

**Family Handbook**

Mission Statement: Explore and Learn Childcare and Learning Center’s goal is to provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment for each child during their formative years. We provide a variety of stimulating activities to promote a child’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Among the activities there will be the opportunity for success through creative and free choice play, outdoor play and structured teacher planned educational learning through exploration. Explore and Learn provides developmental programs for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years of age.

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**CHILD CARE/PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Welcome!**

We are very happy that you have entrusted Explore and Learn Childcare and Learning Center to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for your child. Our goal is to provide a stimulating early care and education experience, which promotes each child’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. We offer each child the opportunity to grow, learn and discover through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. These activities include free play at the many different stations around the room as well as maintaining a teacher scheduled routine of lessons through songs, stories and interactive activities. It is a pleasure for us to be a part of your child’s precious developmental years.

We are fully licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Department of Human Services. We are also licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for our Nursery, Pre-School and Kindergarten programs. We are participants of the Keystone Stars Program, a voluntary continuous quality improvement program in the state of Pennsylvania. Explore and Learn maintains and provides the quality of care to achieve the highest star rating of a Four Star Center.

**School Philosophy**

Explore and Learn provides a safe, nurturing environment that emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual child. We create a creative stimulating atmosphere focusing on emotional, physical, social, cognitive and intellectual development through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. Our focus is on fostering independence and self-confidence. We encourage children to be inquisitive which allows them to explore the world around them so that they can reach their fullest potential.

**School Curriculum**

We provide a warm and nurturing atmosphere as well as an exciting and educational environment for your child. We look at each child as an individual and foster learning through each child’s individuality. We realize that children’s development occurs at different intervals and that every child is different. We base our curriculum on your child’s individual development stage. Our curriculum includes language development, physical development, art, music, socialization and self-help skills. Our center classrooms follow the Creative Curriculum to create developmentally appropriate lessons. We are currently using the Creative Curriculum and The Land of the Letter People for full day Kindergarten program.

**Inclusion Policy**

Explore and Learn aims to provide a child care environment which is free from bias and prejudice in which children learn the principles of fairness and respect for the uniqueness of each person. Differences in backgrounds culture and abilities are valued and families are actively encouraged to share their experiences with educators, staff and other families. The center involves the community to assist educators, staff and children understand and accept the range of cultures and abilities of members of the local community. The center will ensure that appropriate inclusion support services are accessed and referred to families in order to support children’s well-being and full inclusion into the program.

**Enrollment-Class Placement**

Enrollment is open to any child 6 weeks to 12 years of age provided the Center can meet his/her needs. Enrollment shall be granted without discrimination in regard to sex, race, color, religion, or political belief. Full-time / Part-time enrollment is defined as follows:

**Full Time**: A child who is enrolled Monday through Friday and attends for more than four hours per day is considered full time. The child must be enrolled year-round, (January through December) to be entitled to full time benefits (example; one free week during family vacations.)

**Part Time**: A child who is enrolled three, four or five half days (4 hours or less per day) per week is considered part time. Children who are enrolled three full time days are considered part-time. Children enrolled five days per week for greater than four hours per day but who only attend the center during the school year (example: from September to June) are also considered part-time.

Interested parents and children are invited to tour the center and meet the staff. They may also review and complete all the necessary paperwork prior to enrollment. Placement will occur on a first-come, first-serve basis. If not included as a part of the tour, prior to the child’s attendance, a conference with the parent and child is offered to acquaint each new family with the environment, staff, and schedule for the child. Children are grouped according to age and developmental level.

During the first few weeks of school, don’t be alarmed if your child:

* Is shy and clings to you
* Is aggressive and won’t share
* Hits and refuses to take turns
* Tires easily and cries more easily
* Resists using the school bathroom and has accidents
* Won’t talk about his/her day at school

These are all symptoms of stress and normal reactions to a new situation. As your child becomes familiar with our routine and comfortable with our teachers, these behaviors will disappear. As a parent, you can help your child through this time of transition by being sympathetic,

supportive and creating a drop off routine. The following are helpful ways in which transitioning can be made easier for the child, parent, and staff members:

You can help by:

* Letting your child stand back and watch-observation is one way of participating.
* Allowing time for personal routine-a nourishing breakfast and a pleasant ride to school.
* Having a cheerful and positive attitude as you say good-bye to your child.
* Encourage discussion about school and by asking specific questions.

REMEMBER- The more relaxed and happier you are the more relaxed and happy your child will be!!

**Child File and Update**

All parents must complete and return the following forms:

1. Registration Form – (Paid registration prior to start date)
2. Emergency Contact Form (updated every 6 months)
3. Child Health Assessment
4. Agreement Form
5. Child’s Background Information
6. Civil Right Compliance
7. Emergency Pick-up List
8. Parent Consent Form
9. IEP – If your child has an individualized Education Plan and or works with specialist please provide Explore and Learn with a copy of the plan, any special instructions, and contact information so that our teachers may work in conjunction with the specialist. Teachers are also encouraged to attend all IEP meetings at the parent’s approval.
10. Feeding Schedule for infants handwritten by parents.

**Child Observation and Developmental Record**

Head teachers are required to perform a child observation within the first 45 days of enrollment regardless of age (mandatory Keystone requirement). A parent conference must be offered following review of assessment by Director. Developmental reports are done three times per year (Fall, Winter, and Spring). Additional conferences may be requested at any time by parent or teacher for any child. As the child continues through our program and beyond, we will transfer child information/observations/assessments to help inform the child’s future teacher of that child’s individual needs.

**Hours of Operation**

We are open from 6:30am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday. Our Infant Room hours are 7:30am – 5:00pm. We are open year round and offer a summer camp program for children through age 12.

**Holidays**

Our school will be closed on the major holidays listed below. Payment will be due for these holidays if your child is enrolled full time. If your child is enrolled on a part time basis and the holiday falls on a day that your child would normally attend, payment is due. We are required to follow strict child-staff ratios; therefore, we are unable to switch your child’s day of attendance in the event of a holiday.

New Year’s Day Memorial Day Thanksgiving Day

President’s Day July 4th Day After Thanksgiving

Good Friday Labor Day Christmas Eve/Day/Day After

**Emergency Closing**

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| --- | --- |
| **Contact method** | **Type of announcement** |
| Fox 29 TV | Closed, opening late, or closing early |
| 6 ABC TV | Closed, opening late, or closing early |
| Constant Contact: Group email | Closed, opening late, or closing early |
| Facebook Page Posting | Closed, opening late, or closing early |

Our school will make every reasonable attempt to open on time and remain open during inclement weather. However, in the case of extremely dangerous road conditions, worsening weather conditions or a state emergency, it may be necessary for the school to close early, open late or not open at all. If we need to close early, you will be notified by constant contact and the info will be posted on Facebook. If no specific closing time is given you are required to pick up your child as soon as possible. We are not only concerned about you and your child’s safety but the safety of the center's staff. We may have to delay the school opening for an hour or two or may even close the school due to weather conditions. This information will be posted on channels 6 and 29, Facebook and constant contact. In the event of an emergency evacuation of the building, the staff-child ratio will be maintained, and the children will be evacuated to Guth Elementary. Emergency Contact Forms will be brought with every teacher to the new site and you will be contacted by telephone to pick up your child.

**Tuition and Fees**

**Registration:** There is a nonrefundable registration fee of $75.00 due upon enrollment. ($100.00 for two or more children) This fee covers all administrative costs associated with enrollment.

**Escrow:** Upon enrollment, an escrow payment equal to one week’s payment will be collected. This will be applied to your last week of service, given that you give the school the proper two weeks’ written notice.

**Tuition:** Tuition is due every Friday for the next weeks childcare service . Monday is a grace day. If tuition is not received by Tuesday, a $10 (ten) late fee will be charged. If tuition is unpaid after three days, your child will not be admitted to our school until the payment is made. In order to ensure accurate supplies to keep the center running, fees need to be paid on time. Returned checks will be charged a $25.00 returned check fee.

Forms of payment currently accepted are cash, check and ACH draft. Receipts are processed by request only.

**Vacations:** As described previously, children who are defined as “full-time enrollment” are entitled to one week of vacation (must be five consecutive days) where tuition will not be due for that week. The director must be given two weeks written notice of all vacation plans.Failure to give two weeks’ notice will result in a full week of tuition being due. Children who are defined as “part-time enrollment” are not entitled to any free weeks for vacation. Children enrolled as part-time, are required to pay their tuition for all scheduled days even if those days fall on a day when the school is closed due to Holidays or inclement weather.

**Late Fee**: Our school closes promptly at 5:30pm. If you arrive after 5:30pm to pick up your child, you will be given a warning the first time. After a warning any time there after you will incur a **charge of $10.00.** This fee is to be collected at pick up by the closing staff member. If you are running late, please notify the school and make other arrangements to have your child picked up.

**Withdrawal**: In the event that you need to terminate your agreement with our school for any reason, two weeks written notice is required. If you abruptly withdraw your child without just notification, you become responsible for two additional weeks of tuition

**Drop-off and Pick-up**

Upon arrival you are required to wait with your child while a teacher signs your child in for the day. It is necessary for the staff to have an accurate count of children in attendance on a continual basis. Anyone may bring a child to school: however, only parents or authorized persons may sign a child out at pick-up. Please notify the office if anyone not listed by the parent on the Emergency Contact Form is picking up your child. We will not release a child to anyone who is not authorized by the parent. Be sure that the person picking up your child has a picture I.D. (driver’s license).

When picking up your child it is required that they are signed out each day. In order to meet necessary staff/child ratios required by the state, please keep to your agreed drop off and pick up times. We may not have the staff in the building required by state to care for your child if they are dropped off early or picked up late.

Staff members / teachers will not release a child to any parent, relative, or other authorized adult who appears to be impaired by the use of drugs or alcohol. In the event this situation occurs, a phone call will be made to the parent or emergency contact person. In cases where family court or other legal entities have established visitation or custody rights, a copy of the court orders must be provided to the school. A copy of the court orders will be maintained in the child’s school file. The courts orders will be strictly adhered to.

**Staff:Child Ratio:** According to the DHS 3270.51 the following ratios are strictly followed: Infant 1:4, Young toddler 1:5 (1 year old), Older toddler 1:6 (2 years old), Preschool/Pre-K 1:10 (3,4 & 5years olds), Young school-age 1:12 (kindergarten- 3rd grade), Older school-age 1:15 (4th grade -12 years old)

**Attendance**

Because of our continuing academic program, it is to your child's benefit to be here and in class by 9:00am daily. We ask for your cooperation in arriving in a timely manner, as children arriving late are a distraction to the other children. Our teachers begin their morning routine promptly at 9:00am. Children are often upset when they arrive late and miss part of an activity. As a courtesy to your child’s teacher, please notify the office by 9:00am if your child will be late or will not attend. Also, the director should be notified if your child is ill. This enables our staff to keep track of any illness, which may occur at the school.

**Schedule Changes**

***Changing your scheduled days, as per your agreement, is strictly prohibited without the Director’s consent***. Please do not tell or ask a teacher to change schedules, they do not have the authority to make these changes. A parent may add additional days to a child’s schedule but only with the Director’s approval. The Director must be notified of all schedule changes 48 hours prior to the effective date of any such changes. Additional days are offered, however, parents’ requests cannot always be accommodated. Due to staffing requirements, last minute changes to a child’s schedule will only be considered if we can adequately meet the needs of the additional child. The cost for additional days will be determined by the Director.

**Transitioning**

September, January, and June are our biggest transitioning months for Explore and Learn Childcare and Learning Center. A child will not be automatically transitioned to another classroom due to age. Preschool, Pre-K and Kindergarten classes focus on academics and are often based on a school year (Sept- June) program, therefor if a child has a birthday during the school year we often consider many factors before they are moved from their current classroom.

When a child is transitioning to another classroom, we send home a notice at least two weeks in advance. The child will spend time in the classroom he/she is moving to for a little time each day until he/she is comfortable being part of the group all day. Typically, we begin with having thwm join in at AM snack and circle time, the next day it may be outside play or arts and crafts. The process takes approximately 2 weeks. We do our best to meet your child’s needs. An individual who has difficulty with change will be given a longer transitional period, a child who does better with immediate change will require a shorter transitional period.

**School Records**

Each child enrolled in our preschool must have updated school records using state required forms. Your child’s file is confidential and will be shared with other staff members only as required to meet the needs of the child. The parent must review emergency contact information at least every 6 months for accuracy. Medical records are required to be updated annually, or whenever the child’s immunization status changes.

**Parent Communication**

Our school has an open-door policy. Parents are welcome to visit our school at any time. We encourage parents to participate at special events, go on field trips or volunteer in the classroom. Due to the nature of some parent’s work schedules, we know this is not an option for everyone. We feel that communication is the key to providing a healthy learning environment for your child. We encourage you to let the staff know about the daily routine, likes, dislikes, discipline strategies, and any other relevant information about your child. We will keep you informed of our curriculum and daily events through our monthly calendar, newsletter and Seesaw. Seesaw is used by the staff to communicate daily to parents about their child’s daily routine and any special events or occurrences that take place each day. Parents are urged to respond if there are any questions or concerns.

**Parent Code of Conduct**

Parents are to conduct themselves in a respectful manner at all time on the premises.

* There will be no swearing/cursing or other forms of derogatory language. You should not need to be reminded you are in the presence of children.
* You may not threaten staff, children or parents. This will not be tolerated. 911 will be called if warranted.
* There is to be no physical or verbal punishment of your child or other children.
* Smoking is not permitted on the property or in the presence of children.
* Quarreling with family, other parents or staff will not be tolerated. Space can be provided for private conversation with staff.
* Violating the Confidentiality Policy. Should you receive personal contact information via a party invitation or other means from another parent, the information is not to be shared with others, regardless of the situation.

**Things to Bring**

As a parent, you are responsible for providing the following items for your child:

**Infant -** \* 2 crib sheets \* a complete set of seasonally appropriate clothing, labeled \* a pack of diapers \* a container of wipes \*pre-made bottles daily \* all food for your child

**Toddler - \***diapers and wipes or pullups, if necessary \* a sippy cup, daily \*a child size sleeping bag in a pillowcase \* a complete set of seasonally appropriate clothing, labeled \*a lunch, daily \* a backpack

**Preschool/Pre-K** – \*a child’s size sleeping bag in a pillowcase \* extra clothing \*lunch, daily \* backpack

**Kindergarten** - A child’s size sleeping bag in a pillowcase \* backpack large enough to hold a lunch, notebook, and folder \* an extra set of clothing.

**Summer Camp** - If your child will be enrolled for summer camp a summer supply list will be provided before summer camp begins.

**Toys**

We ask that you leave your child’s toys at home or in the car. We have many suitable toys and games for your child’s use. If an item is brought to the school, we cannot be held responsible for loss or damage. Due to safety we do not allow children to nap with dolls, toys or stuffed animals. If you have a book, musical tape, video, or other special item of interest, please check with your child’s teacher first and if possible, they will gladly share it with the class. Be sure that it is clearly labeled. We do not allow any kind of guns, war toys or action figures to be brought to school as they promote violence.

**Health Consideration**

We need your cooperation in keeping our school a healthy place for your child. In order to ensure this, we need you to watch for symptoms of contagious illnesses. This is to protect your child, as well as the other children attending our school. Below we have listed common illnesses and their symptoms from our Caring for Our Children Book, which we reference in case of illnesses. Please keep your child home if he/she has:

* CONJUNCTIVITIS: an eye infection commonly referred to as pink eye. The eye is red and itchy and may have yellow drainage.
* ELEVATED TEMPERATURE: of 101 degrees or more. If your child has a fever the night before, he/she is most likely not well enough to attend school. Children need to be fever free without the use of medications for a 24hour period before returning to school.
* DIARRHEA: loose, more frequent (occurring more than two times) or different colored bowel movement.
* VOMITING
* SEVERE CONGESTION: sneezing, nose drainage, coughing
* SYMPTOMS OF MEASLES, MUMPS, CHICKEN POX, OR LICE
* EAR OR THROAT INFECTION (strep throat): unless the child has been diagnosed by a doctor and has been on an antibiotic for 24hours.
* IMPETIGO: a very contagious skin disease.
* DIFFICULT OR RAPID BREATHING
* BLOOD / PUS: from ears, skin, urine, and stool
* RASH OR LESION:A child with a rash or suspicious lesion will be sent home until the rash or lesion disappears or until the parent provides a doctor’s note state that the rash is not contagious.

If your child shows any signs of the above illnesses while in attendance at our school, we will do our best to make the child comfortable while arrangements are made to have the child picked up. If a parent cannot be located within one hour of the child’s illness, the next person on the emergency contact form will be notified. Children who are sent home due to illness will not be permitted to return to the school until all signs of their illness have been gone for a 24-hour period. The only exception to this rule would be if a licensed physician were to indicate in writing that the child presented no health risk to others and was now able to participate in all regular school activities. Certain communicable diseases are required to be reported to the Department of Health in 24 hours so that control measures if needed can be implemented. Parents and staff are urged to notify the school within 24 hours if a child or family member has developed a known or suspected communicable disease. If your child has not been immunized against any of the following diseases, (due to the child’s age, medical condition, or religious beliefs) the state health department will require that your child be excluded from the school during an outbreak. Examples of “Reportable Diseases” do include the following but are not limited to:

Lyme Disease German Measles Giardiasis Measles

Whooping Cough Spinal Meningitis Mumps Rubella

Tuberculosis Salmonellosis Hepatitis A Shigellosis

**Immunization Policy**

All parents will be given a child assessment form upon enrollment. This form must be completed and returned to school immediately. Parents are responsible to have this form updated annually or as needed. The children must have a physical yearly and all vaccines must be current according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. (The AAP guidelines are located on the back of our health assessment forms.) If a parent does not have their child’s health form updated as needed, we may suspend care for your child until the form is current, pursuant the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

**Medication**

If your child requires medication while in our care, the state requires a medicine log be completed and signed daily, which has been taken from our book, Caring for our Children. All medication must remain in the original container and must be accompanied by a doctor’s note. The doctor’s note must have the child’s name, date(s) to be given, dosage amount, and any other specific directions. This procedure includes all prescription and non-prescription medicines. Upon arrival, notify the director of your child’s need for medicine, give the medicine and doctors note to the director so that it can be properly stored, and you must sign the medicine log. Do not give any medicine to a staff member it must be given to the director. The dispensation of medication is undertaken as a professional courtesy and is not required by law. Our school reserves the right to refuse to dispense medication to any child if necessary, procedures are not followed.

**Potty Training/Diapers**

We follow standards given by the American Academy of Pediatrics in potty training readiness. There are certain times when a child is ready for potty training (ages 2-3 years). We ask that you communicate with your child’s teacher when starting the potty-training process. We will only accept Velcro pull-up if this is your choice in potty training. We then hope to change over to underwear; please have plenty of spare clothes here at school. A child is fully potty trained when they can use the facility independently. In case of an accident, the child will be changed into their spare clothes and soiled clothes will be sent home in a plastic bag.

**Naps and Rest Time**

Every child will need a sleeping bag for rest time. The sleeping bag needs to be brought in a pillowcase. The sleeping bag will be kept at school and sent home at the end of the week to be laundered. Due to the limited cubby spaces, please do not send pillows, toys or stuffed animals. This allows those children who do wish to sleep, a quiet length of time in which they may do so. Quiet music is played, the lights are dimmed, and it is a period of relaxation for non-nappers as well. Although we make every effort to meet each child’s individual rest needs, it is difficult to guarantee a specific length of naptime, or wake-up time for each as a child’s rest needs vary with activity level, sleep patterns the night before, etc. It should be noted that in keeping a child awake if he/she wants to rest, opposes our philosophy on how children should be cared for in a child-centered program.

**Accident and Injury**

Our staff makes every effort to ensure the safety of your child. Unfortunately, minor accidents may occur. In order to keep you informed, you will be asked to sign an accident report, which will give you the details of the accident and first aid measures taken. A copy will be given upon request and a copy will be kept in your child’s school records. Scrapes and minor cuts are treated with soap, warm water, and a Band-Aid. Bumps are treated with a cold compress. In the case of a head injury, the parent will be notified, and the child will be watched closely for signs of a concussion. If the injury is of serious nature, you will be contacted immediately. If you cannot be reached, we will contact the first person on your Emergency Contact Form to make an emergency decision regarding medical treatment.

**Field Trips**

Many exciting outings are planned throughout the year. You will be notified in advance and can keep track of dates through the monthly calendars you receive. These field trips are an additional nominal fee. The field trips are listed on an activity fee sheet. Payment of the activity fee, in full is required prior to going on all trips. **If tuition is not current and paid in full your child will not be able to attend the field trip.** Pennsylvania seat belt laws require children to be 4 years or forty pounds before any child can be transported on field trips.

Parents must complete a Field trip permission form for their child to participate on the field trip. A few days before going on the field trip, parents are asked to sign and acknowledge that their child will be away from the school. Parents will also provide us with a daytime emergency number the day of the field trip. If parents do not sign the field trip acknowledgement form their child will not be able to attend the field trip. Field trips are a privilege for the children who attend our school; however, consistent behavior problems will preclude any child from participating in any field trip based upon the director’s discretion. Parents are welcome to join field trip. Notification of attending trip needs to be given to director and approved before date of field trip.

**Transportation**

Explore and Learn owns and operates their own 9 passenger van and a 5 passenger minivan. The vans are used to transport school age children to and from area elementary schools and local field trips. Children must be 4 years of age and 40 pounds in order to be transported in the van. All Children riding in the bus must wear a seat belt.

**Emergency Transportation**

If your child sustains a serious injury while at school, the center will follow the steps listed below:

1. The child will be attended to by a staff member and Director
2. The parents will be notified immediately
3. The center will call 9-1-1 and the child will be transported by ambulance to the hospital of the parents’ choice.
4. A staff member will ride along in the ambulance with the child to the hospital. The staff member will stay with the child until the parent arrives at the hospital.

In the event we need to vacate the premises for fire or any other emergency, children will exit building and walk to Guth Elementary (Located behind the Center)

**Meals and Snacks**

Breakfast, provided by the parent will be served to the children who arrive prior to 8:00am. All food should be sent ready to serve. The center provides a mid-morning snack that is served by our staff consisting of fresh fruit and/or a dry cereal. You are responsible to send in a lunch for your child in a **labeled** lunch bag. Please be sure that the food is “ready to eat”; fruit peeled and sliced. No lunch should have to be heated up for any reason. Absolutely no candy is allowed in a child’s lunch. If your child’s lunch is not brought to school with your child, a lunch must be brought in by 11:00am. If a lunch is not brought to school, the teacher will call the parent to pick up the child or drop off a lunch. The center only has snacks and is unable to provide the child with a lunch. We also provide an afternoon snack of pretzels or crackers.

**Allergies**

Explore and Learn takes allergies very seriously. If you child has an allergy, it will be posted in each classroom, the kitchen, and every teacher’s emergency bag. This is to keep all staff aware of the allergies in the school. If your child has an allergy to a food ingredient that is found in many snacks (peanuts, tree nuts, milk, egg, etc) you are to provide a snack for them each day. This prevents cross contamination of any kind. You will also need to have your child’s doctor complete an “Action Plan”, or the parent will need to fill out an action plan from the book, Caring for our Children, that discusses the allergies and anything else we need to know. If your child has an epi pen or an inhaler, you must provide one and keep it at school. As referenced in medication section a doctors prescribing must also be provided.

**Birthdays and Holidays**

The staff enjoy celebrating your child’s birthday with them. If you would like to celebrate your child’s birthday with his or her classmates by providing a snack or treat, please let your child's teacher know in advance. **We ask that you do not send in cakes,** rather we suggest perhaps brownies, cupcakes, rice krispie treats, Dixie cups etc. Holidays are also celebrated at the center. We will have a sign-up sheet for party goodies a few days before the holiday or Explore and Learn will supply the food items. Volunteers are always welcome, please let your child’s teacher know if you would like to help.

**Weather and Clothing**

Paint, water play, glue and vigorous outdoor activities are essentials parts of our program. Studies have shown that academic work is greatly improved after such activities. Weather permitting; all children will spend at least a half an hour outdoors each day. Please be sure to provide your children with proper clothing (sweater, jacket, hat, mittens, etc.). Your child’s shoes should also be appropriate for outdoor play. Open-toed shoes, flip-flops, or jellies are not acceptable types of footwear for outdoor play. We also discourage the use of winter boots as a use for all day footwear.

Each child will need to keep one complete set of seasonal clothing at school. Please include underwear, pants, shirt, socks, and shoes. **We strongly request that you label each article of clothing.** Soiled clothing must be taken home the same day and replaced the following day with a fresh set.

If you are missing an article of clothing, please check our Lost & Found box. If unclaimed, articles will be donated to a charitable organization.

**Family Involvement**

Family involvement is an all-purpose term that encompasses parent groups and committees, volunteering, family education and special events. We here at Explore and Learn believe the key to involvement is giving families a variety of ways to be involved in the life of the Center, without making families feel obligated.

Here are some ways to get involved at Explore and Learn:

* The center has an open-door policy. Please visit or call at any time.
* Explore the family resource shelf in the lobby, you will find books, articles, and other helpful materials on parenting.
* Attend events such as parenting seminars, special events, special luncheons, or center celebration.
* Chaperone field trips
* Organize or help with fundraisers or charity events
* Participate in our Box Top program
* Come as a mystery reader and read a book to your child’s class, share your occupation, etc.
* Share concerns or ideas with center management and faculty at any time.

**Family Communication**

Explore and Learn is committed to creating a strong home and center relationship by developing a system for open honest communication with regarding your child’s development and experience here at the Center. This includes a continual exchange of information between you and the Center faculty and management.

**Daily Communication Books**

Each child in the center has a communication book to record written information about their child’s day. This will also include any observations we made about your child. Papers or notices will often be sent home in the communication book so please check the book daily. We also encourage you to use this book to communicate concerns, changes in a child's life or any daily information with your teacher.

**Facebook**

Explore and Learn Childcare and Learning Center has a Facebook page in which photos and information are posted. Be sure to fill out a “Photo Permission Form” to let us know whether or not your child may be photographed.

**Email**

You will receive newsletters, school closing information, and other updates via email, Constant Contact. It is important that we are informed of new email addresses.

**Information Boards**

In the lobby area is a bulletin board for each classroom. Please check these regularly for information on daily events the classrooms participated in that day. It may also include center news, holiday closing dates, and curriculum information. The teachers will write the activities the children did throughout the day. Please make sure to look at the information board daily, you do not want your child to miss out.

 **Monthly Calendar**

Monthly calendars will be provided at both of the center’s entrances. The calendar will provide the dates of any special events, school closing, filed trips and any other activities that are going on throughout the month. Please check the calendar every day. Monthly calendar can also be found on www.exploreandlearn.com

**Parent/Teacher Conferences**

You will receive a progress report for your child three times a year, November, February and May. Please review the progress report, sign and return it to the school. Each time we distribute the progress report you will be given the opportunity to have an in-person or phone conference with your child’s teacher.

**Child Withdraw Policy**

A two-week written notice to the Director is required to withdraw a child from the program. Parents are responsible for the contracted rate for these two weeks, whether our services are used or not. Your original deposit will be credited to your account to cover the last week of care.

**Discipline Policy**

The Explore and Learn staff members are trained to use a positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self direction. Just a few examples used in this situation are: praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior; reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements and redirecting behaviors. For example, “please walk;” as opposed to “don’t run. Aggressive behavior towards other children or staff members will not be tolerated. We will make every effort to work with the child and the parent to promote good behavior. For the safety of all involved, if the aggressive behavior does not improve through our continued joint (center and parent) efforts, we reserve the right to dismiss your child from our program.

Expulsion Policy

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to ask that a child be removed from our program either on a short term or permanent basis.

We will make every effort to work with parents of children having difficulties in childcare. Behavior of children which disrupts normal classroom group activities on a frequent or extended basis may indicate physical or emotional problems requiring the attention of a professional specialist. The teacher and/or Director, with parental consent, will take the necessary steps to refer the child to the Public Health Nurse, a Mental Health Consultant, or other appropriate places for a professional evaluation.

Children displaying chronic disruptive behavior which is upsetting to the physical or emotional well being of another child may require the following actions:

1. Parents of the child will be called in for a conference. We will discuss the issues and identify some possible solutions. A plan of action will be developed and agreed upon by the parents, staff, and a health/behavioral specialist.
2. If the plan of action is not working, the parents will be called in for another meeting. We will discuss what is not working and develop another action plan.
3. If no progress has been made towards solving the problematic behavior, the child may be suspended from care. This suspension may range in length from the rest of the day to indefinitely.

Under the following circumstances we reserve the right to refuse your child admittance to the Center. We will readmit your child when the situation is resolved. In some cases, we may terminate services permanently.

**Child’s Actions for expulsion**

The child is at serious risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself

Ongoing physical abuse to staff or other children

Verbal abuse to staff or other children

**Parental actions for child’s expulsion**

Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payment

Failure to complete required forms (child’s health or immunization records, Emergency Contact or signed agreement)

Verbal abuse to staff

Threatens physical of intimidating actions towards staff members.

Continued, unexcused tardiness or pick-up after closing time. A written warning will be sent after two incidents. After the third incident, you will be asked to find other care for your child.

**Mandated Reporter**

**Definition:**

A Mandated Reporter is a person who, in the course of employment, occupation or practice of a profession, comes into contact with children. A mandated reporter shall report or cause a report to be made when the person has reasonable cause to suspect, on the basis of medical professional or other training and experience, that a child under the care, supervision, guidance or training of that person or of an agency, institution, organization or other entity with which that person is affiliated is a victim of child abuse, including child abuse by an individual who is not a perpetrator under the CPSL (Child Protective Services Law). The only exceptions to this are in respect to confidential communications made with a member of the clergy or an attorney.

The staff at Explore and Learn has taken the Mandated Reporter Training. They have been informed about the types of child abuse and what the signs are to identify it. If child abuse is suspected the staff at Explore and Learn are by law required to report it. The penalties for us not reporting child abuse are Misdemeanor 3 for the first circumstance and Misdemeanor 2 for additional circumstances.

**The types of Child abuse are:**

* Non Accidental PHYSICAL Injury
* Inappropriate SEXUAL contact or exploitation
* Act or failure to act which results in an IMMINENT RISK of serious injury or death
* Injury resulting from a pattern of NEGLECT of basic needs
* When a STUDENT is abused by a school employee

**Here are a few things to keep in mind when it comes to our staff reporting child abuse:**

* Proof is not needed to report child abuse; suspicion is enough for us to report it.
* HIPAA regulations and/or internal confidentiality agreements ***do not apply*** when you are a mandated reporter.
* The identity of reporters is kept confidential.

**To Report Child Abuse:**

* **Call PA 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline: (800) 932-0313**
* **Call 911 or police**
* **Call Local CYS Office:**
	+ Burks County (215) 348-600
	+ Montgomery County (610) 278-5800

**Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play is essential to each child’s health and development. The children play outdoors twice everyday weather permitting. We will check “Accu-weather” for the “real feel” temperature. State regulations require children to go outdoors daily weather permitting, when the temperature is between a wind chill of 25 & a heat index of 90 degrees Fahrenheit. If your child is well enough to be at school, then they are required to go outdoors with their class. Please dress them weather appropriately.

**Child Record Transfer**

Upon completion of your child’s care at Explore and Learn we will be more than happy to transfer or forward your child’s record to the school of your choice. In order to do so you must sign a “permission to release” form as well as provide information to whom and an address. Additional copies of your child’s record can be made for you with a 48 hour notice at a fee of $5.00.

**Parent Acknowledgement**

Please sign below and return to school with your child

I have read and received a copy of the Explore and Learn Childcare and Learning Center’s Parent Handbook. I understand the information presented and know who to contact should there be any changes in our agreement.

Parent/ Guardian Signature Date