



**Little Earth Shepherds Preschool
Learning Center
(LES)**

**Parent Handbook
2023-2024**

Excellence in Early Childhood Education



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Greetings from the Director!

It is my joy and pleasure to welcome your family to Little Earth Shepherds Preschool (LES)! We are excited to help your children to take their first steps on the path of a lifetime learning journey. Our Preschool provides a safe and nurturing learning environment enriched by age-appropriate activities, friendships and, of course, fun!

Welcome to our LES family!

Marygrace Piccolomini

Director, Little Earth Shepherds Preschool

About LES's Director, Miss Marygrace Piccolomini

Marygrace is a former educator of 6 years. Her passion for early childhood education comes from being mentored by her mother who was a Pre-K teacher for nearly 20 years. She was encouraged to pursue education in the hopes of one day making a positive impact on the lives of many children to come. She graduated from Kean University with a bachelor's degree in English Composition and History. She completed and was certified in teaching grades P-5 at Monmouth University. Following in her mother's footsteps, she found herself teaching kindergarten and truly loved building and shaping her students' educational foundation. Marygrace is currently pursuing a M.Ed Degree for Educational Leadership at Rutgers University.

Marygrace has lived in Old Bridge for quite some time but is very true to her New York roots! She's often quoted for stating that being Italian-American from New York is a culture unlike any other and embraces it to the fullest! A die-hard Mets baseball fan and Boston Bruins Hockey fan, she loves sports of all kinds! Marygrace is also a trained tennis player of over 20 years and an instructor for nearly 10. She also loves to travel and explore with her best friends and will get on a plane to go just about anywhere! She's a major foodie and spends a lot of her spare time cooking and baking for her favorite people, her dad and her boyfriend, Nick! Music is also something Marygrace really enjoys; concert going is one of her favorite activities, and she is no stranger to the theater both on stage and as a spectator! When she's not on a plane, in the kitchen or singing her heart out in a crowd/stage, you could usually find her on a tennis court teaching kids or at a baseball/hockey game!

Welcome to Little Earth Shepherd's Preschool!

We are thrilled and excited to welcome you to Little Earth Shepherd's Preschool family and look forward to working with you. We encourage you to become involved, ask questions and enjoy these wonderful "preschool years".

Our Mission Statement

"Encouraging academic excellence... one child at a time!"

Our Goal

The goal of The Little Earth Shepherds Preschool is to nurture each child in a loving and caring atmosphere while helping each of them to grow and develop age-appropriate physical, intellectual, social, and emotional skills.



Our school participates in the "Grow NJ Kids Program." This program is an NJ State initiative partnered with Rutgers University, to ensure quality programming for early childhood educational centers and childcare programs, in New Jersey. Grow NJ Kids provides resources to assess and keep the participating programs current with the latest educational tools and curriculum. It allows educators to continuously evaluate their quality of programming in participating facilities; to meet the young learner's needs and exceed state standards. Parents can access our school's standing on the Grow NJ Kids Website.

STAFF OF LES

We are very proud to have a wonderful, educated, experienced and caring staff at LES. Our staff is always staying up to date on the latest trends and procedures through consistent professional development and continued learning!

All of our staff has been trained in Creative Curriculum through Teaching Strategies, First Aid/CPR-AED, Epi-Pen and Asthma Training, Fire Safety, and Emergency-Evacuation-Lockdown Procedures, as well as NJ State Childcare Licensing Regulations.

Staff Members

Day Care (Preppers)	Pre-K 3	Pre-K 4	Before care
Ms. Denise & Ms. Briana R.	Ms. Guitrie & Ms. Margie & Ms. Carly	Ms. Jessy & Ms. Jamie	Ms. Carly & Ms. Jamie
			Naps: Ms. Guitrie & Ms. Brianna S. Aftercare Ms. Brianna S, Ms. Margie, Ms. Gina, Ms. Gisselle

SCHOOL CALENDAR 2024-2025

HOURS OF OPERATION 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM Mon to Fri

MONTH	Important Dates	DETAILS
September 2024	Monday, Sept. 2 nd	Closed for Labor Day
	Tuesday, Sept. 3 rd	First Day of School!
	Monday, Sept. 30 th	Back to School Night
October 2024	Tuesday, Oct. 31 st	Halloween Parade & Party!
November 2024	Monday, Nov. 4 th	Parent/Teacher Conferences starting at 1pm.
	Monday, Nov. 18 th	Fall Picture Day. Individuals and Class Photos
	Wednesday, Nov. 27 th	1/2 day. LES closes at 1pm. No aftercare!
	Thursday/Friday, Nov. 28-29 th	Closed for Thanksgiving!
December 2024	Monday, Dec. 23 rd	Holiday Party! LES closes at 1pm. No aftercare!
January 2025	Thursday, Jan. 2 nd	LES reopens for the New Year!
	Monday, Jan. 20 th	Martin Luther King Day School closed for Staff Training
February 2025	Friday, Feb. 14 th	Happy Valentine's Day! LES will invite all students for a special snack!
	Monday, Feb. 17 th	Closed for President's Day!
March 2025	Monday, Mar. 17 th	Happy St. Patrick's Day! LES will invite all students for a special snack!
	Thursday, Mar. 20 th	Parent/Teacher Conferences
April 2025	Thursday, Apr. 17 th	Easter Egg Hunt!
	Friday, Apr. 18 th	LES will be closed for Good Friday.

May 2025	Thursday, May 8 th	Mother's Day Tea at 9:30am.
	Monday, May 26 th	Closed for Memorial Day!
June 2025	Friday, Jun. 20 th	Preschool Graduation Ceremony
	Friday, Jun. 27 th	Last day of school! 1/2 day. LES will close at 1pm
	June 30 th -July 4 th	LES will be closed for staff training.
July 2025	Monday, July 7 th	First Day of Summer Camp
August 2025	Friday, August 29 th	Last day of summer camp! LES reopens Wednesday, Sept. 3 rd .

Weather Related Closings

LES will follow East Brunswick School District for weather closures only! (If they close due to weather we will also be closed! We are not obliged by changes in closure dates, we are not obligated to take away federal holiday closures due to weather closures/make up days due to school closures.)

- If the district calls a delay, we will delay. LES will open at 9am for all students Before Care is then cancelled.
- If the District closes early, we **may** have early dismissal determined by the weather.

School closures, delays and dismissal changes will be communicated through the Brightwheel app. Please also sign up for alerts from the East Brunswick School District to receive additional messages on closings. Check the district home page for information.

- Please note, if the CDC or NJ State Issues a statewide closure, we will follow the government guidelines.
- If we are closed due to State Emergencies, Pandemics, & other issues beyond our control.
- Please remember **there are no refunds.**

Little Earth Shepherds Preschool

NJ State Department of Children and Families Office of Licensing INFORMATION TO PARENTS

Under provisions of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 3A:52), every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents and staff this written statement, prepared by the Office of Licensing, Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families. In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent and staff member's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing law to be licensed by the Office of Licensing (OOL), Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our center must comply with the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may view a copy of the Manual of Requirements on the DCF website at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf> or obtain a copy by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJDCF, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, NJ 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing requirements, you are entitled to report

them to the Office of Licensing toll free at 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parents to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center. Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the OOL's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are available soon after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint OOL/Information to Parents/May 2019 Page 2 of 2 investigation, you are also entitled to review the OOL's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review or you can view them online at <https://childcareexplorer.njccis.com/portal/>.

Our center must cooperate with all DCF inspections/investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the OOL for the children's use. Please talk to us if you have any questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements; and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director,

who can advise them of what opportunities are available. Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents. Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to provide reasonable accommodations for children and/or parents with disabilities to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c. 169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division on Civil Rights in the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292-4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required, at least annually, to review the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), unsafe children's products list, ensure that items on the list are not at the center, and make the list accessible to staff and parents and/or provide parents with the CPSC website at <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the center or not is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the State Central Registry Hotline, toll free at (877) NJ ABUSE/(877) 652-2873. Such reports may be made anonymously. Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292-0422 or go to www.state.nj.us/dcf/.

POLICY ON THE RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, the center shall ensure that:

- 1) The child is always supervised.
- 2) Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- 3) Thirty minutes (30min) or more after closing time (6pm) and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the 24-hour State Central Registry Hotline at 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick-up the child.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the Director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

- 1) The child may not be released to such an impaired individual.
- 2) Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent, or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- 3) If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the 24-hour State Central Registry Hotline at 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child.

For school-age childcare programs, no child shall be released from the program unsupervised except upon written instruction from the child's parent(s).

Little Earth Shepherds Preschool

Policy on the Management of Communicable Diseases

If a child exhibits any of the following symptoms, the child should not attend the center. If such symptoms occur at the center, the child will be removed from the group, and parents will be called to take the child home.

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Acute diarrhea
- Episodes of acute vomiting
- Elevated oral temperature of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Lethargy
- Severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin
- Red eyes with discharge
- Infected, untreated skin patches
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Skin rashes in conjunction with fever or behavior changes
- Skin lesions that are weeping or bleeding
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Stiff neck

Once the child is symptom-free or has a health care provider's note stating that the child no longer poses a serious health risk to himself/herself or others, the child may return to the center unless contraindicated by local health department or Department of Health.

EXCLUDABLE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

A child or staff member who contracts an excludable communicable disease may not return to the center without a health care provider's note stating that the child presents no risk to himself/herself or others.

Note: If a child has chicken pox, a note from the parent stating that all sores have dried and crusted is required.

If a child is exposed to any excludable disease at the center, parents will be notified in writing.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTING GUIDELINES

Some excludable communicable diseases must be reported to the health department by the center. The Department of Health's Reporting Requirements for Communicable Diseases and Work-Related Conditions Quick Reference Guide, a complete list of reportable excludable communicable diseases, can be found at:

http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/reportable_disease_magnet.pdf

Little Earth Shepherds Preschool Social Media Policy

In an effort to remain connected to families at all times, Little Earth Shepherds Preschool has established Facebook, Instagram, and Brightwheel accounts. Our pages are public to those who do not possess Facebook or Instagram and Brightwheel allows for all with access to the app to view conversations and media that is posted. These pages are viewed daily and serve as a school resource.

At no time will any photos or videos depicting the children, or their families be placed on our pages unless written consent has been obtained first. Additionally, children's names will never be posted or referenced on Facebook or Instagram posts. The safety and security of our students and their families is paramount to us and for this reason, our page is limited to being used as a resource for families. Any specific or personal communication between the school and parents will be conducted face to face, via phone call, through email or Brightwheel messaging. Below, please find a list outlining the types of communication that can be found on our public pages:

- School reminders
- Emergency closures
- Symposium, Graduation, Back to School Night, and other special event information.
- Early childhood articles and information of general interest.
- Recipes, activities, and other general fun children's information.

Parents are prohibited from posting to their personal social media pages photos or videos of any other than their own without the consent of the other child's parent/guardian. In addition, staff members are also prohibited from posting to their personal social media pages any photos or videos of any child enrolled in the school.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Young children often display age-appropriate behaviors that are a normal part of their development. It is a NJ State licensing requirement to have a Discipline Policy in place that families and staff must provide a signature for receiving and must also be posted for viewing.

We will do our best to work with each child and their family should any need arise that causes concern. Most often a child needs redirection and guidance and this will be the first step we will take when dealing with any discipline issues. Developing a sense of respect for self and respect for others will be part of your child's day and will reduce disciplinary concerns. The following are some guidelines we will use:

- Be positive.
- Praise children for a job well done.
- Be consistent with the age and developmental needs of the children.
- Redirect a child when observing a potential situation that is upsetting to them or the friends around them.
- Staff will set clear and consistent limits that will help children practice self-control.
- Staff will model positive behaviors towards others.

The following shall not be tolerated at any time at LES Preschool

- Staff members shall not use hitting, shaking or any other form of corporal punishment.
- Staff members shall not use abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment or any other form of emotional punishment of children
- Staff members shall speak in a calm and reassuring voice.
- Staff members shall not engage in or inflict any form of child abuse and/or neglect.
- Staff members shall not withhold from children food, emotional responses, stimulation, or the opportunities for rest or sleep
- Staff members shall not require a child to remain silent or inactive, which includes "time out."
- Staff members shall not discipline children for failing to eat, sleep, or for soiling themselves
- Staff shall not withhold active play time as a means of discipline unless the child's actions or behavior present a danger to themselves or others.

In cases where immediate response is necessary, the LES Board reserves the right to take action that is in the best interest of the student, staff and school.

As always if there are any questions or concerns regarding this or any of our policies, please speak to the Director at any time.

EXPULSION POLICY

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we may have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with you in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center.

IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION

- ❖ The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself.
- ❖ The parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members or other parents
- ❖ The parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff or other parents.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION

- ❖ Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
- ❖ Failure to complete required forms including child's immunization/medical records (Health record is due before admission to the center)
- ❖ Habitual tardiness when picking up your child.
- ❖ Verbal abuse to staff or other parents

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

- ❖ Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- ❖ Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts
- ❖ Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children ❖ Excessive biting

SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION

- ❖ If the remedial actions have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion. An expulsion action is meant to be for a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the situation or to come to an agreement with the center.
- ❖ The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period ❖ The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected changes required for the child or parent to return to the center.
- ❖ The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent sufficient time to seek alternate childcare (approximately one to two weeks' notice depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety). Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.

A CHILD WILL NOT BE EXPELLED FOR THE FOLLOWING

If a child's parent(s):

- ❖ Has made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a center's alleged violations of the licensing requirements.
- ❖ Has reported abuse or neglect occurring at the center.
- ❖ Has questioned the center regarding policies and procedures.
- ❖ Has not been given a sufficient time to make other childcare arrangements.

PROACTIVE ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO PREVENT EXPULSION

- ❖ Staff will try to redirect children from negative behaviors.
- ❖ Staff will reassess the classroom environment, appropriateness of activities and supervision.
- ❖ Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children
- ❖ Staff will praise appropriate behaviors
- ❖ Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules.
- ❖ Child will be given verbal warnings.
- ❖ Child will be given time to regain control.
- ❖ Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality.
- ❖ Parent/guardian will be notified verbally.
- ❖ Parent/guardian will be given written copies of the disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion.
- ❖ The Director, classroom staff and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors.

TUITION AND FEES POLICIES

An annual, non-refundable Registration Fee of \$65 is required to secure your child's enrollment for the new school year.

Tuition is paid monthly and will be due on the 5th business day of the month. We understand that sometimes our lives get busy. Please speak to the Director if you have any circumstances that arise that would prevent your tuition from being on time.

Forms of payment accepted will be checks made payable to "Little Earth Shepherds Preschool", or exact change cash. Please put your payment in an envelope with your child's name and account number on the front. All tuition payments must be turned into the mailbox located on the wall at the school's entrance.

A discount of 10% off the lowest tuition will be given to other children in the family after the first child.

All deposits and tuition payments are non-refundable and are due regardless of illness, vacations, or other reasons a child may not attend. If there are any special circumstances, please speak with the Director. If you are withdrawing from our center, 30 days' notice in writing must be given to the Director at littleearthshepherds@gmail.com. Failure to provide this notice will result in being charged for the next month.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

The drop-off and pick-up location for Little Earth Shepherds is located at the back of the church building. Please enter the church driveway from Cranbury Road, pass the building and make a left. There are parking spaces available. We ask that you not park in front of the stairs leading to the yellow doors when picking up and dropping off.

Below you will find instructions on how to sign in/out by using Brightwheel!

1. Sign your child in and out by using the Brightwheel app on your mobile device.
2. Log into your child's account.
3. Scan the QR code at the entrance.
4. Enter your child's unique, 4-digit code. You will then be prompted to select your child's class or select your child's name to sign them out.

Check in/out can only be done on LES property. Please be sure to set up Parent-Approved pick up in the event you cannot drop off/pick up your child!

COMMUNICATION

LES offers a weekly update for parents and guardians to stay up to date on your child's week, what's new in our community, updates/reminders as well as a glimpse into what to expect in the next week. Weekly updates are sent via Brightwheel every Friday as a PDF file!

Our teachers use Brightwheel, as well as school-issued email, as a source of communication with the parents.

Teachers and the director are available via email during office hours from 7:30AM to 3:00 PM Monday-Friday. If you have a question for your child's teacher, please be sure to email her during that window. Anything sent after 3pm or over the weekend will be acknowledged at our earliest convenience.

In the event of an emergency, please send a direct [message](#) to the director via Brightwheel or give us a call at 732-955-6761. All urgent information will be relayed to your child's teacher.

Follow us on Facebook/Instagram: Little Earth Shepherds Preschool

GENERAL DAILY SCHEDULE

Our facility opens at 7:00 AM for Beforecare. All academics are conducted from 9 AM through 12:00 PM. Outdoor play is conducted on a rotating schedule per classroom and students are outside for at least 15 minutes each day, weather permitting.

7:00 - 9:00 AM: Before Care

The teaching staff will play with the children, read, stories and crafts. Children who may need to have their breakfast may bring something to eat with them.

9:00 - 9:30 AM: Bathroom/Circle Time/Morning Routines

9:30-10:00 AM: Snack/Bathroom

10:15-11:45 AM: Planned Academics/Music or Art/Free Play (outside play)

12:00-12:45 PM: Bathroom/Lunch

Part time students: 1:00 PM Dismissal

Full time students: Nap from 1:00-2:30 PM

2:30-6:00 PM: After Care

Free play, Bathroom, Afternoon Snack, Music/Movement, Lesson Extension and Story Time, Outdoor play (weather permitting)

CURRICULUM

The Little Earth Shepherds Preschool will be using a combination of early learning tools to reach out to the whole child. Through this we can introduce activities and materials that provide sensory, motor, perceptual, social, language, physical and academic skills. Research has shown that the areas of art and music can be instrumental in helping children with reading and math skills and have also proven helpful for the child who cannot always express themselves with words. This is because children respond naturally to activities involving music, dance, and art.

Promoting both indoor and outdoor physical activity is an important part of the daily schedule. We have a fenced outdoor play area and an indoor play space. Exploring nature will be a key component in our quest to be environmentally friendly!

Along with hands on learning from lessons prepared by our early childhood teachers, we will be utilizing lessons from the following:

Scholastic Magazine's "Let's Find Out."- Pre K 4 only.

OVERVIEW

Developed by educators and early childhood specialists, it addresses some of the important skills necessary to help our children feel confident and "kindergarten ready." The content of each issue focuses on:

- Language Arts
- Reading: Foundational Skills, Informational Text, Literature, Pre-Writing Skills & Writing,
- Mathematical Practice: Counting, Cardinality, Geometry, Measurement & Data
- Science: Weather patterns, Animals, Climates, Fundamental Chemistry, Fundamental Biology
- Social Studies: American Culture, History Months, Historical Figures, Landmarks

The Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence

The newest addition to the continuing guidelines series, "Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs," contains a set of recommendations for developing and administering high-quality environmental education programs for young children from birth to age eight, with a focus on ages three to six.

The guidelines for the curriculum identify six key characteristics of high-quality early childhood environmental education programs. For each of these characteristics, guidelines are then listed that early childhood programs should follow. Finally, each guideline is accompanied by several indicators listed under the heading "What to look for" such as:

- * Program Philosophy, Purpose & Development
- *Developmentally Appropriate Practices *Play and Exploration
- *Curriculum Framework for Environmental Learning
- * Places and Spaces
- * Educator Preparation

TV/COMPUTER/VIDEO POLICY

Students do not have direct access to technology at LES.

Exposure to technology is limited and teacher directed. Teachers will use videos, read-aloud stories, and other online resources to supplement their lessons.

Our students are primarily educated through initial whole group instruction to introduce themes and objectives and are then broken down into smaller groups to ensure more personalized instruction.

TOILET TRAINING

As toilet training is a part of early childhood development, Little Earth Shepherds will play a part in the training of your child.

We hope this will be a collaboration between us and the parents. Through our joint venture, we are positive your child will have a seamless experience between home and school.

All children who are not yet fully toilet trained will be required to send in all supplies our staff will need to work with your child.

Please dress your child in clothing that will be "toilet training friendly" and send extra clothing.

- Please remember that diaper cream is considered a medication and will require a consent form. If a child has been placed into regular underclothes and has had more than 3 accidents, we will require that the child be put back into a pull-up type of undergarment until training has been complete.

CLOTHING

Please make sure your child is appropriately dressed for the weather.

Layering is the best option as many times children feel warm or cold throughout the day.

Please also remember that we will go outdoors, weather permitting, so appropriate footwear is also necessary. As noted on the list of items to bring with your child to school, you will be required to leave a full change of clothing at school in case of emergencies.

NAP TIME

In accordance with NJ State regulations, all children over the age of 18 months, who attend preschool for four or more consecutive hours, must have a daily rest/sleep time. We will provide a mat for your child, and you will be required to provide us with a crib size sheet, as it is a state licensing requirement. You may also bring a blanket. Our nap time will be from 1:00-2:00 PM.

If you would like to discuss any alternative nap times, please speak to the Director.

IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

State law requires a complete physical examination record be on file prior to your child starting his/her first day of school. Immunization records and physical exams must be **UPDATED YEARLY AND SIGNED BY YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR**. **There is no reduction in program fees for days missed due to incomplete records**. State law requires that each child enrolled:

- Be fully immunized (including HIB vaccine) in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Be in the process of being fully immunized or
- Have a physician's statement that immunization is contraindicated for medical reason
- Have the parent or guardian's statement that the child has not been immunized due to religious beliefs.
- Provide documentation of a flu vaccine given between September 1- December 31 each year until the age of 59 months.

Please be sure to input your child's immunization and medical history up on the Brightwheel app for easy access to information in the event of a substitute or staff changes.

ACCIDENTS/INJURIES

Of course, we hope no child will have any type of injury while attending school. However, in the event of an accident/injury, state licensing regulation requires that any injury:

- from the shoulders up
- that breaks the skin.
- a fall greater than the child's height
- an injury that would require emergency services.

will require a phone call to a parent/guardian within 15 minutes of the incident. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, a message will be sent via Brightwheel.

MEDICATIONS

Please notify your child's teacher if medication was given to your child before school. For any medication to be given at school, either orally or topically, a medication consent form must be filled out completely by the parent or legal guardian. You can request a medication consent form from the Director.

Guidelines for administering medications:

Over the Counter Medication

Over the counter medication such as acetaminophen, cough syrup, Calamine Lotion, Sunscreen, Diaper Cream, etc., will be given to a child on the following conditions:

- The parent fills out a medication consent form.
- The medication is brought into school in its original manufacturer's container.
 - The expiration date on the container must be current.
- The parent requested dosage does not exceed the recommended dosage for the child's age or weight as indicated on the label of the medication. This can only be done with a signed note from your doctor.
- Medication is to be brought home when the treatment is complete. Medication not taken home will be discarded.

Prescription Medication

Doctor prescribed medication will be given to your child on the following conditions:

- A medication consent form is filled out by the parents.
- The medication is brought in its original container with a pharmacist's label containing the following information: Child's name, Physician's name, Directions for dosage, filled date, name of medication, expiration date.
- Prescription medication will be sent home at the end of each day.

****Note for Epi-Pens, asthma inhalers, nebulizers - Parent must train staff at the school in the use of this medication equipment and there must be a special care plan for use form completed by a physician. *****

ALLERGIES

If your child has a known allergy, we will ask you to complete a special form. An allergy list will be posted in all classrooms.

If your child requires an Epi-pen or any special medications for this allergy, a medication authorization form must be completed by the child's physician indicating the plan for use, and the medication must be in the original packaging labeled with the child's name.

We will inform any parents of children with an allergy of any parties or special events where there may be food items.

SNACK

Snack time is held every day at 9:30AM. For students that do not provide a snack from home, they will be offered a variety of dry snacks and a serving of fruit daily. Fruit varies from season but typically consists of applesauce, fruit cups and/or clementines. Dry snacks may include:

- Goldfish
- Cheez-Its
- Pretzels
- Ritz Crackers
- Animal Crackers
- Graham Crackers
- Teddy Grahams

******Please Note if your child cannot eat these snacks or has allergies you will be required to send in a snack for him/her******

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

We would love to celebrate your child's special day here at school! Here are some suggestions for what type of snack your child may bring in to share with the class is as follows:

- Although we do not have a "nut free" policy, we do ask that any food items brought in for birthdays not contain nut products.
- It is always a good idea for young children to share bite sized snack items such as: munchkin donuts, mini cupcakes, or mini muffins if possible.
- Please let your child's teacher know the date and snack item you would like to share at least a week in advance and include an ingredient list.
- You can either drop off the snack when you bring your child to school in the morning. If you would like to come in and share your child's day, please let us know.
- If you are hosting a birthday party outside of the school day and would like to invite students from the school, you can only use the school mailboxes if you are inviting all the children from the class. Please note we cannot give out the children's addresses.

SPECIAL EVENTS

From time to time, we will host special events here at Little Earth Shepherds.

All special events are noted on our 2024-2025 School Year Calendar. If a special event/party requires food or party items, we will have a sign-up sheet in your child's classroom. Please remember, although we do not have a "nut free" policy, we do ask that any food items brought in for special events not contain nut products.

GIFTS FOR EMPLOYEES

LES Policy states that LES employees are not permitted to accept gifts of any kind more than \$50.00. This includes money, goods, food, entertainment or services.

Please see the Director if you have any questions.

PARENT PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERING

We will have opportunities during the school year for volunteers to help with special events!

If you have an idea about volunteering, please feel free to share it with us. We will have a sign-up for parents, grandparents, etc., to come and read to your child's class.

We want your child's experience from home to school to be virtually seamless, and we look forward to building a relationship that will be rewarding for everyone.

SAFETY/SECURITY

Our school is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, families, and staff. Staff and child safety and well-being are a priority, and we will adhere to the following policies:

Our building will be secured and only accessible to people who have permission to enter.

Sign in and out is conducted through the Brightwheel app. Parents and guardians may add up to 3 additional contacts as an Approved Pick Up for their child. Please be sure to notify the school via Brightwheel Messaging if there is a change in who will be dropping off or picking up your child.

As it is state protocol, our school will conduct emergency/evacuation/lockdown drills. In the event of any emergency, please know that you will be notified as soon as possible and given directions to pick up your child.

We will practice fire drills monthly on random days and times.

Each staff member will be trained in CPR and First Aid. We will have written procedures in place for children who have allergies or need special equipment or medication.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

There are opportunities for parent/teacher conferences semi-annually and per parent request. We will have a sign-up list in your child's classroom with times available. Conferences are available both in person or via Zoom/phone call. Please be sure to communicate with your child's teacher on how you will be conducting your conferences.

LES will hold conferences twice within the school year to ensure you are following your child's progress.

Mandatory conferences for all parents/guardians will be held in the fall. Spring conferences may be scheduled but are not required.

You may also request a special conference any time by speaking with the Director or emailing your child's teacher if you would like to address any needs specifically throughout the year.

SIGNATURE FOR REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

By providing your initials and signature, you are confirming that you have read and understood the terms and conditions from the included documents provided in your Parent Handbook, such as:

(Initial) _____ State Required Information to Parents Document

(Initial) _____ Little Earth Shepherds Discipline Policy

(Initial) _____ Little Earth Shepherds Policy on the Release of Children

(Initial) _____ Policy on Illness/Communicable Disease

(Initial) _____ Little Earth Shepherds Expulsion Policy

(Initial) _____ Tuition & Fees Policy

(Initial) _____ Computer & TV Policy

(Initial) _____ Social Media Policy

By providing your signature, you understand the terms and conditions of enrollment at LES Preschool and that there are no make-up days, switching of days or refunds. This includes but is not limited to, state ordered closures, pandemics, or other events beyond our control.

Parent/Guardian Signature(s): _____ Date: _____

Image Consent Statement

By providing your signature, you grant permission for your child to be photographed or recorded at school. I understand that these images may appear in, but not limited to, church or parent newsletters, media releases, presentations, social media sites, and the pre-school website.

Child's name (Please print): _____

Parent/Guardian signature(s): _____ Date: _____