

Dear Parents,

Welcome to The MCC Learning Tree Preschool and Child Care Center. Please read through the material in this handbook and save it for future reference.

We look forward to getting to know you and your child and providing him or her with a pleasant preschool experience.

You may contact us by phone at 563-264-2088, or leave a voicemail at 563-288-6075.

The Staff of The Learning Tree Preschool

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. Learning isn't just repeating what someone else says-it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in.

In their early years, children explore the world around them by using all their senses (touching, tasting, listening, smelling and looking).

In using real materials such as blocks and trying out their ideas, children learn about sizes, shapes, and colors, and they notice relationships between things.

In time, they learn to use one object to stand for another. This is the beginning of symbolic thinking.

For example, they might pretend a stick is an airplane or a block is a hamburger. These early symbols-the stick and the block-are similar in shape to the objects they represent. Gradually children become more and more able to use abstract symbols like words to describe their thoughts and feelings. They learn to "read" pictures which are symbols of real people, places and things. This exciting development in symbolic thinking takes place during the preschool years as children play.

Play provides the foundation for academic or "school" learning. It is the preparation children need before they learn highly abstract symbols such as letters (which are symbols for sounds) and numbers (which are symbols for number concepts). Play enables us to achieve the key goals of our early childhood curriculum. Play is the work of young children.

THE GOALS OF OUR CURRICULUM

The most important goal of our early childhood curriculum is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners. We're teaching them *how* to learn, not just in preschool, but all through their lives. We're allowing them to learn at their own pace and in the ways that are best for them. We're giving them good habits and attitudes, particularly a positive sense of themselves, which will make a difference throughout their lives.

Our curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development:

**Social:* To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are a part of the group.

**Emotional:* To help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.

**Cognitive:* To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations and feelings.

**Physical:* To help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies do.

The activities we plan for children, the way we organize the environment, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children, are all designed to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school.

LICENSING

The child care center is licensed by the State of Iowa, through the Department of Human Services for 99 3-6 year olds, and passes all safety, health and sanitation and fire codes of the State Board of Health and the City Department of Fire Prevention.

A copy of the Iowa Department of Human Services licensing standards for child care centers and preschools is available upon request from the director. If there is a question regarding these standards please contact the child care licensing consultant. This information is posted on the bulletin board in the entryway.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Before enrolling, your child must be:

*At least 3 years of age

*Completely toilet trained

Before attending, your child must have:

*A current physical examination signed by a physician

*A current immunization record signed by a physician

*Completed enrollment forms on file at the center

**EFFECTIVE JANUARY 5th, 2015
ENROLLMENT OPTIONS AND CHILD CARE FEES**

Our hours are Monday thru Friday, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.

5 full days per week.....\$130.00 weekly
2, 3 or 4 full days per week..... \$ 30.00 daily
Half days (7:30 am-1 pm).....\$ 25.00 daily
Mornings (8 am-11 am).....\$ 15.00 daily
Student rate..... \$ 3.00 per hour

Student rate will be given to those MCC students who are currently enrolled in classes and ONLY when you are in class. You will be asked to provide the director with a copy of your class schedule. If additional time is needed for campus work study or other on campus commitments, special arrangements will need to be made with the director.

You are responsible for payment whether or not your child is in attendance.

There will be no charge for days the center is closed (holidays and weather-related closings).

You will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute after 11:15 am, 1:00 pm, or 5:30 pm depending on your enrollment option. Payments for late fees are due by the end of the next school day.

PAYMENT POLICY

Payments are due at least once every 2 weeks unless other arrangements have been made with the director, and can be made by cash, check or money order. If you pay in cash, you must have the correct amount, as no cash or change is kept at the center. We cannot carry over 2 payments. All accounts must be kept current in order for your child to remain enrolled. Receipts will be written once weekly and put into your child's mailbox.

If you are a student, your hours and the amount you owe will be figured weekly and given to you at that time. Those amounts must be paid within 2 weeks.

TRANSPORTATION

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation to and from the center. It is the parent's responsibility to see their child into the building and to sign them in on the daily attendance sheet.

WEATHER RELATED CLOSINGS

School cancellations are announced on KWPC-KFMH radio stations and KWQC-Channel 6 TV, among others. When the Muscatine Community College is closed for bad weather, The Learning Tree is also closed.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

We are closed on the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day (and the Friday following)
- Christmas Day (and either the preceding or following work day)
- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- 4th of July

DAILY SCHEDULE

AM

- 7:30.....Children arrive/free play
- 8:30..... Homeroom centers
- 9:00.....Clean up/restrooms/washing/show and tell (Wed., Th. and Fri.)
- 9:15.....Snack
- 9:30.....Small preschool groups
- 11:00....Morning dismissal/outdoor play and learning centers (weather permitting) or indoor free play
- 11:45....Clean up/restrooms/washing
- 12:00....Lunch

PM

- 12:30....Homeroom circle time/restrooms
- 12:40....Story time
- 1:00.....Half day dismissal/naptime
- 3:00.....Quiet play/restrooms/washing
- 3:30.....Snack
- 3:45.....Outdoor play and learning centers (weather permitting) or indoor free play
- 5:00.....Staff directed play
- 5:30.....Center closes

HEALTH PROCEDURES

No child may attend the center with a fever. Children may return to the center after they are fever-free for a 24 hour period (without fever-reducing medication.)

In the event of a stomach illness (vomiting and/or diarrhea) the child may return to the center after being symptom-free for 24 hours. No child may attend the center with an infectious illness or contagious disease. Children will be allowed to return when the designated period of communicability has passed (as deemed by the child's physician.)

To avoid problems upon arrival, do not bring your child to the center before the 24 hour symptom-free period has expired, as he/she will not be allowed to remain at the center.

MEDICATION PROCEDURES

*All medication to be given at the center must be in its original container marked with the child's name.

*A medication release form for each medication must be signed by the parent or guardian.

*We cannot dispense any medication on an "as needed" basis. We must have a specific time schedule from a parent or doctor.

For emergency medications, (ex: inhaler, Epinephrine pen, nebulizer) written instructions must accompany the signed medication release form.

HEAD LICE

Staff will conduct periodic "head checks" on all children. If head lice and/or nits are found on a child, the parent will be called to pick up their child at the center. To prevent isolated cases from becoming an "outbreak", we have a no-nit policy. All nits must be removed from the child's hair before they are allowed to return to the center.

ACCIDENTS

In the event of an accident or incident, we are required by the state to fill out a report to be kept in each child's file. You will be asked to sign this report as verification that you were notified of the occurrence. In the event of a medical emergency, the staff will take all necessary action to ensure the health and safety of the child, and the parent(s) will be notified immediately.

BITING POLICY

Biting is a very common form of communication among children birth to three years, but may occur among older children for a variety of reasons. A child may be overly tired or frustrated or he/she may be trying to get the attention of a teacher or his/her peers. Sometimes biting occurs for no apparent reason. The center staff will maintain close and constant supervision of the children at all times and encourage children "to use their words" if they become angry or frustrated.

The following steps will be taken if a biting incident occurs at the center:

- *The biting will be interrupted with a firm "No, we don't bite people."
- *Staff will stay calm and will not overreact.
- *Staff will remove the biter from the situation by redirecting to another area.
- *The wound of the bitten child shall be assessed and cleansed with soap and water. A cold pack will be applied if the area is swollen.
- *The parents of both children will be notified. An incident report will be filled out and signed by both a staff member and a parent .
- *Confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained.
- *The bitten area will be continually observed by parent and staff.

NUTRITION

Our center participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program. We serve a nutritionally balanced lunch, as well as a morning and an afternoon snack. Weekly menus are posted in the entryway.

If your child is allergic to any foods, you will be required to fill out an allergy/food exception statement and have it signed by your child's physician. At mealtime, your child will have a placemat where all allergies are listed. His/her food will be checked by at least 2 staff members to ensure the safety of all foods being served.

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

Communication and cooperation between the home and the center are extremely important and valuable to your child's growth and development. We welcome visits from families to share pets, hobbies or interests, stories and cultural backgrounds. If you would like to share something with our students, please see the director to set up a time that would be convenient.

UNLIMITED ACCESS

Parents of children enrolled at the MCC Learning Tree will have unlimited access to their children, unless otherwise directed by the courts. Children will not be allowed to accept telephone calls while at the center. Not only is this a distraction, we have no absolute way to confirm the identity of the person on the other end of the line.

SUPERVISION AND ACCESS

“Unrestricted Access” means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for child care. Any person in the center who is not a staff member or substitute who has had a record check and approval to be involved with child care shall not have “unrestricted access” to children for whom that person is not the parent, guardian or custodian.

At times, a person or persons who do not have “unrestricted access” to children (inspectors, contractors, etc.) will be on the property of the center. As at all times, the children will be supervised by center staff. The center director or lead staff person will monitor people in the center to ensure that these people do not have unauthorized access to the children at the center.

A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor who is required to register with Iowa sex offender registry (from Iowa Code 692):

- 1) Shall not be on the property of the child care center, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender’s own minor child or ward to and from the center.
- 2) Shall not be employed by, or act as a contractor at the center.

DISCIPLINE

Redirection is the most positive form of discipline for 3-6 year old children. We redirect the child, or children, whenever possible and appropriate. In more severe cases, a time-out may be warranted. A time-out may consist of loss of privileges (ex: losing 3-5 minutes of playtime). If inappropriate behavior persists, a parent conference will be scheduled to plan a system to correct the behavior in a way that is best for all concerned.

With incidents involving two or more children, we encourage the children to talk to each other and help them find solutions to resolve their problems.

DISMISSAL POLICY

We reserve the right to dismiss a child from our program due to any of the following reasons:

- * a child who is disruptive to the learning process due to persistent inappropriate behavior.
- * any violation of admission requirements or health procedures
- * a person dropping off or picking up a child while intoxicated
- * a person being verbally or physically abusive to any staff member as defined by the center’s director or MCC administration
- * having unpaid fees, beyond 2 weeks, unless otherwise arranged with the center’s director

FIRE AND TORNADO DRILLS

Fire and tornado drills are conducted on a monthly basis. We discuss the purpose and procedure of these drills with the children. Please reinforce the importance of this exercise with your child.

FIELD TRIPS

For all away from center activities, at least one additional staff person over the required ratio will attend. When field trips are not within walking distance of the center, the children will be transported by a Muscatine Community School District school bus. No seat belts or car seats are required on the bus. No child under the age of 12 is allowed to ride in the front seat of a school bus. Parents may be asked to sign an additional permission slip for bus trips.

CELL PHONES

Please turn off all cell phones during drop off and pick up. We feel your child, and the staff, need your undivided attention at this time.

SUPPLIES

All classroom and art supplies are provided by the center. If a special project item is needed (ex: milk jugs, juice cans, paper towel rolls, etc.) a note will be posted in the entryway. We do ask that you bring in a box of tissues for the school, as we go through these rather quickly.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

Children's shoes and clothing should be appropriate for play and for weather conditions. All outerwear must be labeled with your child's name.

HOLIDAY PARTIES

All children may attend holiday parties regardless of their scheduled day. Dates and times for the parties (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter) will be announced in the monthly newsletter and/or posted in the entryway. If you would like to bring a treat, drink or tableware for a party, please see one of the staff.

BIRTHDAYS

If you would like to send a birthday treat for your child, please see one of the staff. No individual or class only birthday invitations will be handed out at the center. If you would like to bring one invitation and post it for all, you are welcome to do that. We do this so that no one will feel left out.

SHARING DAY (SHOW AND TELL)

We encourage the children to bring an item from home to show the others this can be done every day of the week. As we work on phonics at this time, their sharing item should begin with the designated letter of the week as posted in the monthly newsletter. (ex: for "A" week your child could bring an apple, anteater, auto, apron or agate.) Short books for story time are welcome on any day. Please mark all personal belongings with your child's name.

NAPTIME

Each child staying for nap has their own cot with a sheet and a blanket. No nap items will be allowed from home with the exception of a small beanie baby.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Mark all personal items with your child's name. Other than labeled show and tell and nap items or books for story time, no personal belongings will be allowed into the center. It is too difficult to keep track of what belongs to whom, and this eliminates conflicts between the children concerning personal items. Please help us enforce this policy by not allowing your child to bring items that cannot be brought to school. This will alleviate problems at the door during drop-off time. Only students transported by bus will be allowed backpacks or bags, as we have limited storage. We cannot be responsible for any non-labeled, misplaced, lost, stolen or broken items. Non-labeled items will be placed in the "lost and found" bin located in the entryway.

If you need assistance to clearly understand the information in this handbook, please see one of our staff members.

