



LEARNING BRIDGE
early education center

Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Revised 1/2024

www.lbeec.org

Dear Parent,

Thank you for placing your trust in us as Early Childhood Educators for your child. We seek to provide the highest quality educational experiences for the young children in our care and dedicate ourselves to providing an environment that is stimulating, respectful, nurturing and fun. Your child is in good hands.

We look forward to working with you to provide the best possible care for your child and to getting to know the unique qualities that make your child (and every child) special.

For Children,

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PROGRAM ORIENTATION

HISTORY & MISSION

Learning Bridge Early Education Center (formerly Child Care Center of Evanston) is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that began as a day care for 3-to-5-year-old children in 1944 during World War II.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide equitable access to high-quality early learning in a caring and safe environment so that every child thrives.

VISION

- Every child developing a lifelong love of learning
- Every child growing into a responsible person
- Every family stronger because it is part of the Learning Bridge community
- Every child welcomed regardless of their family's ability to pay
- Every child ready for kindergarten

VALUES

Community: We seek to be a community that respects others and cooperates with each other.

Diversity: We seek diversity among our children, staff, and board.

Equity: We strive for equity for each child by assessing and meeting their individual needs.

Excellence: We seek to inspire and prepare each child to reach their full potential.

Inclusion: We seek to ensure that every child and family are welcomed, included, and valued.

Opportunity: We seek to provide the foundation upon which all future learning is built.

For more information about Learning Bridge visit our website www.lbeec.org

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Through play, children learn how to learn. We believe that children learn best through active participation in hands-on experiences and exploration. Our program encourages the growth of each child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical abilities. Through the Center's carefully balanced program of independent play and structured activities, children explore their world within the safe, loving and supportive surroundings of the Center. Age-appropriate experiences at each level help children interact with their peers and with adults, use their creativity and curiosity, develop problem-solving and thinking skills, and build positive self-concepts.

As they play and learn, children are encouraged to become responsible for their own actions. By setting limits and allowing children to make choices about their actions, children learn to control and to accept responsibility for their own behavior. Children are encouraged and guided by

teachers to resolve conflicts in the classroom. By stressing the use of verbal expression, teachers help children learn to identify and talk about their feelings and work out their own problems.

LICENSING & ACCREDITATION

Our program is licensed through the Department of Children and Family Services and accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (**NAEYC**). We've earned the ExceleRate **Gold Circle of Quality**. Gold Circle programs are actively engaged in continuous quality improvement and have met the highest quality standards in three areas: learning environment and teaching quality; administrative standards; and staff training and education. We are also a recipient of ExceleRate's '**Award of Excellence for Preschool Teaching and Learning**'. These accreditations serve as an indicator that you have chosen a high-quality early learning program. <http://families.naeyc.org> www.exceletrateillinois.com



WELCOMING ALL FAMILIES

We define family as a close-knit unit of individuals joined together without distinction to race/ethnicity, biology, sexual orientation, age, generation, or presence in households, cemented through one common characteristic: love. We make no assumptions about with whom a child lives, who they love, and who loves them. Within the classrooms, teachers will discuss all types of families and not just the traditional mom-dad-child structure. Children in the classrooms are divided into attachment groups. Each teacher is responsible for conferencing twice a year with the parents of their attachment group children.



We welcome you and look forward to developing a rich and supportive relationship with you and your child.

TEACHING STAFF

We do not believe that there is only 'one way' to be a good preschool teacher. Our teachers bring a variety of personal styles, training, and backgrounds – all within a framework of professional skill, commitment, and a love of young children. Important qualifications of all our teachers are sensitivity to children and parents, caregiving skills, and understanding our program's philosophy and practices.

Children are assigned a primary attachment teacher within their classroom. This teacher develops a special relationship of mutual trust and respect with the child and his/her parents. This system ensures that every child has a 'special' person, and every parent has a primary contact. The primary teacher will be the 'expert' on your child, knowing your child's individual schedule, developmental abilities, special needs, sleeping habits, and individual interests. Observation, discussions with other staff and parents, and analysis of the actual experience of the child and family are regularly made and noted. However, primary does not mean exclusive. Other classroom staff will also develop a relationship and interact with your child as s/he explores the learning environment and will convey information to you about your child's day. Each teacher is responsible for conferencing twice a year with the parents of their attachment group children.

Our program has excellent child to teacher ratios, exceeding DCFS and NAEYC guidelines. We schedule teacher hours so there are as few changes of staff as possible during the day. Children in the classrooms are divided into attachment groups. **For the safety of our children and our staff, children are never alone with a staff member.**

We believe in the importance of education and provide on-going professional development for all staff at our Center. Training and support are provided to ensure that all staff are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the developmental and educational needs of all children.



PARENT- CENTER PARTNERSHIP

Daily communication between you and your child's teachers is very important. We will share details of your child's day with you. We hope you will share with us anything from home that may impact your child's mood or behavior. Information such as a recent move, a death in the family, or birth of a sibling will allow the staff to provide individualized support to your child. **Please remember to let us know if your phone number changes.**

Parental Involvement improves student success. Extensive research has shown that students achieve more in **school** when their **parents** are **involved** in their **education**. Here are a few ways we can work together:

- Together we can model respectful dialogue between adults.
- Visit your child's classroom.

- **Please take the time to read information posted on classroom parent communication boards. Check your Class Dojo app daily.**
- Attend parent/teacher conferences. These are held twice a year – once in early winter and once in late spring/early summer. If you feel the need for a meeting or conference at some other time, don't hesitate to ask.
- If your child's teacher feels the need to connect, find time to meet.
- **We strongly urge you to attend all parent meetings and special events.** Parent meetings are held to provide valuable information about parenting young children, school readiness, and are an opportunity for sharing ideas. Special events are held for our families. Children enjoy these special times at the Center with both their parents and teachers.
- Come share a hobby of yours with the children, tell them about your job, read a story, play a musical instrument, do an art or cooking project with a small group of children.
- Join your child's class for field trips and/or walking days.
- The program is always in need of supplies such as recycled materials for craft activities, and clothing and props for dress-up and dramatic play. Please check with your classroom teachers before bringing in items.

YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

Separation can be stressful for both children and parents. You can help ease your child's transition in the following ways:

- Allow plenty of time to get ready in the morning.
- Establish routines when you are getting ready. Routines provide children with predictability and a sense of control.
- Bring a picture of you and/or your entire family for your child to have in their classroom.
- Allow your child to express sadness at saying goodbye.
- Don't sneak out. Develop a 'goodbye' routine (leave after washing hands, greeting the teacher, a hug and a kiss, etc.)
- After you have said goodbye, leave – even if your child is crying. Lingered can make separations more difficult. Teachers will comfort your child.

The following items are needed before your child's first day:

- Completed enrollment packet
- Up-to-date medical form completed and signed by a physician
- Copy of your child's birth certificate
- At least one complete change of clothes **with each item labeled with your child's name**
- Payment for the first week of care

CELL PHONES

For safety reasons, cell phones may not be used while dropping off and picking up your child. **THIS INCLUDES TEXTING.** Parents using phones will be asked to end their call. This is also a special time for your child; they have been looking forward to reconnecting with you all day, and staff may need to discuss important information with you.



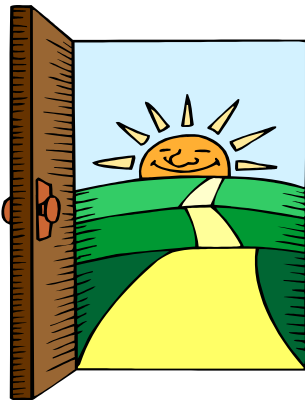
SCHOOL HOURS

The Center is open from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

ARRIVAL

Parents are to escort their children into the classroom and will sign in on the classroom iPad.

It is important for a child's learning that they have a consistent arrival time. **We expect all children to arrive no later than 9:00 AM** - the time when classrooms come together for group time. During group time children learn the day's schedule and can make their first choice for the day.



If a parent knows of an upcoming day when a child will arrive later than 9:00 AM, arrangements must be made with the child's teacher and the office **at least one day prior to the late arrival day.** Late children must arrive before lunchtime.

Please communicate with your child's teachers regularly. Talk to them about anything unusual that may have happened to your child that may affect his/her behavior. For example: a late bedtime, a change in routine, an illness, if someone else will be picking up your child or any other changes in the family.

DEPARTURE

When departing, please make sure that a teacher knows your child is leaving. **Parents must sign their child out.** If you are unable to pick up your child yourself, be sure to notify us in advance as to who will pick up. Your child will only be released to individuals authorized by you in writing on your child's release form. All authorized individuals must be over the age of 16 and show photo identification - this includes older siblings who are picking up.

Parents must come into the building. Children may not be picked up or dropped off via the front gate to the playground.

Teachers may not sign in or sign out for parents.

Any parent or other person who is authorized to pick up a child enrolled at the Center, and who comes to the Center intoxicated or in an impaired physical or mental condition that may prevent him/her from assuring the child's welfare, will not be allowed to pick up a child.

ABSENCES

If your child is going to be absent for any reason, please tell your child's teacher or call the Center at 847-869-2680. Irregular attendance or absences of more than one week without notification may be cause for disenrollment.

TRANSPORTATION

Parents are responsible for arrangements to pick up their child. Learning Bridge employees may not transport or assume responsibility for transporting any child enrolled at the Center. Center employees may not be authorized by parents/guardians to pick up a child or to care for a child outside of the Center.

PARKING

The driveway and back lot are for quick drop-off and pick up only. Please respect other parents and staff. **If the front driveway's five parking spaces are full, please drive through the center lane and park on the street.**

Do not block the middle lane or stop at the entrance of the driveway. TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE. If you will be longer than five minutes or have a large vehicle/truck, please find street parking.

State law forbids leaving children unattended in a vehicle. Do not leave children in your car while dropping off your child.



Rear-facing car seat: infants up to at least age 1 year or 20 pounds.

Forward-facing car seat: children up to age 5 years or 40 pounds.

Booster seat: up to age 6 years.

Vehicle's seat belt system: children ages 6 to 15 years, no matter where seated in the vehicle.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

We need to be able to always reach you. Please be certain that we have your most current home, work, and cell phone numbers on file. In addition, we require that you give us names and numbers of at least two people we can contact if we are unable to reach you in an emergency. **Please keep all emergency numbers up to date.** We will periodically ask you to verify

enrollment information. Children who are sick should be picked up within 60 minutes of a call to parents.

SCHEDULED & EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

The Center is open Monday through Friday year-round with the following exceptions:

- Labor Day
- The day before Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following
- Winter Break (Generally Christmas Eve through New Year's Day)
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Spring Break (D65 schedule)
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Fourth of July
- August closing
- Professional Development days for staff (TBA)

Please refer to the Learning Bridge Calendar (www.lbeec.org).

In the case of a snow emergency, we follow the lead of Evanston /Skokie School District 65 -- if District 65 is closed we will also be closed. For District 65 delayed openings, the Center will open at 9:30 AM. District 65 information may be found on their website at www.district65.net. Closings are also posted on the Center's Facebook page; emergency school closing website and on Class Dojo.

In the unlikely event of an emergency such as lack of electricity, running water or heat, the Center will close. We will do our very best to share information as soon as possible during building emergency situations. **Please make sure we always have your most current contact information.**

COMMUNICATION

By establishing and maintaining open and ongoing communication with families, we are able to strengthen the ties that connect the home with our Center and enhance the individual development of the children in our care. **We make every effort to keep parents fully informed of situations that may impact their child's classroom.** Communication takes place through morning and afternoon greetings, Center and classroom bulletin boards, the Class Dojo app, postings on classroom doors, in parent folders, during conferences, on the Center's Website and Facebook.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information regarding a child, family or staff member is considered confidential. Children's records are kept in a locked cabinet in the front office and are available only to the Executive Director, administrative managers, the child's teachers and, with parent approval, contracted consultants. Records are never released to classroom volunteers. Regulatory agencies may review your child's record in order to ensure the Center has followed its requirements. Regulatory personnel with access to records shall respect their confidential nature.

ENROLLMENT & BILLING POLICIES

ADMISSION

The Center has one classroom for 2-year-old children and one classroom for 2½ to young 3-year-old children; toilet training is not a requirement in these classrooms. All other classrooms are for children who are at least 3 years-old; completion of toilet training is required for a child enrolled in our 3-years-and-up classrooms. We work together with families on toilet learning.

TUITION

Fees are based on enrollment rather than attendance. The cost of the operation does not change if a child is absent. Parents are advised to keep in mind that there are two aspects of service that the Learning Bridge Early Education Center provides: the actual child care services itself and the reliability of that service. As a parent you are assured that your child's slot is always there, whether your child attends. Therefore, fees will continue to be charged during absences, including absences due to illness and vacation. In addition, we cannot "hold" a space for your child if you dis-enroll for any reason. This includes holidays, snow days, and professional development closure days. Tuition is not charged over the 2-week summer break in August.

Payments are due the Friday before the week of care. If parents have not paid by the following Monday, the LBEEC Center Manager will send a written note home reminding parents that payment must be paid Tuesday morning for us to accept your child for care. Teachers will direct you to the office on Tuesday morning.

For your convenience the Center accepts debit or credit card payments from Visa, MasterCard, Amex or Discover. Parents will receive instructions on how to enter payments online.

Every Friday afternoon a parent is emailed a copy of your ledger which will show charges, payments and your ledger balance.

WITHDRAWAL

Parents are required to give at least two weeks' notice when withdrawing a child from the Center. Failure to do so will result in a charge for those two weeks.

DISENROLLMENT

The Center reserves the right to not enroll or to discontinue enrollment of any child if:

- Parents fail to follow Center policies and procedures. Parental disregard of policies can include aggressive, loud, and argumentative interactions with Center staff, as well as hostile phone calls, voicemails or email communications.
- The child is dangerous to him/herself or others, is destructive to Center property, or impairs the education of other children. (See Challenging Behavior on page 18)
- The child requires another educational setting more appropriate to his/her needs.
- The family's behavior is detrimental to the operation, routine, or goals of the program. We must consider the welfare of **all** children enrolled in our program.

Please know that it is *not* our goal to exclude children and families from our program but to work *with* families to provide the best possible care for their children. Abusive behavior and/or verbal threats by parents toward another parent or program staff will *not* be tolerated and will result in their child's immediate dismissal.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

The Center closes promptly at 5:30 p.m.

If a child is not picked up by 5:30 PM there will be a late charge of \$15 the first 15 minutes and \$30 for every half hour.

Late pick-up times will be determined according to the clocks within the Center, not according to personal devices. At least one staff member will remain until all children are picked up. Parents and/or emergency contacts will be called when a parent is late. If a child is still at the Center at 5:30 PM, and all attempts to reach family and other contacts have failed, the Evanston police and DCFS will be contacted. It is crucial that emergency contact information be kept up to date.

If you know you are going to be late, please call the Center (**calling does not remove the late fee.**) Remember that your child anticipates your arrival. A child can become worried and anxious if his/her classmates have all been picked up and his/her parent has not yet arrived. In addition, a staff member who has put in a full day of work is inconvenienced and their evening plans impacted. Parents must abide by the closing schedule; not doing so will result in termination of childcare services. Center staff acknowledges that it's not the fault of the child if a parent is late picking up; therefore, any conversation regarding this situation will be had with the parent, not the child.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** offers financial assistance to income-eligible families who work or go to approved schools or training programs. Families cost-share on a sliding scale based on family size and income. Learning Bridge is an administrator of CCAP for Center families. Contact our Center Manager.

Our Private Donor-based Scholarship Program supports Evanston families who are over CCAP income eligibility guidelines. Contact our Center Manager.

Childcare Network of Evanston may have scholarship opportunities as well.

GENERAL OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

VISITATION

Learning Bridge welcomes parents and offers many opportunities for families to observe and spend time at the Center. All parents must spend the morning with their child for their child's first half day. A Day in the Classroom, Orientation, and Parent/Teacher Intake Conferences are scheduled so that families can get to know the teachers and families at the Center. **Other visits should be discussed with your child's classroom teachers prior to the day of your visit.**

During your visit, please follow these guidelines:

- Arrive with your child no later than 9:00 AM
- Be respectful of the classroom teachers' role and the classroom/playground rules
- Do not disrupt the classroom routine or flow of the day
- Learning Bridge's Guidance and Discipline Policy must be followed
- Use of cellular telephones and personal calls are not allowed at the Center
- Learning Bridge is a workplace free from drugs, alcohol and firearms
- The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers states that "volunteers whose duties require contact with children on a regularly scheduled basis of one or more times per month shall meet the same personnel qualifications required of other staff." Volunteer requirements include a background check and health report.
- Parents may plan to have breakfast, lunch or snack with their child. **Do not bring food into the Center.** DCFS Licensing Standards state that "*All food consumed by children under the supervision of the childcare center shall be provided by the center.*"

This visitation policy is not intended to limit access to your child, but to protect the routine, structure, and predictability of the day for each child enrolled in our program.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

Learning Bridge believes that the goals of setting limits are to help the child gain self-control, develop responsibility for his/her own actions, and develop an awareness of the rights of others. Simple, understandable rules will be used with children (e.g., “I will not, cannot allow you to hurt another child with your body or your words.”)

Discipline shall be developmentally related to the child’s act and shall not be out of proportion to inappropriate behavior. The child shall be made aware of the relationship between the act and the natural consequences. Removal from the group may be an occasional means of helping a child to regain control. The number of minutes for this period will not exceed the age of the child and will be under a teacher’s supervision. Some means of setting limits may include redirection, loss of privilege or activity where misbehavior is occurring, firm positive statements about what else can be done, and helping children to solve their own interpersonal conflicts.

Parents will be informed and consulted when discipline problems arise in the classroom. A child’s behavior can change through consistent expectations and direction, and when these are mutually decided upon with the teachers, parents are expected to continue the same practices at home. For children and families needing additional support, referrals to the proper agencies will be recommended and staff will check in regularly to facilitate support. Together we can all provide the foundation necessary for school and life success.

We like to see limit setting as something we are doing *with* the child or *for* the child, and not something we are doing *to* the child.

In accordance with state law, no child shall be subjected, under any circumstances, to corporal punishment inflicted in any manner upon the body, threats of physical punishment, verbal abuse or profane language, be deprived of regularly scheduled meals or any part of meals as a form of punishment. Nor shall a child be punished for toileting accidents.

It is our policy to handle **ALL** discipline situations that may arise with the children while they are at the center, according to our stated philosophy. If a parent has concerns regarding another child’s behavior, we ask that you discuss your concerns with the appropriate teacher. **Under NO circumstances will parents be allowed to approach a child or his/her parent(s) in an effort to deal with a situation themselves.** We consider this method to be inappropriate and **it will not be tolerated.** Abusive behavior, language and/or verbal threats by parents toward other parents or program staff will not be tolerated and will result in their child’s immediate dismissal.

Learning Bridge uses **CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE®**, a research-based, social-emotional classroom management program based on current brain research. Conscious Discipline® empowers adults to consciously respond to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children and building resilience in children, families, educators and schools.

Conscious Discipline links social-emotional learning and classroom management to achieve success:

1. The School Family™ creates safe, caring classrooms that improve brain function.
2. Creating a compassionate School Family™ culture motivates adults' and children's willingness to engage in healthy relationships, helps each other to be successful, and changes perceptions about conflict.

In the classroom we use a Safe Space and Conscious Discipline breathing techniques to calm down. We may also use lotion to help children self soothe.

We encourage parents to ask their teacher or the Program and Education Director about this program.

Additionally all parents are required to sign off on the Guidance and Discipline Policy which is included in the enrollment packet.

CLOTHING

Please dress your child in comfortable clothing suitable for active and messy play. If children have to worry about their clothes getting dirty, it will interfere with their full participation in activities. All children must have at least one extra set of underwear, socks, pants and top. Younger children should have at least two changes of clothing. Since outdoor play is a daily scheduled activity, except during very cold or rainy weather, your child should be dressed appropriately for outdoor exploration. During cold weather this includes boots, warm jacket, snow pants, mittens, hat and scarf. **Extra clothing must be clearly labeled.** Children will **go outdoors daily** unless the temperature is below 30 degrees or above 90 degrees. We go outside on days when it is light rain. We stay indoors on ozone action and wind advisory days. If you have questions about the weather, you may stop by the front office.



We recommend that you send your child to school wearing sturdy shoes, sneakers without laces, which support the foot and protect the toes. Shoelaces are a tripping hazard. Children should be able to independently take off and put on their shoes. Regular sneakers with socks are best. **Shoes must be slip on or Velcro, no shoelaces as shoelaces are considered a tripping hazard. NO high tops.** The ability to dress themselves builds a child's confidence, independence, and gives a sense of achievement.

Sand play is a part of our daily activities. If you have concerns regarding sand in your child's hair, please send a hat to school, which will be washed weekly.

BATHROOM AND TOILET LEARNING

Children use the bathroom (males/females together) at scheduled and unscheduled times throughout the day. We use the correct terminology for all body parts including private areas. Please be sure that your child has an adequate amount of extra clothing in their cubby.

MEALS AND SNACKS

- A light breakfast (generally cereal, juice and milk) is served between 8:30 and 9:00 each morning. On Tuesday and Thursday mornings a hot breakfast is provided. **Please have children finish all food from home before entering the building. Food may not be placed in a child's cubby.** DCFS Licensing Standards state that *"All food consumed by children under the supervision of the Learning Bridge shall be provided by the center."* A well-balanced lunch of organic food (consisting of a meat or a meat-alternative, grain, vegetable, fruit, and milk) is served at approximately 12:00 PM.
- An afternoon snack is served at approximately 3:15 PM. We try as much as possible to have the children participate in the preparation of snacks because it is an excellent learning opportunity.
- The Center only accepts restrictions regarding diet due to allergies and religious purposes. A letter from your child's pediatrician must be given to the Center office to be kept in your child's file.
- Special foods or beverages provided by you **due to dietary restrictions only** should be clearly labeled with the child's name, date and identity of the food and shall not be shared by the other children. The food must comply with the DCFS guidelines and portion control which will be given to you by administration.
- **Learning Bridge is a "nut free" and "pork free" facility.** Please read all labels carefully as some foods may have trace elements of nut products.
- Parents are required to inform the Center Staff of any food allergies their children may have and to give a description of the child's reaction, such as: *Allergic to strawberries, exposure results in hives.* In some cases, parents may be asked to provide food substitutions for their child(ren).
- Our food service caterer is Food2You. Menus are shared with families via Class Dojo and posted on the classroom parent bulletin boards as well.



NAP TIME

Nap time is from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM. Per DCFS licensing, all children are expected to rest quietly on their cots for the first hour of nap time. We make every effort possible to provide an environment that is quiet enough for those who need to nap, yet not too restrictive for those who do not. Children are awakened by 3:00 PM. The Center provides each child with his/her own cot, sheet and blanket, which are washed weekly. DCFS regulations do not permit us to keep children under 5-years-old awake.

OUR FACILITY

Each child is carefully placed in one of our five classrooms – four in the Main Building and one in the Annex (coach house). Your child will spend most of his/her indoor time in his/her own classroom – including mealtime and naptime. S/he will have an opportunity to develop strong attachments to peers in his/her own group and to the team's teachers.

We are particularly proud of our large and varied outdoor play space and garden. During good weather, we regard the play yard as an outdoor classroom. Our outdoor area includes a bike track, swings and climbers for large motor activities as well as spaces for reading, art, dramatic play, gardening, sand and water play. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing suitable for active and messy play. Closed toed shoes are required for playing outdoors.

CLASSROOM TRANSITIONS

We try to have as few transitions between classrooms as possible. Wherever possible we keep children in their classroom for the full academic year. Children should be in a classroom for one year before moving to an older classroom, and in the older classroom for two years before going to kindergarten. Support staff takes teacher recommendations and parental preferences into consideration when placing children; parents are informed near the end of the school year as to which classroom their child will be placed in for the coming year.

TOYS FROM HOME

We discourage children from bringing toys from home unless they are part of a planned activity or a transition plan discussed with your child's teacher. Toy weapons and destructive/violent toys are not allowed in the Center. We are not responsible for items that may become lost or damaged.



HOLIDAYS / CELEBRATIONS

Our Center celebrates the spirit of the season – family, friendship and goodwill – rather than any holiday. The passing seasons, changes in growth and development, and cycles of weather are all part of our yearly celebrations.

The Center’s children, families and staff are a diverse group. Our goal is to be sensitive to and respectful of the variety of beliefs and traditions of all at our Center. This policy does not ban holidays from our program. Our teachers do not plan holiday activities, but children may talk about holidays, bring in books or artifacts from home, and incorporate holidays into their play.

We do encourage children and families to share their traditions and activities with their classmates. If you have a family tradition, holiday or otherwise, that you would like to share in your child’s classroom, we welcome you to bring this to your child’s teacher who can help you ensure the activity is age appropriate for that group.

PLEASE NOTE: WE DO NOT SERVE CANDY TO CHILDREN AT ANY TIME.

BIRTHDAYS

Children may enjoy celebrating their birthdays with friends, family and teachers at the Center. A few days before your child’s birthday, your child will choose what s/he would like to eat for snack on their birthday from the birthday recipe book. Teachers will let you know what your child has chosen and if there is something special you can bring into school to complete the recipe. On the day of the birthday, the classroom will make the chosen snack.

Please do not have your child come to school with gum, candy, junk food, or unwrapped food.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Recognizable individual and group photographs of children at the Center may not be posted on social media without permission from that child’s family. Center staff is strongly advised to decline social media ‘friend’ requests from Center families. Cell phone use is not allowed in the Center. **This includes texting.**

COLLEGE PRACTICUM STUDENTS

Early childhood education students as well as students from other educational programs may be in the Center to work on class assignments or to observe children. Please know that **students are always under the direct supervision of a classroom teacher.**

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

The Center is a “No Hurts” School. Challenging behavior is any behavior that (1) interferes with children’s learning, development and success at play; (2) is harmful to the child, other children, or adults; (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. (Kaiser & Rasminsky, *Challenging Behavior in Young Children*)

Examples of challenging behavior are physical aggression (hitting, biting, shoving, whacking with toys), relational aggression (“You can’t play with us,” verbal bullying), tantrums, whining, testing limits, refusal to follow directions or observe classroom rules. **We are a “NO HURTS” school.**

We make every effort to work with each child and family. If a child has continual discipline problems with significant disruptive or aggressive behaviors, the child’s parent(s), teachers and Center leadership staff will meet to discuss the issue, develop an action plan and devise strategies to implement in the classroom. **Our goal is to work together to help your child.** We may refer the family to a social worker or suggest that additional services from the local school district be sought. Parent involvement and cooperation are required to ensure care. If after 3 weeks the plan is not successful, we will help the family transition to a Center better fitted to their needs.

POLICY FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS OF FAMILIES

If a family has an issue or concern that is unresolved after talking with their child’s teacher, the family should contact the Program and Education Director immediately.

A variety of paths could follow, including:

- A meeting with an administrator to discuss concerns and clarify issues.
- The P & E Director may observe the child and staff in the classroom setting and provide feedback to the family and the staff.
- A meeting that includes the family, teachers, and administrators to problem-solve and create a plan to address the concern.
- A follow-up meeting (if needed) to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and modify the plan if necessary.
- The Program and Education Director may provide a referral for outside services.

HEALTH & SAFETY

PREVENTIVE HEALTH

Preventative health measures should be taken at home as well as at school. Parents should:

- See that their child gets sufficient sleep at night
- Encourage good eating habits
- Encourage hand washing, especially before meals and after toileting

IMMUNIZATIONS

Children must be immunized in accordance with standard pediatric practice and DCFS Licensing Standards. We do not accept children on relaxed or delayed immunization schedules. **Children whose immunizations are not kept current will be dis-enrolled from the Center.**

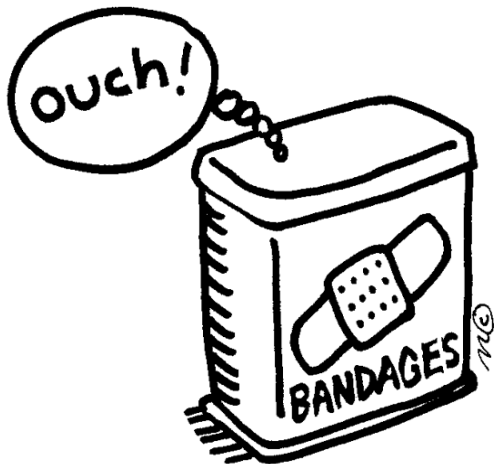
ILLNESS

The following are indications of illness for which a child should remain at home. If a child becomes ill at school **the parent/guardian must pick up their child within an hour of the call.** The sick child will be isolated from the other children while waiting for pick-up.

- **Fever:** Children with a fever of 101 degrees or higher will not be allowed to attend the Center until their temperature has been normal for 24 hours without medication.
- **Severe Cold:** with fever, sneezing and thick nose drainage
- **Vomiting**
- **Diarrhea:** defined as two or more loose stools. Children may return after symptoms subside.
- **Rashes:** that have not been identified or that have not been diagnosed as non-communicable by a physician
- **Ringworm:** A generic term for skin diseases, which may be caused by any of several groups of fungi. The child must be treated by a doctor. A doctor's written release is required to return to the Center.
- **Impetigo:** A skin infection consisting of vesicles (blisters) surrounded by a reddened area. When the vesicles break, the surface becomes raw, weeps and oozes. The lesions eventually become encrusted and yellowish. The most common sites are on the face, ears and nostrils, but can occur anywhere on the skin. A doctor's written release is required to return to the Center.
- **Conjunctivitis:** An eye infection commonly referred to as "pink eye." The eye will have an unexplained redness and there may be thick, yellow drainage. The child may return to the Center 24 hours after treatment begins.
- **Bronchitis:** characterized by a severe continuous cough that interferes with activity and well-being.
- **Strep throat:** If the doctor diagnoses strep throat and places the child on an appropriate antibiotic, the child may return to the Center if s/he no longer has a fever, has taken the medication for at least 24 hours, and is feeling well.
- **Hand, Foot and Mouth:** Child must be without fever for 24 hours and any visible lesions have dried up or can be covered.
- **Measles, Mumps, Rubella ("German Measles"), Chicken Pox:** Any contagious childhood disease.
- **Head Lice:** A parasitic infestation that is unrelated to cleanliness or quality of care. The child may return to the Center after receiving treatment. Follow-up treatments must be adhered to.



- **Pinworms:** Small children frequently become infected with these intestinal parasites. The child may become restless and irritable, especially at night, and may complain of, or be observed as having rectal itching. Children will be excluded from the Center until treated with prescription medication.



- **If a child appears ill** without obvious symptoms: Parents or teachers can often tell when a child does not look, act, or otherwise appear to be his/her usual self. For example, if a child is unusually pale or flushed, is acting irritable, is unusually tired or lethargic, or cannot participate comfortably in program activities – s/he should be kept at home. Children should not be given fever-reducers just prior to attending the Center in an effort to disguise a fever.

- **Covid:** When there is a concern that Covid cases are at the Center notifications will put on Class Dojo as to symptoms. Children with Covid symptoms should be tested prior to sending them to care. Masking precautions will be put into place when Covid cases are present at the Center.

MEDICATIONS

- All medication must be brought to the office and given to the Center Manager. **Every medication, INCLUDING DIAPER CREAM, must have a written doctor's order.**
- Prescription medications may be given to a child at the Center if the label bears the child's name, physician's name, dispensing drug store, prescription number, and date of prescription and directions for administering. Medication forms can be found on our website www.Lbeec.org.
- Non-prescription medications may only be administered if accompanied by a doctor's signed note that includes the child's name, name of recommended medication, an explanation of condition requiring medication, date and dosage.
- A child must have had the first dose of a medication administered at home to check for allergic reaction. We will not force a child to take any medication.
- Children who have been diagnosed with **asthma** must have an inhaler at school (see first bullet item above) along with an Asthma Action Plan. The Plan must be updated annually.
- Teachers must have a written description of symptoms that require the application of an EpiPen. The description must be written by a parent or a physician.

SUNBLOCK AND LOTIONS must be furnished by parents and can only be applied with written parental permission.

ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

- In non-life-threatening instances, the Center staff will provide on-site first aid.

- If the child requires medical attention, the child's parent will be contacted, informed of the injury, and asked to pick up the child.
- If the accident, injury or sudden illness is life-threatening or requires immediate medical attention, the ambulance service provided to the City of Evanston will be called upon to transport the child and a staff member to the Evanston Hospital Emergency Room. The parent will be called and asked to meet us at the hospital.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTER

Parents are responsible for the safety and well-being of their child(ren) when together at the Center (drop-off and pick-up times, after-school events, etc.), but Center staff will step in if we feel a child's behavior is considered unsafe for him/herself or others.

It is imperative that children are always supervised while at the Center. Parents/guardians should escort their child to and from the classroom when entering and exiting the building. Children must not run ahead to their classroom or run out the door of the building without their parent/guardian. Please do not allow your child or any child with you to wander or run off anywhere in the Center without you (classrooms, basement playroom, etc.). **Children should never be outside of the building without direct adult supervision.**

SAFETY

Please make sure all doors and the back gate close tightly behind you as you enter or leave the building. All parents and visitors must be buzzed into the building.

Firearms, alcoholic beverages, or non-prescription controlled substances are prohibited on the premises or in vehicles. Due to the nature of their duties, Evanston Police may carry firearms onto the premises.

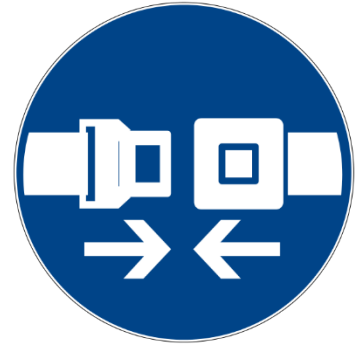
Learning Bridge Early Education Center prohibits any unlawful use, possession or control of a weapon, or use or threat of use of any item as a weapon; the term "weapon" may be more broadly defined than it is in criminal law and may encompass any item whose actual or inferred use or intent is to do unauthorized harm to another or to property.

Smoking is not permitted on Learning Bridge Early Education Center's property.

CAR SEATS

The Child Passenger Protection Act requires that children under the age of eight be secured in an appropriate child restraint system (safety or booster seat.) Children weighing more than 40 pounds may be transported in the back seat while wearing a lap belt if the back seat does not have a lap and shoulder belt system for booster seat installation.

All parents in our program are expected to use the safe practice of securing their child in a car seat. Please know that Illinois law specifies that, as a parent, you are responsible for providing a child safety seat to anyone who transports your child.



VISION & HEARING

Adequate vision and hearing are paramount to educational performance. Impaired vision and/or hearing in children can seriously impede learning and contribute to the development of educational, emotional and behavioral problems. Early discovery and treatment can prevent or at least alleviate many of these problems.

As mandated by DCFS, children aged 3 and above must receive annual vision and hearing screenings to comply with Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH) Policy. Each fall, a DPH-certified technician visits the Center to administer screenings. Results are shared with parents. In some cases, follow-up visits may be recommended.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (IPM)

Integrated pest management is an ecosystem-based strategy that focuses on long-term prevention of pests or their damage through a combination of techniques such as biological control, habitat manipulation, modification of cultural practices, and use of resistant varieties. IPM visits occur outside of Center operating hours when children are not present. A record of application use shall be maintained and stored in the front office.

BED BUGS

Pest control is always a challenge in spaces used by large numbers of people such as schools and child care centers. The control of bed bugs is no exception. Bed Bugs are notorious stowaways and may hitch a ride in or on bags, clothing, books, and other items, so they are easily brought to and from infested places.

Due to our following Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines to control and prevent bed bugs, we've never had an infestation. Per guidelines, we do not allow cloth items brought from home such as blankets, pillows and dress-up clothes.

PROGRAM STANDARDS

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Learning Bridge Early Education Center utilizes *Creative Curriculum for Preschool*® for our curriculum and *MyTeachingStrategies* as our assessment tool. *Creative Curriculum*® is built on theories of development in young children -- that all children learn through active exploration of their environment and therefore the environment plays a critical role in learning. The goal of the *Creative Curriculum*® is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive, and enthusiastic learners by actively exploring their environment.

The Curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development: Social/Emotional, Cognitive, Physical and Language. The planned activities for the children, the organization of the environment, the selection of toys and materials, planning the daily schedule and interacting with the children are all designed to accomplish the goals and objectives of the curriculum and give your child a successful year in school.

Teachers integrate learning in literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts and technology throughout the day. The curriculum is based upon relationship building and employs a variety of teaching strategies -- from child-initiated learning to teacher-directed small group activities. Lesson plans and activities are based upon needs, skills and interest of the individual children.

Each of the classrooms, including the Montessori classroom, have ten interest areas or learning centers upon which teachers build their lesson plans.

- Dramatic Play
- Blocks
- Mathematics
- Art
- Sand, Water
- Library
- Music and Movement
- Writing Center
- Discovery
- Cooking

These rich interest areas allow opportunities for children to learn by interacting with materials, teacher and their peers. The teacher's role is to create an environment that invites children to observe, to be active, to make choices, and to experiment. Our environment is continually assessed using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale.

MyTeachingStrategies is the assessment tool for *Creative Curriculum*®. The curriculum's goals and objectives provide a framework to help determine how children are developing. This information enables teachers to tailor instruction to meet the needs of the individual child.

Our teachers have a holistic approach and focus on the 'whole child' to promote learning. Goals interrelate and focus on all areas of development:

- **Social / Emotional Development:** A child's feelings about themselves, the development of responsibility, and the ability to relate positively to others.
- **Physical Development:** A child's gross and fine motor development.
- **Cognitive Development:** A child's thinking skills, including the development of symbolic and problem-solving skills.
- **Language Development:** A child's ability to communicate through words, both spoken and written.
- **Mathematic Development:** A child's introduction to the basic mathematical concepts.

Assessment is an ongoing process, with three checkpoints during the year. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year, one in December and another in May/June. Parents may request additional conferences as needed.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

As part of our continued efforts to provide a developmentally appropriate program based on the criteria of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards, all children will be provided an Ages & Stages Questionnaire screening (ASQ3 and ASQ-SE) within 60 days of entering our program and annually thereafter. A permission slip for screening is signed by all parents during enrollment along with an Authorization to Exchange Information form. Using a standardized screening helps to inform parents and teachers about children's abilities and strengths and provides information for planning and individualization in the classroom. Early Screening Inventory (ESI) screenings also help to identify children aged 3 to 5 for Illinois Preschool for All. For children who may need support services such as speech or occupational therapy, Children aged 3 to 5 shall be referred to their local school district. Children under the age of three who need referrals shall be referred to Child and Family Connections.

Parent participation is strongly encouraged. We believe that early intervention is vital for helping young children prepare for kindergarten. Failure to complete recommended screenings or register with District 65 (or the child's local school district) and follow their recommendations may result in disenrollment.

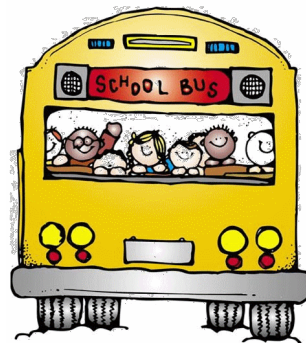


ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES - EXCURSIONS AND FIELD TRIPS

Many enrichment activities are incorporated into Learning Bridge's program and these activities usually involve leaving the building. **The Center Manager knows of all plans and destinations.**

Walks: Each classroom has a walk day each week. The children may walk to any of the nearby parks, our local library, fire stations, etc. **A cell phone, First Aid supplies, and emergency numbers are taken on walking trips as a safety precaution.**

Field Trips: Each year the classrooms go on field trips. Parents/guardians will be notified of these trips in advance. Parent volunteers are welcome and needed for additional supervision. Due to our insurance regulations, field trips are for children enrolled at the Center only; siblings and other children not enrolled at the Center are prohibited from participating. Some of the sites we visit may limit chaperones, and parents may be asked to pay a fee to attend. Past trips have included: Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago Botanic Garden, Kohl Children's Museum and the Art Institute of Chicago.



REQUIRED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, guardian, caretaker, a person living in the child's home, or anyone who is responsible for the child's welfare at the time of the alleged abuse. Mistreatment can either result in injury or put the child at serious risk of injury. Child abuse can be physical (i.e., bruises or broken bones), sexual (i.e., fondling or incest), or mental (emotional injury or psychological illness). Neglect is the failure of a parent or caretaker to meet "minimal parenting" standards for providing adequate supervision, food, clothing, medical care, shelter or other basic needs.

All Learning Bridge staff members receive child abuse and neglect prevention and reporting training upon orientation. Per the Childcare Act of 1969, childcare providers are Mandated Reporters and are *required by law to report suspected abuse.*

The procedure for reporting is:

1. The staff member will report such information to the Center Director.
2. With support of the Center Director, the staff member will make a report to DCFS by telephone, followed by a written confirmation of the call within 48 hours.

3. Documentation of suspected child abuse or neglect shall be maintained by the Center. Information will be kept confidential unless requested by an official representing DCFS during an investigation of suspected abuse.

As a result, all injuries that a child has upon arriving at the Center will **always** be internally documented, regardless of the reason given for the injuries. Adults signing the child in or out of care will be asked about the cause or reason for all injuries. These injuries include but are not limited to cuts; bruises; unexplained behavior; a story related by the child; extreme sunburn; unusual smell; repeated wearing of clothes; a child arriving with extreme hunger or thirst; a diaper that is soiled to extreme.

If you suspect abuse or neglect you have a social responsibility to report it to the hotline. Call the Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-ABUSE.

LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

EVANSTON / SKOKIE: Joseph E. Hill Education Center (JEH)

1500 McDaniel Avenue, Evanston, 60201 (847) 859-8065 www.district65.net

D65 New Student / Kindergarten Registration: Kindergarten Registration is held the first week of March. Information Nights are held in January. Once registered, you may apply for another attendance area school or one of the magnet schools/programs through a permissive transfer. Computers and assistance are available at JEH.

Services for Pre-primary aged children (SPPAC)

SPPAC offers developmental screenings for children from age 2 years, 8 months to age 5 years. Screenings are completed regularly throughout the school year at the Joseph E. Hill Education Center, as well as throughout the community. Eligibility determinations will be made based on criteria from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). (847) 859-8300

SKOKIE: The village of Skokie has 5 separate elementary school districts:

District 68: 9440 Kenton Avenue, Skokie, 60076: (847) 676-9000 skokie68.org

District 69: 5050 Madison Street, Skokie, 60077: (847) 675-7666 sd69.org

District 72: 7040 Laramie Avenue, Skokie, 60077: (847) 929-1048 fairview.k.12.il.us

District 73: 7634 East Prairie Rd, Skokie, 60076: (847) 673-1141 eps73.net

District 73 ½: 8000 East Prairie Rd Skokie 60076: 847-324-0509 sd735.org

Please see the Program and Education Director for information about school districts not listed here.

CRADLES TO CRAYONS

Learning Bridge is a Service Partner with *Cradles to Crayons*, a non-profit agency that provides children from birth through age 12, living in homeless or low-income

situations, with the essential items they need to thrive – at home, at school and at play. Clothing, shoes, winter coats, books, toys, backpacks, school supplies and more are supplied to eligible families free of charge. As a Service Partner, Learning Bridge can determine if your family/child meets income eligibility requirements. If you are interested, please leave your name and phone number with the front office and the Center Manager will get back to you.



BUNDLED BLESSINGS



For families needing assistance with diapers, Bundled Blessings Diaper Pantry can provide a monthly supply of diapers for children at the Center or their siblings. Each month an order can be placed, and the diapers will be picked up. If you need diapers, please let your child's classroom teacher or the front desk know.

CHICAGO FURNITURE BANK

Chicago Furniture Bank will help with a furnishing package for a small fee of \$50.00. Items must be picked up. There are additional fees for delivery. If you are in need of assistance, please let the front desk know that you would like more information, and an order form with instructions will be given to you.



GENERAL RESOURCES

Being the parent of young children can be difficult at times. There are agencies in Evanston offering counseling, evaluation and support. They all have sliding fee scales based on income and ability to pay. A few of these agencies are listed below for your convenience.

CEDA / Neighbors at Work

2010 Dewey Avenue, Evanston (ground floor of Family Focus)
(847) 328-5166

Services: WIC, Housing Counseling, Job placement, Emergency services

City of Evanston / Department of Health and Human Services

2100 Ridge Avenue, Evanston
311 or (847) 448-4311 www.cityofevanston.org

Services: Healthcare, Food, Housing, Shelter, Mental Health

City of Evanston Produce Mobile Robert Crown Center

1801 Main St. Evanston
(847) 475-7070

Services: Fresh fruits and vegetables

Connections for the Homeless

2121 Dewey Avenue, Evanston
(847) 475-7070

Services: Housing

Erie Evanston / Skokie Health Center

1285 Hartrey Avenue, Evanston
(847) 475-4500 info@familypromisetchicagos.org

Services: Primary, Women's, Prenatal, Pediatric, Behavioral Healthcare

Family Promise – Chicago North Shore

Various sights
(847) 666-3494 www.riefamilyhealth.org

Services: Housing

The Family Institute at Northwestern University

Bette D Harris Family and Child Clinic
(847) 733-4300 www.family-institute.org

Services: Counseling for children, individuals, couples and families; Sliding-scale Fee

Hillside Food Pantry

2727 Crawford Avenue, Evanston

(847) 328-7182 www.hillsidepantry.org

Services: Food

Northwest Center Against Sexual Assault

415 West Golf Road, Suite 47, Arlington Heights

(847) 806-6526 www.nwcasa.org

Services: Crisis Intervention, Advocacy, Counseling, Community Education

The YWCA Domestic Violence Program

1215 Church Street, Evanston

(847) 864-8445

Services: Comprehensive Residential Domestic Violence Program

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Learning Bridge Early Education Center is a not-for-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors consisting of members of the community. The Board oversees governance of the Center, sets fiscal policy, raises funds and hires the Executive Director

Board of Directors 2023-2024

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Sylvia Holdampf	Treasurer
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Email address: lbadmin@lbeec.org