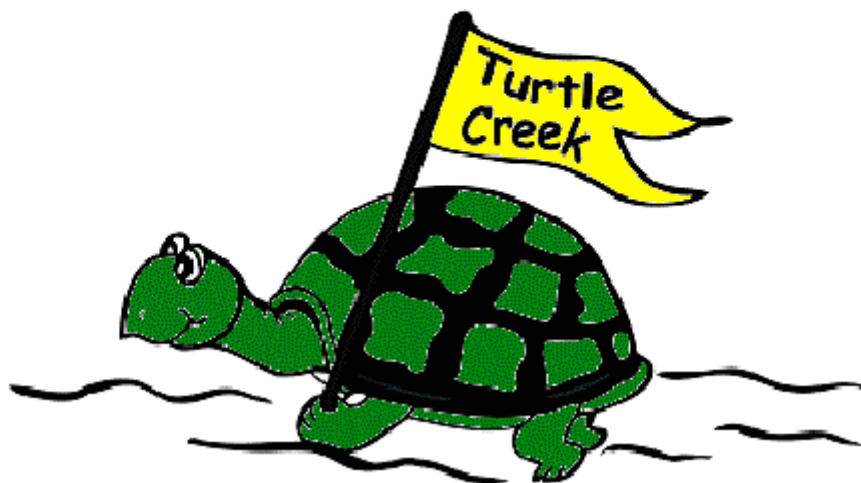


PARENT'S HANDBOOK



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Turtle Creek Learning Academy

Mission Statement

The mission of Turtle Creek Learning Academy is to provide exceptional education for the pre-school child in a loving, nurturing environment.

This is accomplished through the efforts of a professional, caring, and dedicated staff that inspire children, involve parents and support colleagues, so that all children successfully achieve a love of learning, confidence in themselves, and respect for others.

Philosophy

The philosophy of Turtle Creek Learning Academy is based on the values and beliefs of what constitutes a quality child development program. A quality child development program provides a safe, healthy and nurturing environment which facilitates the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children. It also responds to the needs of the student families served and creates a sense of belonging and responsibility among parents, children, staff and community resources to support, respect, and cherish the development of each child that the program serves.

This is accomplished through a program which incorporates play/socialization and skill reinforcement through multidisciplinary thematic approach within a developmental framework. Teachers facilitate and maintain an environment which provides a variety of experiences, materials and activities consistent with a developmental approach to a child's growth. Teachers plan with an understanding that children learn by playing. Children have opportunities throughout the day to freely select activities from stimulating high-interest centers and to participate in monitored play where teachers actively engage children in discussion, posing questions and ideas to enhance thinking and problem solving skills. When teachers introduce skills/concepts (i.e. math and reading readiness, science), the activities honor the playfulness and innate curiosity of children who learn best "by doing." Teachers also promote literacy through a language rich environment which is achieved through carefully planned quality literature, interesting reading and writing centers, and open communication which is valued and encouraged. Hands-on-activities, music, movement and art experiences help children to progress along the developmental continuum. New Jersey's Core Curriculum Standards for Pre-schools and Kindergarten are consulted for content, expectations, thematic ideas, and valuable assessments.

Finally, staff understands that the best atmosphere for optimum learning and happiness is created by building a welcoming and loving sense of community within the classroom, the school, and among families. Staff creates opportunities and structures activities for children that encourage empowerment, confidence, cooperation and respect for self and others, particularly in light of the increasing diversity in today's classrooms. Staff is sensitive to the challenges facing parents and works in tandem with them. All teachers and administrators conduct themselves with an understanding that the initial learning and school experiences create attitudes in children and families about learning, about themselves and about school, which can last a lifetime.

Goals

At Turtle Creek Learning Academy, children will:

- Feel a sense of love and belonging;
- Develop socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively;
- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills;
- Learn to become a responsible member of a group and relate to others;
- Learn to appreciate individual differences and value diversity;
- Develop self- control and independence;
- Develop a positive self concept, and self identity;
- Develop self expression and creative expression;
- Develop respect and build community in the classroom;
- Develop social interaction skills;
- Develop communication skills and the ability to express thoughts, ideas and feelings;
- Develop an ability, on their level, to understand spoken and written symbolic representations
(i.e. number and letter systems);
- Develop an interest in books and stories.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	5
<u>Policies</u>	5
Activity Fee	10
After Care	7
Appropriate Dress	9
Arrival & Pick-up Procedures	6
Attendance	6
Back to School Night	7
Before Care	7
Change of Clothing	9
Channels of Communication	11
Child Abuse & Neglect	10
Class List	10
Communicable Diseases	12
Conferences	7
Cut-off date	5
Delayed Opening	7
Discipline	8
Dispensing Medication	8
Drop off Schedule	6
Expulsion Policy	11
Graduation	7
Half Day Schedule	6
Health Forms	8
Health & Safety	9
Holidays	7
Transfer Student	5
Nature Walk	10
Orientation	7
Parent Teacher Organization	10
Parent Visitation	8
Personal Hygiene	9
Pick-up Schedule	6
Release of Children	6
Report Cards	7
School Calendar	5
School Closings	7
School Pictures	10
School Supplies	11
Snacks	10
Student Placement	5
Toilet Training	9
Toys from home	10
Washing Hands	9
Withdrawal	5

INTRODUCTION

This handbook was prepared to familiarize you with the policies and procedures that govern our learning center. Many of the policies included in this handbook are required by the state of New Jersey in order for our center to be licensed. The Bureau of Licensing, an agency within the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), publishes the Manual of Requirements for Childcare Centers. A copy of the manual is on file at the learning center. You may request to see it at any time or we can supply the address where you may request your own copy. As a parent/guardian of an enrolled child, you have the right to bring to our attention or the attention of DYFS any practice or condition, which you believe, may be in noncompliance with state regulations.

Our primary goal at Turtle Creek Learning Academy Inc. is to provide a safe and stimulating environment for your child to grow and learn. Keep this handbook on file and use it as a reference if a question of policy arises. We would be more than glad to discuss any issue or concern with you.

POLICIES

STUDENT PLACEMENT AND CUT-OFF DATE

Students are admitted and placed in classes after due consideration of age, previous school experience, emotional and physical maturity, and achievement levels. We adhere to the December 31st cut-off date of the Marlboro Township School District, however, any or all of the following may be used to determine proper placement: evaluation of previous records, results of screening by teacher/director, and/or trial placement in an appropriate class. The final decision on student placement will be determined by the Director(s).

TRANSFER STUDENT

Any transfer student who applies for admittance into Turtle Creek Learning Academy any time throughout the year will be required to meet with the Director before being accepted into the school for screening and/or interview.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Turtle Creek Learning Academy's school calendar is reflective of the Marlboro Township School Calendar with some exceptions. This calendar will be available to parents in the spring, prior to the start of the school year in September. The calendar is subject to change depending on the school closings.

WITHDRAWAL

Before a parent is permitted to withdraw his/her child from the school, the parent must meet with the director and the classroom teacher. If his/her child's needs are not being adequately met the school, the parents will participate in creating a plan for remediation. The school requests at least three weeks for the teacher to implement the plan. Another parent-teacher-director meeting will take place after that time. If improvement is not noted by both parent **and** teacher, the school will refund the parent's pro-rated tuition.

ARRIVAL, PICK-UP PROCEDURES AND EARLY PICK-UP

For the safety of your child, we ask that you park your car and accompany your child inside the building at arrival time. Likewise, at dismissal, we ask that you enter the building and escort your child safely to your parked car. Limit your drop off/pick-up time to 5 minutes. Please call if you wish a conference with your child's teacher. The teacher cannot meet with a parent during drop off and pick up time; her attention must be focused on all the children at this time. Please do not drop your child off before arrival time. A teacher may not be there or she may be preparing for the day of teaching. Because the school is locked during school hours, please notify your child's teacher in writing if you plan on picking your child up earlier than the scheduled pick-up time.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

On the enrollment agreement, parents have indicated two other people who are authorized to pick up their child from the learning center other than the parents/guardians. We will not release your child to any other person besides those two people. We ask as a courtesy that you telephone the school to inform us that the authorized person will be picking up. If, on a rare occasion, another adult is the only person available to pick up your child at dismissal, you will be required to send in a written and dated authorization. This authorization should include the full name of the person who will be picking up your child on that particular day. We will require that the person present proper identification to us. We ask that you confirm this authorization by telephoning the center. In the event of an emergency where you or another authorized person cannot pick up, the parent must speak to both the teacher and the director to verify that the child can be released to designated person.

If a non-custodial parent is not included among those persons authorized by the custodial parent to pick up the child, you must clearly indicate that on the enrollment agreement and attach the appropriate documentation.

If an authorized person fails to pick up a child at the time of the school's daily closing the following shall be put into effect:

1. The child will be supervised at all times.
2. Staff members will attempt to contact the parents or other authorized persons.
3. An hour or more after closing, if we have not heard from parent or other authorized person, a staff member shall use his/her own discretion in caring for the child which may include taking the child home with her, or calling the Division of Youth and Family Services. The Director will determine the best course of action for each situation.

The above protocol shall be followed by a staff member if the parent or persons authorized by the parent appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the Director, the child would be placed at risk or harm if released to such an individual.

ATTENDANCE AND DROP-OFF/PICK-UP TIME

The continuity of education is very important. Your child will benefit more fully from the educational program with consistent attendance. Likewise, it is imperative that you adhere to the school's drop-off and pick-up schedule. Teachers are instructed to follow their posted schedules; hence, they will not wait for late children before beginning their daily activities.

HALF DAY SCHEDULE

There will be several days throughout the year when the center will operate on a half-day schedule to accommodate conferences and administrative days. Kindergarten and Mini-Day will be dismissed at 12:00. Our three half-day Pre-K and 3 year old classes will follow their regular schedules. All other full day classes will be dismissed 2 ½ hours after their regularly scheduled starting time. Kindergarten Enrichment will follow their regular schedule for the AM and PM classes.

DELAYED OPENING

Turtle Creek Learning Academy follows the weather closings of the Marlboro Township Public School District. Listen to the following radio stations, 1410 AM, 106.3 FM or 92.7 FM. Parents can also call the school to hear a recorded message regarding a delayed opening or watch channel 12 New Jersey regarding a delayed opening. All classes will start two hours after their scheduled times and will be dismissed at their regular time. Our three year old class and our three half-day Pre Kindergarten classes should bring lunch instead of snack on these days and will be dismissed 2 hrs. after arrival. Our AM Kindergarten Enrichment will be cancelled and our PM Kindergarten Enrichment will be held at its regularly scheduled time.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

As stated on the enrollment agreement, the first four school closings due to bad weather or other emergencies will not be made up. If the center closes for any other reason, the school year will be extended to make up the lost days. School closings will be based on the closings announced by the Marlboro Township School District. Local radio stations and cable channels broadcast school closings. A message will also be left on the answering machine at the school when the school closes for bad weather. If our school day begins and the weather deteriorates, a parent may be asked to pick up his/her child early before the roads are unsafe to travel. Teachers will call the parents for the early pick up. If the parent is unavailable to come and transport the child home, the teachers will begin to call the other authorized people listed on the enrollment document.

ORIENTATION, BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT, CONFERENCES, REPORT CARDS, AND GRADUATION

Orientation for the parents and children will be held prior to the first day of school. At this meeting, the director and classroom teachers will review school policies and procedures. Back to School Night is held in September or October. At this time, the teacher will discuss the curriculum, his/her instructional strategies, and the day-to-day routine at the center. Conferences are held in December and March at which time the teacher will discuss with the parents the progress of their child. A written assessment (report card) will be distributed to parents three times throughout the year. Our 3 year olds receive two report cards.

All of our students will present an end-of-the year program in June. A graduation program will be held for our kindergarten students at this time as well.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

The school provides before and after school care by a qualified staff member for those parents needing the service. There will be an additional fee charged for this childcare. The hours for the morning care begin at 8:30 am. The school requests that children should be picked up by 4:30 p.m. If parents need to use this service on an occasional basis, the school requests that the parent telephone the school at least one day in advance so the staff can be prepared for the total number of children.

HOLIDAYS

The staff respects the multicultural nature of our community. Therefore, teachers will attempt to expose children to the traditions of many cultures. We encourage parents to assist us in enriching our cultural diversity by sharing family traditions with us.

PARENT VISITATION

Our school must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center's director or classroom teacher who can advise them of what opportunities are available. Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the Director or any staff member. We would appreciate a phone call or a note to let us know you are coming just for the sake of uninterrupted educational continuity, but parental visits are welcome. If at any time the Director feels that parental visits are excessive and impede the growth of your child, she will discuss this with the visiting parent.

DISCIPLINE

The center is responsible for the total education of your child. This includes the intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development of all of our children. Teachers, parents and students share in the responsibility of developing children to their fullest. Positive discipline is one way of teaching children how to behave appropriately in social situations, which will develop in them a sense of citizenship and responsibility to themselves and others.

The philosophy of the center emphasizes positive appropriate behavior through rewards. Cooperation and encouragement are fostered rather than competition or criticism. The teacher has the responsibility of structuring the physical environment and planning the instructional day to encourage appropriate behavior. Furthermore, the teacher is also responsible for modeling befitting manners and interactions. When an occasion arises in which a child's behavior may need attention, the teacher has options depending on his/her professional assessment of the situation. She may redirect the child's attention, furnish additional choices, or provide individualized attention to help a child deal with a particular situation. No matter how the teacher chooses to handle the situation, she is expected to consistently reinforce that it is the behavior that is being corrected. The child is still loved, valued, and appreciated.

Parents are expected to reinforce appropriate behavior at home. If a child's behavior is so disruptive as to interfere with the instruction of other children in the class, then the director will meet with the parents to discuss other alternatives which may include, on rare occasions, the removal of the disruptive child from the center.

HEALTH FORMS

Two health records are required for each child: a Universal Health form and a State of New Jersey Health History and Appraisal form. A medical form will be given to you at the time of enrollment. This form must be completed by your child's doctor (no attachments) and returned to the school by August 15th, ***no child will be admitted to the school without them.*** A provisional admittance form will be provided for those students whose scheduled well check up with their physician falls after the September 1st due date. A doctor's signature is required to verify the scheduled check-up. Consult your doctor for the immunizations that are required. If an immunization is contraindicated for medical reasons or if a religious exemption is claimed for the child, a form must be completed by your physician to be kept on file.

DISPENSING OF MEDICATION

Because of the litigious nature of dispensing medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, the school has adopted a policy not to dispense any medication. If a child needs medication administered on an acute or chronic basis; the parent must come to the school and dispense the medication to his/her child. On rare occasions the school will make exceptions when the administration of an allergic suppression over-the-counter drug, (i.e. Benedryl) will help to prevent a full blown allergic reaction. In that case, specific protocol for

administering that medication must be written by the parent and the child's doctor. In the event that the child's allergies are so severe which may require the administration of epinephrine, the school requires a specific epi-pen protocol to be completed and signed by both parent and physician. The school will provide the parents with the necessary forms. These forms must be submitted by August 15, before the commencement of the school year to allow time for review and rehearsal in the event of an emergency.

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF YOUR CHILD

Your child's health is a matter of great importance to all of us. If your child appears to be sick when he/she is dropped off, we will ask that you take your child home. If your child appears to have any symptoms of illness during the school day, your child will be isolated and we will call you to pick him/her up from school. Please keep your child home if he/she has a fever, heavy nasal discharge, consistent cough, suspicious rashes, sore throat, abdominal pain or reddened eyes. Children, who have been ill, must be home for a full 24 hours after being on antibiotics and show no signs of illness before returning to school. For children who have missed school because of muscular or skeletal injuries (i.e. broken bones, sprained ankles, etc.), a note from the doctor indicating the child's limitations will be required upon the child's return. If the child cannot participate in gross muscle activities, such as outdoor play, he/she will be assigned to another classroom and supervised by that teacher until his/her class has completed the activity. Please contact the school if your child contracts a communicable disease. We would like to apprise other parents of this situation. Your privacy will be protected, however it is important for other parents to be aware of the situation.

WASHING HANDS -ANTIBACTERIAL WIPES

The teachers instruct all students in the proper way of washing hands and require all students to wash prior to eating. On the occasion that children cannot wash with soap and water, they will be given a wipe to clean their hands. When there is an outbreak of any contagious bacteria or virus in the classroom, antibacterial wipes will be used instead.

APPROPRIATE DRESS AND SHOE WEAR

Parents are requested to send their child to school in clothing that will allow them to fully participate in all the activities that the school offers. Closed toe and rubber soled shoes (no slip-ons) are best for playground activities.

PERSONAL HYGIENE, TOILET TRAINING AND CHANGE OF CLOTHING FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

In the event of an accident, we request that parents send in a labeled change of clothing in a labeled bag by the first week of school. If the child has an accident, the teacher will calmly and privately remove the child from the classroom and assist him/her in changing from the soiled clothes into dry and clean clothes. Teachers will express sensitivity and understanding and will reassure the child and that "next time they'll remember to use the potty." Teachers understand that it is not uncommon for children to regress to wetting and/or soiling as a reaction to stress. Teachers will continue to provide a nurturing and loving environment in order to reduce children's apprehensions which may cause accidents.

For our first year students, our school requires that all children be toilet trained prior to entering school in September. If a child continues to have frequent accidents, the director will discuss options with the child's parents, which may include removing the child from the center until such time as he/she is fully toilet trained.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The state of New Jersey requests that we inform our parents that we are responsible for reporting child abuse and/or neglect. If a staff member suspects any form of child abuse, it is the legal responsibility of the staff member to inform the Division of Youth and Family Services. The state does not require the staff to discuss this matter with the parents first. Speak to a staff member if you have any questions about what constitutes abuse and/or neglect.

SNACKS/PEANUT FREE SCHOOL

Given the high incidence of food allergies and the children's varying tastes, the center requires students to bring in a simple and nutritious snack from home. Teachers request that students not share snacks. The school will provide a snack if a student forgets. Because of the high incidence of nut allergies and the seriousness of the reactions, Turtle Creek Learning Academy has designated itself as a nut free school. For the safety of our children, we request that parents pack nut free lunches and snacks. We also ask that you send in a healthy snack, i.e., fruit or vegetables. More information about this will be distributed at orientation.

CLASS LISTS

Students will be provided with a class list at the beginning of the school year. Notify us in writing if you do not wish your name, address and telephone number included on the list.

SCHOOL PICTURES

A professional photographer takes school pictures in the fall. All students will have their individual and class photos taken. The purchase of the pictures is optional.

TOYS FROM HOME

Because the school will not assume responsibility for any toys brought from home, we discourage children from bringing in any personal belongings unless requested by the teacher.

PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION AND PARENT PARTICIPATION

An informal parent-teacher organization will meet throughout the year to continue to develop parent/school/community relationships. We encourage parent participation and volunteerism at the school. Working together to benefit the children will be our primary goal. Turtle Creek Learning Academy eagerly invites parents to participate in activities at the school. If a parent has a special skill or hobby or simply desires to read to the class or create an appropriate art project, please discuss your desires with the teacher. Parental participation is warmly appreciated.

ACTIVITY FEE - NATURE WALKS

An activity fee will be required from all parents at the beginning of the school year to cover the cost of field trips, guest speakers, special parties and functions. A pro-rated refund will not be provided if a child does not participate in all of the activities.

On occasion, a teacher may take her/his class on a nature walk in the neighborhood. The parent must sign a permission slip in the beginning of the year for a child to participate in a class walk. Field trip permission slips

will be sent home before each scheduled event for a parent's signature granting permission for the child to participate in the field trip. If a child cannot participate in the event for any reason, including a medical reason, the child must be kept at home for the day. Childcare services will not be provided at the school for individual students not attending.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Before school starts the classroom teacher will inform the parents by letter of any required school supplies. Students are to bring in these supplies during the first few days of school.

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

The school requests that all parents adhere to the chain of command when addressing concerns or questions. If a parent has a question about classroom activities, procedures, or policies, the teacher must be contacted first. The director will not speak to the parent until the parent talks to the teacher and an attempt has been made to resolve the problem/concern. If the parent does not receive a satisfactory response, then the parent should notify the director of the school.

EXPULSION POLICY

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

IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION

The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself.
Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members.
Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION

Failure to make tuition payments.
Failure to complete required forms including child's immunization records.
Verbal abuse to staff.

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

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

SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION

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

POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

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

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

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

TABLE OF EXCLUDABLE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

A child who contracts any of the following diseases may not return to the center without a health care provider's note stating that the child presents no risk to himself/herself or others:

Respiratory Illnesses

Chicken Pox **
German Measles*
Hemophilus Influenzae*
Measles*
Meningococcus*
Mumps*
Strep Throat
Tuberculosis*
Whooping Cough*

Gastrointestinal Illnesses

Campylobacter*
Escherichia coli*
Giardia Lamblia*
Hepatitis A*
Salmonella*
Shigella*

Contact Illnesses

Impetigo
Lice
Scabies
Shingles

* Reportable diseases that must be reported to the health department by the center.

** Note: If a child has chicken pox, a health care provider's note is not required for re-admitting the child to

the center. A note from the parent is required, stating either that at least six days has elapsed since the onset of the rash, or that all sores have dried and crusted.

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

This handbook should have answered many of your questions as to the policies that govern our school. If you have any additional concerns or suggestions, please feel free to comment.