



## Parent Handbook

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# Little Scholars Early Learning Center

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## WELCOME TO LITTLE SCHOLARS EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Our mission at Little Scholars is to provide a warm, supportive, and nurturing educational environment in our preschool / daycare program for children ages 12 months to 5 years. Students enjoy a curriculum provided by Funshine Express which includes early literacy, math, science, language, art, music, dance, and sports. Our healthy balance of student and teacher directed activities provide a foundation for children to grow cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically while rejoicing in the simple joys of childhood. It is our focus to provide students with a fun and challenging atmosphere that encourages contribution and teamwork with a goal of inspiring opportunities that will result in a love for learning and form a foundation for early success and school readiness.

This Handbook is a summary of our school, mission, philosophy, policies, hours, and rates. Please contact us if you have any further questions.

Little Scholars Early Learning Center does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.

### Philosophy

- We believe learning is a life-long, challenging and enjoyable experience.
- We have high expectations for all children. Every child is unique and at individual learning levels. Therefore, we tailor our approach to each individual child's social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
- Children learn faster in a stimulating environment.
- We provide students with a variety of educational opportunities for an early start toward school success.
- Children learn by touching, seeing, hearing, modeling, and through play.
- We believe that play gives children opportunities to understand their environment, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their imagination and creativity.
- Children will participate in a learning environment in which they can solve problems and express their feelings through words, art, and other creative areas.

- We believe that family provides the child's most important learning environment. Parent involvement is encouraged and welcomed.
- Reading to young children is important for the development of pre-reading skills.
- Developing math skills is an important part of an early childhood program.
- Preschool should be the foundation for all future learning environments.

## **About Our School**

Serving the communities of Lakewood, Steilacoom, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, we are centrally located within the Clover Park and Steilacoom School Districts and near Pierce College.

Little Scholars cares for children 12 months to 8 years. We are a non-discrimination Center. We are open to all children regardless of race, nationality, or creed. No religious activities will be observed at our Center. We realize that all children have their own religion and since we are a multicultural center, we respect all beliefs and national

origins. We provide a rich environment where children gain confidence and self-esteem and cultivate a love of learning. Our program is based on purposeful play, and promotes learning in all developmental areas that are specific to a child's emergent ideas and interests. Small class sizes and low teacher-to-student ratios give each child the opportunity to learn at their own pace and in their own style.

We believe a child's knowledge of self and the world grows from pleasant and meaningful learning experiences as well as cohesive communities. Because of this, Little Scholars provides programs, curriculum, and people within the community that support children and empower them to succeed to their full potential academically and in all aspects of life.

We focus on developmentally appropriate education. Our curriculum integrates music, art, movement, math, science, botany, language, dance, cooking, early literacy, and social studies to provide enrichment to children.

As part of our commitment to high quality early learning, we are proud participants in Early Achievers, Washington State's early learning quality improvement program. If you have questions about the program, please visit our office or go to [www.del.wa.gov/care/qris](http://www.del.wa.gov/care/qris). We also are nationally accredited by the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care.

## **Meet the Owner / Director**

Dear Parents,

My educational background includes a Bachelors Degree in Education with State of Washington teaching certification in General Education: preschool to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and Special Education: preschool to 21 years. I also have Master's credit in Curriculum Development.

I had the opportunity to serve as a Special Education Preschool and Kindergarten Teacher in the Clover Park School District for the past 14 years in the following capacities:

- Grades 1-3 Teacher
- Itinerant Teacher Preschool Special Education
- Grades 1-10 Special Education Teacher
- Early Childhood Instructor Pierce College

Plus, I have worked in a broad range of settings with children for the last 25 years.

I retired 5 years ago from the school district and enjoy being a grandmother of two young children, Isabella and Charl. Their mother, my daughter, Kiersten Matteson, shares duties here at Little Scholars. Her educational background includes a Bachelor's Degree in Communication and Business, which provides a nice balance to Center operations.

We welcome you and your children and look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Joyce Livingston & Kiersten Matteson

## **Application and Enrollment**

Tours of our school campus are available by appointment. Application materials will be provided at the tour. If you have specific questions prior to that time, please contact us at: **(253) 327-1822**

## **Enrollment Fee**

The enrollment fee for your child will be \$150.00 and is due at registration or prior to your child's first day. This is an annual fee due September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The enrollment fee is non-refundable.

## **Tuition Payments**

Tuition payments are due weekly, no later than Friday for the upcoming week. Non-payment of tuition will result in denial of service. There are no tuition reductions for absences or holidays. Tuition payments and enrollment fees are nonrefundable. Tuition rates are subject to change. Tuition payments are non-refundable.

Please see our tuition schedule for current rates.

## **Late Payment**

A \$50 late fee will be added if payment is not received by Monday. Late fees must be paid the next day. If payments are not made by the end of the business day Tuesday, services will be suspended.

## **Late Pickup**

Pickups after 6pm will incur a \$35 late fee. In addition to this late fee, pickups after 6:10pm will be subject to a \$5 per minute late charge.

### **First Day Expectations**

All paperwork, including certificate of immunization, ASQ screening, registration form, all about me, childcare agreement, photo and video consent forms, and medical information / physician statement form must be completed prior to the child's first day.

### **Transitioning Into Our Center**

We offer an open-door policy for you to visit your child throughout the day. You can also call and check in with the staff. We also use the Himama app to provide daily updates about your child's activities and needs. We will make every effort to have a meet and greet with the teacher to help facilitate a smooth transition into our center.

### **Child Screening Policy**

Upon enrollment each new child will receive an "Ages and Stages" Questionnaire (ASQ-3) form which should be filled out by their parent or guardian. This form will be used to provide periodic screening of the child.

After enrollment their teacher will also screen the child within the first 45 days. Thereafter a child screening will be performed annually. The results of these screenings will be shared with the family during parent conferences in fall and spring of each year.

### **Kindergarten Transition**

We have a partnership with Custer Elementary School that allows us to align our activities to support the child's transition into their Kindergarten program. We post and provide parent with updated information about Kindergarten registration and orientation annually. At the end of each school year all PreK students will have a graduation to symbolize their transition from our program into their Kindergarten program. If your child will not be attending Custer Elementary School the Director will make every effort to assist families with resources and information specific to their school district.

### **Signing In / Signing Out**

There will be a daily Sign In / Sign Out kiosk at the front entrance. Washington State requires clear legible signature every time the child enters and exits the Center. Failure to sign in or sign out will result in a \$75 assessment.

### **Center Hours**

Little Scholars Early Learning Center is open 5 days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We are closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day & Day After
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Veterans Day
- Presidents Day
- Memorial Day
- Martin Luther King Day

The Director reserves the right to close the Center if necessary for safety, maintenance, or administrative reasons. We will endeavor to give parents advanced notice if this should occur.

## Daily Schedule

The following is indicative of a Little Scholars day. This schedule varies according to the age of the child. We try to remain continuity throughout the Center. Please note: this schedule is subject to change.

- 6:00 a.m. Center opens
- 7:30 a.m. breakfast & clean up - open choice
- 9:00 a.m. morning preschool; circle time, calendar, story time, songs, finger play
- 9:30 a.m. Center rotations; language & writing center, math, art, dramatic play
- 10:00 a.m. snack time
- 10:30 a.m. outdoor play
- 11:00 a.m. circle time, story time, listening centers, flannel boards
- 11:30 a.m. lunch & clean up
- 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. nap time (not everyone is required to sleep but is required to rest)
- 2:15 p.m. afternoon preschool; circle time, story time, dramatic play, botany
- 3:00 p.m. snack time
- 3:30 p.m. outdoor play
- 4:00 p.m. free play centers (*Please do not bring toys from home, unless it is for a special project or show and tell.*)
- 4:30 p.m. class room activities; art, computer time, listening centers

- 5:00 p.m. afternoon snack, clean up & pick up
- 6:00 p.m. Center closes

Little Scholars closes at 6:00 p.m. Please be prompt. There will be a \$50.00 late charge if we have to pay a teacher to wait with your child. All late charges are payable in cash the next day. Repetitive tardiness may result in termination of care. Please contact the Director with scheduling questions.

## **Preschool Curriculum – Funshine Express**

Interactive, playful and inspiring, our preschool program consists of small and large group activities designed to facilitate development in language, motor and cognitive skills as well as in reading, math, and social skills. The developmentally appropriate curriculum promotes kindergarten preparation and readiness.

There is a balance of child-directed and teacher-directed activities, which are included throughout the day. Developmentally, play is a vital component of the program. Play facilitates problem solving, social interaction, communication skills, and increases cognitive growth.

The Little Scholars curriculum prepares children to get along well with others and become enthusiastic learners. We provide a purposeful and interesting learning environment that helps children grow in all areas, with the goal to prepare each child for success in school.

Our program allows the child to plan and carry out activities at the Center of his or her choice. These include blocks, dramatic play, science, a sensory table, art center, and a listening / story area. Our teachers integrate children's spontaneous, day to day discoveries, interests, and curiosity into established learning goals and activities. When teachers incorporate children's ideas into their experiences, the child's self esteem is enhanced, and over time, this will support them in becoming self directed learners.

Our teachers engage in observing, guiding, learning and assessing children's progress to ensure each child's experience is rewarding and meaningful. Curriculum goals for each age are the focus.

Parent communication is facilitated through activity calendars, newsletters, conferences, and other specific events throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to become active members of our team assisting during the day or observing in the classroom.

## **Preschool Program Goals**

### 12 months - 29 months

Toddlers learn through exploration. They are beginning to have structure in their day. Our curriculum



combines teacher directed activities to fulfill toddler milestones. Morning circle time includes a variety of activities to foster language development and sensory exploration like story time, music, dance, song and finger plays. Toddler teachers work on an individual basis with each student while others rotate to activity centers such as art, puzzles, blocks and toys. Our toddler lesson plans also include indoor and outdoor manipulative activities geared to developing the child's motor skills.

### 30 months - 3 years

Each accomplishment fills 2 and 3 year olds with pride and a desire to learn more. They are active learners with a natural curiosity of the world around them and have endless energy. When children turn 3, they become more social and develop language skills rapidly. They begin to understand various concepts and think more symbolically and logically. Little Scholars provides a rich learning environment where children are encouraged to explore and are challenged to learn, while making friends and developing self confidence.

Our child centered curriculum combines teacher guided activities with time for free choice, play, and socialization. Children choose from activities such as free and cooperative play, science and nature, art, writing and reading, math, and block building. During circle time, our little ones share books, music, songs, and their experiences together. Our outdoor play area offers a fun climbing / slide structure, riding area for trikes and other wheel toys designed to develop the children's physical skills, motor skills, and coordination.

We provide opportunities for discovery and hands on experiences, which combine creative expression and skill building. Our teachers also provide individual attention to support children's unique needs.

### 4-5 (pre-k)

4 and 5 year olds are in a phase of wonder and exploration, where children want to learn more about the things they find most fascinating. Our classes are designed for each child to acquire the skills and concepts necessary for later success in school. We provide opportunities for children to explore things that are interesting and meaningful to them. When children learn through play they develop a deeper love and appreciation for learning we trust will last a lifetime.

Many of the learning competencies begin emerge in pre-k years and continue to develop in kindergarten. Our teachers work on the children's skill levels, using an emergent approach through playful and meaningful activities.

The curriculum content areas and developmental indicators for the pre-k class include:

- Approaches to Learning - choice making and problem solving
- Arts - visual arts, culinary arts, dramatic art, music
- Mathematics - numbers, sorting and matching, patterns, space

- Science - classification of objects, time, similarities and differences, exploration, study of nature
- Social Studies - group routines, awareness of the community
- Language, Literacy, and Communication - interest in reading, writing, story telling
- Social and Emotional Development - express feelings, building relationships with children and adults
- Physical Development, Health and Well Being - knowledge of health, creative movement, self help skills

### **Transitioning Children To The Next Classrooms**

When a child is age appropriate and developmentally ready to be transitioned to another classroom we gradually introduce the child to her new teacher and classmates. We pair with the children's parents at appropriate time to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible. The transition procedure is as follows:

#### **Week of Transition**

**Day 1:** Arrange for the child to visit the receiving room during free choice play.

**Day 2:** Arrange for the child to visit the receiving room during free choice play and outdoor play.

**Day 3:** Arrange for the child to visit the receiving classroom during free choice play, outdoor play and through lunch.

**Day 4:** Arrange for the child to visit the receiving classroom during free choice play, outdoor play, lunch and naptime. The primary caregiver will visit at naptime only if the child indicates a need to see her/him.

**Day 5:** Arrange to have the child completely transitioned to the new classroom. At this time the current caregiver should move the child's possessions to the receiving classroom.

### **Child Abuse**

Washington State Law (WAC 388-150-480) requires childcare professionals to report any or all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. We document any bruises or

injuries that happen in the Center and any that the child has coming into the Center. We may ask the parent to sign the form that explains how the child received the bruise or injury. This is for the protection of all concerned.

In addition, if a child is left in our care after normal business hours and we have not been notified by the parent that they may be substantially late to the point of concern, the child may be considered abandoned and the child protective services will be called.

### **Chronic Disruptive Behavior**

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties in child care. As

providers we will ensure that the staff receives training to support positive social and emotional development to reduce challenging behaviors. Additionally, staff will receive training on trauma informed care.

We as a center are a part of Early Achievers and have a early learning coach assigned to our site that we can consult for behavioral or developmental concerns. The early learning coach can conduct observations and provide additional resources as needed. We are here to serve and protect all of our children. Children displaying chronic disruptive behavior (*determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well being of another child*) may require the following actions:

- Initial Consultation
  1. The Director may require the parent(s) of any child who attends Little Scholars Early Learning Center to meet for a conference.
  2. The problem will be defined in writing.
  3. A behavior support plan will be created and the parent(s) will be involved in creating approaches towards solving the problem.
  
- Second Consultation
  1. If the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parent(s) will again be required to meet with the Director
  2. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, outline new approaches to the problem, and discuss the consequences if progress is not apparent.
  
- Suspension
  1. When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made towards solving the problem, the child may be suspended from the daycare indefinitely.
  2. A parent may be called from work at anytime the child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by the Little Scholars staff. That parent may be asked to take the child home immediately. Suspensions from the program may vary from a few hours to an indefinite period.
  3. Little Scholars Early Learning Center may immediately suspend a child anytime he/she exhibits a behavior which is harmful to him/herself or others.

## **Disaster Preparedness / Emergency Procedures**

Posted procedures are in each of the classrooms that are to be followed in the case of a natural disaster. Also posted are the emergency evacuation routes that are to be followed in the case of a fire. We encourage you to look at and become familiar with these.

Fire drills and earthquake drills are performed at random times at least once per month. The dates and times these occur are recorded and kept in the office.

Please provide an earthquake kit for each child enrolled. They can be purchased through most major grocery stores, for a very small fee. We ask that you include a picture of your family. It helps us in identification and in comforting the child if something should happen.

## **Discharge Policy**

Little Scholars Early Learning Center reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for the following reasons:

1. Non-payment or excessive late payments of fees.
2. Parents not observing the rules of the Center as outlined in the Parent Agreement.
3. Child has special needs which cannot be adequately met with current staffing patterns. (i.e. we are not adequately set up for a quadriplegic child.) In case of disenrollment we work with the Department of Youth and Families to find alternative and appropriate care for the child's needs.
4. Physical and/or verbal abuse of staff by parent.
5. Physical and/or verbal abuse of staff by a child will be evaluated by the Director and efforts will be made to provide additional resources for the family upon disenrollment.

## **Discipline**

Corporal Punishment of any kind will not be used. We explain the rules to the children to the best of their understanding. We model appropriate behavior and encourage good manners. We try to be very consistent. All children are treated equally. It is our hope that your child will be too engaged and busy to get into any disciplinary trouble. However if the occasion arrives, we will let the child know that the behavior they are displaying is inappropriate and is not allowed. We use redirection and on rare occasion "time out" (one minute per year of age). We attempt to redirect your child in a positive manner.

## **Environment**

We provide a clean indoor and outdoor facility. The play area and toys are sprayed with a

disinfectant. The toys are sanitized weekly with bleach and bedding is washed weekly (daily if needed). Sanitizing will be according to our health policy. Chemicals and medication is kept in locked doors away from children. We have child proof latches.

## **Free Access**

Parents have permission to be in any part of the Center that your child is allowed in during the time that the child is at Little Scholars. Please feel free to check in at the front desk whenever your child is in our care. Please note that due to Washington State Health Laws, no parent or child is allowed in the kitchen.

## **General Information**

Children are asked to wash their hands when entering Little Scholars for the day. We request this as a health protection for our Center. We also require washing up after toileting and before eating.

Smoking is not allowed in the Center.

Please provide a change of clothes each day for your child. It is nice to send your child home in clean clothes.

Should your child be allergic to milk or any other food, we need a signed statement from his/her physician in accordance with Washington State requirements. Note: Little Scholars does not serve nuts due to allergies.

We do not provide formula or diapers. There will be a \$1 charge per diaper if you do not supply an adequate amount of diapers.

We cannot rinse out bowel movement from clothes or even blood if a child gets cut. If your child is in different clothes when you pick them up, please check for a plastic bag so you may wash the clothes immediately. This is to ensure compliance with Washington State Law (WAC 388-150-270).

## **Hand Washing / Diapering / Sanitizing / Laundering Policies**

1. Staff will wash their hands before and after diapering, toileting, eating, handling, and preparing food, and handling contaminated materials.
2. Children will wash after toileting, after handling contaminated materials and before and after eating.
3. Diapers will be changed regularly and immediately after a bowel movement.
4. Bedding will be laundered as needed or once a week.
5. Toilet training will be supported and a toilet insert will be available for use.

## **Meals / Snacks**

Little Scholars provides children with breakfast and a morning and afternoon snack.

Please remember to bring a bagged lunch from home for your child that includes the all basic food groups to comply with USDA food and nutrition guidelines. State law

prohibits food from home being shared with other children. We ask that no food besides your child's lunch be brought to the center. See WAC 170-295-3180

## **Medical Emergency**

If a child is hurt, the teacher will stay with the child and administer first aid while another teacher will call for aid if needed. The teacher will also attempt to notify the parent any time a child is hurt, no matter how minor. If the emergency is life threatening, we will call 911 prior to calling the parent. This is to ensure compliance with Washington State Law (WAC 388-150-480).

## **Missed Day / Vacation**

If your child will be absent for any other reason than an illness we ask that you give the Center 24 hour notice. Please give us two weeks prior notice when you will be taking your child on vacation. We will not give credit for any missed days.

If your child is absent for an entire week and we are informed in advance we can charge a \$100 reservation charge. Please note that if your child attend any day during this week the full tuition rate will apply.

## **Sick Children / Medication**

Do not bring your child to Little Scholars if he or she has the following symptoms: 100 degree or higher fever, vomiting, diarrhea or has a contagious illness. This is in compliance with the Washington State Law (WAC 388-150-220). Please keep in mind that per Washington State Department of Health Regulations, the child must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before returning to the Center. If your child is on prescription medications for lice, strep throat, pneumonia, pink eye, bronchitis, or ring worm, your child must be on medication 48 hours with no symptoms prior to returning to the Center. If a parent sends their child to Little Scholars ill or does not pick them up in a timely manner after the Center has contacted the parent, the parent will be charged \$15 per hour until pick up.

In the event your child needs medication administered at the center parents must fill out the medication permission form that is signed by the parent and doctor if needed. Medication will be

administered once a day by the director or manager on duty. If child has life saving medicine then in addition to the medical authorization form the parent must have a Child Care Emergency Plan for Allergic Reactions form signed by the parent and the physician. All staff is trained on emergency medication.

## **Supplies**

When needed we ask that you provide the following:

- Blanket if they have a special one.
- Change of clothing
- Comfort item

## **Toddler Room Procedures**

Each staff member has a Food Handlers Card as well as a CPR/First Aid Card and Aid Certificate. All food, formula, and bottles (supplied by parents) are labeled with each toddlers name and date.

Our diapering procedures are very exacting. The diapering area is completely separate from any food handling area. Hand washing facilities are adjacent to the diapering table. All the necessary equipment for cleansing and sanitizing the toddler is at hand. Disposable wipes are used for cleansing the toddler and disposable diapers (supplied by the parent) are used. Diapers are checked and changed, as needed with a one hour minimum. Always plan on 1 diaper per hour that your child is in our care. Oils, ointments or powders will not be used without the parents filling out a medication sheet and checking it in the office. Little Scholars will sanitize the changing table and wash it thoroughly after each use. Diapers are disposed of using a waterproofed and lined container.

## **Toilet Training**

When you feel your child is ready to potty train, we will be happy to assist you. Your child may be ready to potty train if he or she is:

- Staying dry for several hours
- Able to communicate the need to use the toilet
- Appears to be aware of wet or soiled diapers
- Is in a cooperative mood

Please note the following items that we require are supplied from home:

- Wipes
- Milk/Formula
- Change of Clothing

- Pull ups with Velcro (when potty training)
- Clothing should be easy to manage to encourage self help and independent skills, please no buckles or suspenders.

There is no definite age when a child is ready, and many toddlers and two-year olds alternate between periods of cooperative and negative behavior. It is our experience that toilet training is best started sometime between 24 and 36 months of age. Both the parent and staff should use the same procedures for training so that they do not confuse the child. If there is too much anxiety or stress, then it may be better for the child to wait and try again at a later time. During potty training, it is very important to dress your child in uncomplicated clothing that the child can easily manage on his/her own and to provide clothing changes. We would like to reiterate that toilet training in a group affects individual children differently and can actually accelerate or slow your child's training while at the Center. A toilet training consent form will be provided upon enrollment.



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**Parent Signature**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the Policies and Procedures of this Little Scholars Early Learning Center Handbook. I also have been through the orientation process about the center.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Director Signature