in order to avoid them. Be alert to dangerous situations. In an emergency, do not hesitate to protect any child. Report all accidents, however minor, to the teacher.
 - Allow an opportunity for the children to choose activities themselves. Remember that watching is also a vital form of participation. Children can be invited into activities with “You can have a turn now,” or “There’s a place for you.” The question, “Do you want to...?” can be very broad, so try to offer specific suggestions.
 - When it is necessary to talk with other adults, use a low voice so children are not disrupted in their play. Be especially quiet during group activities. Learn to look, listen, and “record” during these times. Do not engage a child in private conversation during group time as this interferes with his or her participation and disturbs other children.
 - When you want to share observations concerning your own or other children, please do this when the children cannot overhear you. Perhaps, save it for an after class meeting.
 - When unacceptable behavior does occur, redirect behavior whenever possible rather than scolding or lecturing. Try to be sure the child knows and understands why the behavior is not acceptable. It is important for the child to know that you are rejecting inappropriate behavior, and not the child. “I don’t approve of what you *did*, but I still like *you*.”
 - **The teachers at Little Explorers have the right to ask any adult in the classroom to leave immediately without explanation.**
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CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

1. Class Overview & General Schedule

2-Day Class

Mrs. Bailey Herritage

Monday & Wednesday | 8:30-11:00AM

8:30-8:45- Drop-off in classroom

11:00 - Pick-up in classroom

Mrs. Katharine Dollard

Tuesday & Thursday | 8:30-11:00AM

8:30-8:45 - Drop-off in classroom

11:00 - Pick-up in classroom

**Our 2-day class is for students who will turn 3 years old on or before September 30 of the enrollment year.*

This class is designed as a play-based introduction to the school setting and will help your child develop an early love for learning. There are currently two 2-day offerings for this school year.

3-Day Class

Mrs. Hannah Goodwin

Tuesday, Wed, Thursday | 8:30-11:30AM

8:30-8:45 - Drop-off in classroom

11:30 - Pick-up in classroom

Mrs. Amy Whalen

Tuesday, Wed, Thursday | 12:00-3:00PM

12:00-12:15 - Drop-off in classroom

3:00PM - Pick-up in classroom

**Our 3-day class is for students who will turn 4 years old on or before September 30 of the enrollment year.*

This class is designed to take your child deeper into learning through play-based activities. After 3-day, students may advance to 4-day or Kindergarten, depending on age and readiness. There are currently two 3-day offerings for this school year.

4-Day Class

Mrs. Danielle Blankenship

Monday - Thursday | 12:00-3:00PM

12:00-12:15 - Drop-off in classroom

3:00 - Pick-up in classroom

**Our 4-day class is for students who are 4 or 5 years old. This class is designed to prepare your child for Kindergarten by incorporating more K-level academics into our creative, play-based curriculum. There is currently one 4-day offering for this school year.*

2. Drop-Off & Pick-Up

Drop-Off: We expect students to be dropped off during the allotted drop-off time. Please do not drop off your child prior to the scheduled drop-off time, as our teachers need that time to set up for the day. And, please do not drop off your child after the official class starting time, as it is disruptive to the start of class.

Pick-Up: We expect children to be picked up at the official end of class time. Please be on time; it ensures a smooth transition for your child at the end of the school day and helps our teachers and parent helpers to do their work more efficiently and leave the school in a timely manner.

3. Absences

Parents should notify the teacher of absences by texting or calling the teacher before school starts that morning or sooner if it is a planned absence. The teacher will call you later in the day to talk in more detail, if necessary.

4. Clothing

Parents and children should plan to dress casually and comfortably for school. Clothing should not hamper class participation and should be allowed to get dirty without concern. Everyone should have shoes appropriate for running, jumping, and climbing.

Children will go outside to play every day, weather conditions permitting. As needed, please send your child to school every day with a complete set of outerwear appropriate for the weather: winter hat, sun hat, sunglasses, boots, mittens, snow pants, jacket, coat, etc. When selecting these items, please consider the ease with which your child can manage them independently.

Please also provide a complete change of clothes for your child in a labeled Ziploc bag. These will be kept in your child's backpack and should include pants, a shirt, socks, and underwear. Clothes should also be checked frequently for size, completeness, and appropriateness for the weather.

5. Transition to School

Not all children are ready to separate from their parents on the first day. Even a child who has not had difficulty separating in the past may experience some fear or hesitation. Your child's teacher is well prepared to comfort and ease your child into the classroom, so you can feel comfortable leaving even if your child is struggling. In most cases, children cry for a minute or two and then start to become more comfortable on their own. When it comes to transitioning into school, it also helps to establish evening and morning routines conducive to getting enough rest and arriving at school unhurried and prepared for the day.

TUITION & PAYMENT

1. Registration Deposit

To register your child for our program and secure their placement, we require a **non-refundable deposit equal to one month's tuition** to be paid and submitted with your registration form. This deposit is a placeholder and will cover next May's tuition. If you're reading this handbook, you've likely already submitted your child's registration and deposit.

2. Tuition Payment Options

Once the deposit has been paid, you will only be responsible for paying tuition for September through April. There are 3 main ways to pay: yearly, semesterly, and monthly.

Yearly: You may pay one time in full for the school year. This option earns you a 10% discount. Full yearly payment will be due the first day of school unless other arrangements are made.

Semesterly: You may pay in full for each semester. This option earns you a 5% discount per semester. Semesterly payments will be due the first day of fall semester and the first day of spring semester unless other arrangements are made.

Monthly: You may pay monthly. Tuition will be due on the first day of school and then on the first day of each month thereafter (October - April) unless that date falls on a weekend or holiday. You may also request to change your payment due date to something that works well for you. Payments received over one week after the due date will be considered late and a \$5.00 late fee will be assessed each week thereafter until tuition plus late fees are paid.

3. Payment Methods

We accept yearly, semesterly, and monthly tuition payments in the form of ACH automatic withdrawal, or auto-pay, from your bank account.

ACH Automatic Withdrawal: ACH auto-pay is just like paying with an eCheck. The appropriate tuition amount will automatically be deducted from your checking or savings account on the dates provided above (under Tuition Payment Options). An ACH authorization form will be provided before school starts in September. You can also enroll in ACH at any time during the school year.

Check: We are requiring all families to enroll in ACH this year in order to make payment processing as automated as possible. If you must write a check for any reason, it can be made to Little Explorers Preschool or LEP. A \$15.00 fee will be assessed for any returned checks.

LEP reserves the right to withdraw a child from the program if tuition is over 30 days late and no prior arrangements have been made to rectify non-payment.

See next page for a tuition breakdown and payment schedule.

4. Tuition Breakdown & Payment Schedule:

	Monthly (full price)	Semesterly (5% off)	Yearly (10% off)
Due	First day of school and then the 1st of each month	First day of fall semester; first day of spring semester	First day of school
	Monthly: Sept - Apr (8 mos.) Deposit covers May	Fall Sem.: Sept - Dec (4 mos.) Spring Sem.: Jan - Apr (4 mos.) Deposit covers May	Full Year: Sept - Apr (8 mos.) Deposit covers May
2-Day	\$105/month	\$399/semester	\$756/year
3-Day	\$140/month	\$532/semester	\$1008/year
4-Day	\$185/month	\$703/semester	\$1,332/year
	Deposit is equal to one month's tuition.	5% off each semester.	10% off year, Sept - Apr.

5. One-Time Supplies & Custodial Fee:

This year, we will be collecting a \$25 school supplies fee and \$75 custodial fee to cover certain school supplies and cleaning and snow removal costs. This will be due by Parent Orientation. You will be able to pay this online as part of our LEP Orientation & Fees form, which will be emailed in August.

6. Financial Assistance

To help defray the cost of tuition, parents are welcome to request an application for financial assistance. We have a scholarship fund that allows us to offer a few partial need-based scholarships each semester. Families can apply at registration in spring/summer for fall semester assistance and will then need to reapply in December for spring semester assistance. While we try to meet as much need as possible, funds are limited and not all families will qualify for or receive assistance. We will accept applications at any time but cannot guarantee that there will be funds remaining after initial scholarship dispersal.

We will notify applicants of their scholarship award status and amount after our scholarship committee has convened. Since we are only able to offer partial scholarships, each recipient family will be required to contribute some amount toward tuition per month. For example, if you have been awarded a scholarship for \$40 per month toward 3-day tuition (\$140 per month), your total amount due each month will be \$100. This monthly amount due will be subject to all the same conditions of our previously stated tuition policy: tuition will be due on the first of the month (or on the customized due date), tuition is considered late over a week after the due date, and scholarships may be revoked and students may be withdrawn after 30 days of non-payment unless prior arrangements to rectify non-payment have been made.

Scholarship families will not be charged late fees for late payments, but we do ask that you notify us if you need to make a late payment and keep us informed of any financial hardships. We are here to assist and work with you.

For questions about financial assistance, to request an application, or to discuss financial hardship, contact LEP Treasurer, Hailey Hauck, at 307-262-9671 or littleexplorerscody@gmail.com.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Yes! You made it through the Parent Handbook! Thank you for carefully reading. If you have any questions or concerns about anything covered in this handbook, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher, the Director, or the Board President. We are happy to assist you in any way we can.

Also, please don't hesitate to point out errors, needed corrections, or needed clarifications in any of our paperwork or handbook, so we can improve these materials accordingly.