

LEARNING LADDERS PRESCHOOL

A MINISTRY OF MANDARIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



FAMILY HANDBOOK 2022-2023



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Section 1 – About Learning Ladders Preschool

Mission Statement

The purpose of Learning Ladders Preschool is to be a ministry of Mandarin United Methodist Church and to extend an opportunity for families in the community to experience all that the United Methodist Church and its ministries have to offer. As a school and ministry, we provide activities to help children grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually in a warm, loving, Christian environment. We encourage children to build a positive self-image; explore their natural sense of wonder; discover their creative spirit; learn problem-solving skills; develop self-control and consideration of others; increase coordination, balance, and body image; and know that learning is fun!

Philosophy

Learning Ladders believes that children learn through play. Children gain knowledge by touching, tasting, smelling, watching, listening, thinking, and doing. Our child-centered curriculum encourages choice-making and social competence. The exploration of music and movement, science and nature, families and culture, art and drama, and language and numbers is integrated into your child's day. Indoor and outdoor activities are planned with a concern for individual needs and developmental differences.

“His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.” Isaiah 28:26

Goals

- To provide an environment that nurtures a positive learning experience in which the preschool child may feel secure and happy away from home.
- To provide an opportunity to build and maintain a positive self concept so that he/she may develop to his/her greatest potential- spiritually, physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

Objectives

- To establish a balanced day of physical activity, mental stimulation, social and emotional development, free choice activities and spiritual growth.
- Assist in developing and reinforcing habits of good health and safety, attitudes of friendship and traits and skills conducive to learning.
- To maintain an environment that promotes activities which develop attitudes and traits found conducive to success in learning.

Curriculum

Objectives are met through the use of two developmental, thematic curriculums and are enhanced through the use of other teacher resources. Classrooms are set up with learning centers to provide hands-on, creative activities that support the children's choice and to encourage children to experience the many wonders of the world that God has made.

Section 2 – Health & Safety

Illness policy:

- Please be considerate, and do not bring sick children to preschool. If your child has a fever or has vomited (within the last 24 hours), diarrhea, heavy congestion, colored nasal discharge, or a persistent cough, he/she needs to be at home with you. If your child has a persistent runny nose (not thick and discolored) that is due to allergies rather than a cold, please have her/his doctor write a note informing the school of that diagnosis. If a child appears to be ill, a parent will be called. We ask that parents respond immediately and remove the child within thirty minutes. We reserve the right to require a doctor's note before returning to school after an illness.

We are subject to the Department of Children and Family Services following Health Related Requirements.

- Please notify the school if your child develops a communicable disease (chicken pox, lice, etc) so we can alert the other families. Affected child's name will not be mentioned when notifying families. Children identified **with any communicable disease** cannot return to school until student has been treated and no longer has this disease.
- Children shall be observed on a daily basis for signs of communicable disease. Any child suspected of having a communicable disease shall be removed from the classroom and the parent/guardian must immediately, within 30 minutes, pick up the child when notified. Such child may not return without medical authorization or until the signs and symptoms of the disease are no longer present, usually 24 hours after symptoms begin.

Signs and symptoms of communicable disease include the following:

- Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Stiff neck
- Diarrhea (more than one loose stool within a 24 hour period)
- Temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher
- Conjunctivitis (pink-eye)
- Vomiting
- Exposed, open skin lesions
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Any other unusual sign of symptom of illness

We ask that anyone who enters our campus be free of any signs of communicable illness.

We reserve the right to change our illness policy at anytime.

Bloodborne Pathogens Training:

Learning Ladders staff members receive annual training regarding how to avoid exposure to bloodborne pathogens and what to do if exposed to infectious material.

Medications:

Prescription medications will be given at lunchtime to full time children only. Medications must be in original container, up to date, and have child's name on them and expiration date clearly marked. Medication forms must be filled out and approved by the office. Medications are not given to part time children. Learning Ladders reserves the right to refuse to administer any medications or procedures at any time.

*“But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,’ declares the Lord.”
- Jeremiah 30:17*

Snacks and lunch:

- Parents are required to provide a nutritional lunch and snacks for their children. Learning Ladders cannot refrigerate or heat up lunches. We encourage you to pack an ice pack to keep perishable items cool. Please include a beverage. We ask that you send in a nutritious lunch and limit any items containing sugar. Please do not send in hot-dogs unless they are quartered and cut in small pieces (not round) to prevent choking. Grapes also need to be sliced. Please send in foods that your child can easily handle by himself without other assistance. We discourage *Lunchables* and squeezable yogurt. If you need lunch ideas your child’s teacher or director will be happy to make suggestions. Please label your child’s lunchbox and thermos with first and last name.

Naptime:

- Children napping need to bring a *small blanket or towel* for napping. Cots are provided. Items must be brought in a bag and fit in child’s cubby. *Pillows, if used must be small, travel size. Covers larger than the cot are not allowed.* Nap things need to be taken home weekly. If items are too large or inappropriate parents will be informed.

Clothing:

- We have “messy fun” at school - cooking, water tables, sand boxes, painting, outdoor play, etc. Please dress your child in *comfortable clothes*. It is also helpful to dress children in clothes that allow them to feel independent when using the restroom. Please wear safe shoes such as closed toed, tennis shoes for the playground...*no flip-flops, or sandals* for your child’s safety. If your child has problems walking in his/her shoes you will be asked to bring another pair of shoes.
- Please label your child’s clothing, coats, sweaters, lunch box and backpack with his or her first and last name. If backpacks are brought it must fit completely in cubby.
- Children are not permitted to wear clothing or bring accessories to school that could become a distraction. If clothing or accessories are in question, please see the Director. The school retains sole discretion to determine what clothing is a distraction.

Items from home:

- Please do not allow children to bring personal items from home unless their teacher has requested children to do so (i.e. show & tell). *Guns, knives, or any item that promotes violence are prohibited at school.* We cannot be responsible for lost or broken items.

Media Policy:

During the course of the school year, Learning Ladders Preschool will/may photograph or video your child(ren) during activities in the classroom or outside. These photographs/videos may be taken and used in an appropriate, creative or educational manner. These same photos/videos may also be used to post on the Preschool’s website, Facebook page, or sent to your phone/email. If you wish your child(ren) to not be photographer/video taped, please be sure to notate this on your child’s registration form.

Confidentiality Policy

All personal information in regard to Learning Ladders children, families, and personnel is used only as required in the performance of school required duties. This information will not be provided to other parents/guardians or students by personnel on or off campus. Each staff member has access to student files

as needed and have agreed to adhere to this policy. DCF also has access to student files as needed and upon routine inspections.

Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of Learning Ladders Preschool that its services shall be provided to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, disability, religious affiliation, or denomination.

Hurricane or Inclement Weather:

- Learning Ladders follows the same guidelines that are used for canceling public schools during a threat of a hurricane or tornado, etc. In the event that Duval County public schools are closed due to inclement weather, etc. Learning Ladders *will close also*. Please listen to the news on the radio or television for information regarding closings. Many closings are announced on early news programs. Occasionally the weather changes during the day, and schools and extended day programs close early. We will also close early following their lead. Learning Ladders reserves the right to develop its own policy for “make-up days.” We will update you via email, phone calls, Brightwheel or Facebook when we are in session during sudden inclement weather.
- In the event public schools are not in session and the news media and/or emergency broadcasting system is announcing a threat of a hurricane, tornado, etc., our school will be closed. If school is in session at the time of the announcement you will need to come *immediately* and pick your child up.

Other Emergencies:

- In the event of other emergency closings, we will follow the public-school guidelines for closure if in session. If not, we will follow the news media and emergency broadcasting system’s warnings and proceed with school closure. If public schools are closed *for emergencies, we are closed*. Learning Ladders reserves the right to develop its own policy for “make-up days.”
- If school is closed for a partial month full tuition is still required.

Emergency Plan and Procedures:

Each classroom has an Emergency Plan and Procedures posted in their classroom. In the event something of a serious nature occurs, we will follow the plan in place and contact the parent(s).

Accident Policy:

Our staff is trained in CPR and First Aid. Minor injuries will be treated as needed, i.e. scrapes, bruises, minor cuts, etc. Parents will be informed of any accidents or injuries at school. Parents will be given a form with a summary of the accident. A signed copy will be kept on file in the school office. For emergencies that require immediate medical attention, we will do one of the following, depending on the severity of the situation:

1. First aid will be administered, and parent(s) will be called to transport the child to the doctor.
2. First aid will be administered, 911 will be called and the parent(s) will be called.

In all of the instances above, a staff member will stay with your child.

Child Abuse & Neglect:

Learning Ladders Preschool has the responsibility for the prevention, identification, and reporting of child abuse and neglect. Under Florida all school employees are mandated reporters and therefore cases of possible child abuse and neglect will be reported immediately to the Department of Children and Families. The abuse hotline is 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Section 3 – Attendance

Admission:

The following must be completed *before* your child can attend school: enrollment form, Florida Department of Health immunization and physical health forms (supplied by your doctor), and any applicable registration fees must be paid.

Some children have Religious Exemption from immunizations; therefore, DCF requires that we inform you there may be children enrolled who do not have their immunizations.

Emergency Contacts:

Parents are required to provide the telephone number where they can be reached at all times in case of emergency. If parent is unavailable, please supply a phone number and name of another person who can be contacted in case of emergency or illness. These are put on the enrollment form. It is your responsibility to always keep numbers current. Change of information may be given to director, administrative assistant or put in Learning Ladders mailbox next to the office.

Drop Off/Pick-Up:

Parents/guardians must drop off and pick-up children in their designated classroom. Children are then signed in/out by staff and parents daily in their classroom. Children may not be dropped off earlier than ten minutes before their class begins. If care is needed prior to drop off time, please take your child to our Extension Ladders room. (Note: wrap around service prices will apply)

Absences:

We care about your family. If there is a severe illness, death, deployment, separation, divorce, or other major change in your household please let the director or administrative assistant know immediately. We are required to document absences and will contact you if we haven't heard from you regarding your child's absence.

- Please call the preschool office (292-1126) if your child will not be attending preschool due to an illness. We care about the children and would like to know when they are out sick. We also need to know the type of illness in case there would be special precautions we should take for the health and well being of the other children and staff in the center.
- VPK Parents must adhere to the VPK Absentee Policy.

Parent Conferences:

Conferences are scheduled at least twice a year and are also available at other times upon request and set up through the teacher.

Open Door Policy:

To ensure the safety of the students and staff, we ask that parents/guardians check in at the front office when visiting the school for a reason other than pick-up/drop off.

Birthdays:

- Your child may celebrate his/her birthday at school if you wish to send in a special treat for your child's class. Please inform the student's teacher ahead of time so she will be able to make plans accordingly. (Birthday celebrations are generally done at snack time.)
- Birthday gifts are discouraged at school.
- If you wish to send out invitations for a party away from school grounds, we will be happy to distribute them if everyone in the class is invited. If you wish to only invite a few people, we suggest you obtain addresses from parents at pick up time or personally distribute after class dismissal.

Class Parties & Events:

We strongly encourage parental participation. Please check with your child's teacher for upcoming events and sign-up sheets. Class parties are for the children in the classroom and siblings are not always allowed to come.

Assessments:

Assessments are an important part of an early childhood program. It shows the teacher which skills the child has mastered, and which skills are still emerging. This helps the teacher to plan more effective lesson plans and apply differentiated learning techniques. Assessments are valuable in identifying children with special needs. Early intervention can help children with developmental delays to catch up with their peers. Through assessments we can evaluate progress toward reaching goals.

Our teachers will use various assessment tools during the year. These will vary from informal notations to more formal checklists. VPK students will be assessed at least 2 times/year. Conferences are held upon request of the parent or teacher throughout the year.

If specific behaviors or learning difficulties suggest that a child may benefit from professional intervention, a recommendation will be made to have the child evaluated by specialists. For the benefit of the child and to continue enrollment at Learning Ladders Preschool, parents are requested to follow through with these evaluations in a timely manner and follow the recommendations of the specialists. Learning Ladders Preschool reserves the right to dismiss any child who we cannot reasonably accommodate.

Behavior Management Guidelines and Procedures:**Behaviors which are unacceptable**

- Behavior outside of established school and classroom rules.
- Physical aggressive behavior toward another individual.
- Any behavior which jeopardizes the safety and/or welfare to the child, to another child, or to a staff member.
- Demonstrating defiance of authority by refusal to obey the teacher or individual in leadership.
- Any other behavior, which is deemed unacceptable or problematic by the teacher and/or administrator.

Steps for Behavior Management

We will never use physical punishment as a means of behavior management. We will always make every effort to communicate caring and love as we correct a child.

The following steps are implemented in the following order. We attempt to deal with the behavior by initiating intervention at the level of least severity (as is appropriate) and proceed to the point at which the problem is resolved. Parents are notified privately of behaviors that are harmful and/or persistent. Learning

Ladders reserves the right, however, to withdraw a child from preschool at any time if aggressive behavior creates an unsafe environment.

- Teacher will give non-verbal cues such as making direct eye contact and establishing closer proximity to the child.
- Gently call the behavior to the child's attention and clarify that it is unacceptable and is not to be repeated. Teacher will lovingly redirect the child.
- If necessary, a reminder may be given followed with a statement (privately), indicating a separation from the group will follow if the behavior persists.
- Separate the child for a period of time that is appropriate and encourage the child to think about his/her actions and to have a cool down period. This gives the child the opportunity to regain control.
- In the event that the behavior persists, the teacher will remove the child from the classroom and talk with him (with gentleness but definite authority) regarding the reasons why the behavior is unacceptable and why it is creating a problem for the class. The teacher will help the child understand it is the behavior, which is objectionable, and not the child himself. The child may then be returned to the classroom under the condition that he agrees to cease the behavior and comply with the teacher's instruction.
- If the child is unwilling to alter the behavior or is defiant continuously, then we move to the next step.
- The parent will be asked to meet with the teacher and the director to discuss the problem if the behavior persists. A plan of action will be developed at this time. If the child has a persistent biting problem or other seriously aggressive behavior, a parent will be asked to come to the classroom to directly supervise his/her child. If a parent cannot come and supervise the child, then it will be necessary for the child to go home. Any child who injures another child will have an incident report written to inform the parent of the child's actions. If a child willfully injures another child more than once, it will be necessary to involve the parents in correcting the problem. If satisfactory resolution to the problem is not accomplished, it may be necessary to dismiss the child from the school. We want to ensure the safety of all the children who attend our preschool.

Expulsion/Dismissal Policy:

Our preschool reserves the right to cancel enrollment of a child for the following reasons: but not limited to:

- Nonpayment/excessive late payment of tuition.
- Excessive tardiness/unexcused absences.
- Failure to adhere to policies and procedures outlined in the Family Handbook.
- The child has needs which we cannot meet with our staff and/or facility.
- The child's behavior threatens the health and/or safety of him/herself, the other children or staff.
- The parent/guardian exhibits behavior, which is detrimental to the health and well-being of the children or staff in our preschool or negatively interferes with the normal functioning of our preschool. This includes vulgarity, intimidation, harassment, physical confrontation, or violation of childcare regulations.

Section 4 – Tuition & Fees

Registration Fee:

- There is a \$125.00 *non-refundable* registration fee when your child is enrolled in a tuition-based program. For students in the VPK Voucher only program we request a \$125.00 one time donation.

Tuition:

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month, August through May (10 payments). Tuition rates are based on the reserved time for the entire school year and not the actual time that a child spends at our ministry. There will be no tuition reduction should a child not be in attendance due to holidays, illness, emergency closings, teacher training and vacation days.

- There is a 10% discount on the second child's tuition only, not registration or extended. If a child is participating in VPK, family or sibling discounts do not apply to tuition.
- Tuition may be paid by credit card, debit card, check, money order or cash.
- After the fifth of the month a \$10.00 late fee will be added to your bill. If tuition is not paid by the tenth of the month we will be unable to provide care until the balance is paid. If extraordinary circumstances occur, please see the director before your tuition is past due.

Return Check Fee:

There is a \$30.00 *return check fee*. We do not redeposit your check.

Late Pick Up:

Children are to be picked up at the designated dismissal time. If you are late picking up your child, he/she will be taken to Extension Ladders, and you will be billed accordingly.

After Closure Pick-up:

There is a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute per child after 4:30pm. After 10 minutes, the fee increases to \$5.00 per minute per child. If you are habitually late, we will recommend you withdraw from our school and find a center that better serves your needs.

Withdrawal:

A written notice is required two weeks in advance of withdrawal from school.