

LEARNING TREE PRESCHOOL
Parent Manual

OVERVIEW OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHILDCARE MINISTRY

PURPOSE AND POLICY

Learning Tree Preschool (LTP) was established by First United Methodist Church (FUMC) as a nurturing ministry of this congregation to families in our community. We believe that each child is a child of God and should have every opportunity to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually to his/her fullest potential.

LTP is a child-centered, multi-ethnic school where children receive developmentally appropriate instruction in motor, social, emotional, language, and academic skills.

Our goal is to serve an inter-faith community. We strive to teach children to exhibit the loving, caring behaviors associated with Christ's teachings toward themselves, their classmates, and their community.

MISSION STATEMENT

LTP strives to create an atmosphere in which children can develop curiosity, independence, self-confidence, creativity, and social skills through teacher directed and self-initiated activities using age-appropriate curriculum and close family/child/teacher interaction.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

LTP utilizes learning approaches that encourage self-development, including physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth, and cultural awareness. We provide sensitive and responsive care giving, and our teaching emphasizes active discovery as the cornerstone for children's learning. Through these approaches, the LTP programs foster a broad spectrum of development for our children. Such philosophy and practices nurture an independent, self-confident, and caring child, and encourage the development of his/her intellect, reasoning, and curiosity.

LTP has the following beliefs:

- All children learn according to their unique learning styles.
- Children learn through hands-on experiences created and facilitated by the staff.
- Children learn best when provided a variety of experiences.
- Age-appropriate materials and activities must be available to children for self-initiated play.
- Helping children develop independent skills will assist the child in meeting with success.
- Children work/learn best when they are in classrooms with small child/staff ratios.
- A competent staff is critical for the success of LTP.

- Communication from the staff to parent/guardian and parent/guardian to staff concerning each child's development is crucial.
- Quality care must be provided at a competitive, affordable cost to all children.
- Parents/guardians must be aware of, supportive of, and involved in LTP to make their child's school experiences a success.

LTP PROGRAMS

LEARNING TREE PRESCHOOL

LTP consists of a possibility of two programs: Preschool and extended care.

Children will be placed in an age-appropriate classroom with the LTP Director having final authority over child placement and classroom changes.

Classes may be added, combined, or eliminated as enrollment dictates and as approved by the LTP Board.

LTP SCHEULE

LTP follows the BCSC school year calendar (the exception being that our school year typically begins after and ends before BCSC and our snow make up days are scheduled differently). School is typically held for thirty-four weeks, excluding holidays. See the current LTP School Calendar for dates.

In the event of a BCSC delay, we alter our day to run from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm. In the event of a BCSC weather-related closing, LTP will also be closed.

If LTP is closed due to weather, LTP may remain open additional days past the regular closing day, for a maximum of 5 days. If this should occur, information for additional days will be sent home.

EXTENDED CARE

Extended Care is available to all children enrolled at LTP. The extended hours are daily from 7:30 am to 9:00 am and 11:30 am to 5:30 pm. Extended Care is available on any normal operating LTP day, not just those the child attends regularly. Parents/guardians are asked to sign up their children for Extended Care on the sign-up sheet located on the hallway table outside the Preschool office. Parents/guardians must give 24 hours notice when they want to use Extended Care since numbers are limited due to available space and staffing. LTP may cancel a day of Extended Care if there are not a minimum number of children. The charge for Extended Care will be billed monthly.

Morning Extended Care

Children attending Morning Extended Care should be dropped off in the Tulips class room (# 204). When dropping off your child, please initial and document the drop-off

time on the sign-up sheet located in room 204. Morning Extended Care is not available on a weather-related delay or closing.

Please do not send breakfast with your child unless previously approved by the Morning Extended Care staff.

Afternoon Extended Care

Children attending Afternoon Extended Care will be brought to the designated Afternoon Extended Care rooms after the LTP school day ends at 11:30 am. Children attending Afternoon Extended Care only should be dropped off after 11:30 am in the designated Afternoon Extended Care room. Please wait to take your child into the designated Afternoon Extended Care room until other parents have picked up their children who attended LTP that morning. After picking up your child from Afternoon Extended Care following the LTP pick-up procedure, parents/guardians must also sign-out their child from Afternoon Extended Care by initialing and documenting the time of pick-up on the sign-out sheet.

Parents/guardians are asked to send a lunch, including a drink, with their child on the day(s) their child is to stay for Afternoon Extended Care. The child's name must be marked on the lunch container to ensure each child receives the correct lunch. Lunches are served between 11:30 am and 12:00 pm. Staff members must discard any perishable or opened food that is not eaten.

Afternoon Extended Care activities may include art and craft centers with age-appropriate materials, music, gross motor movement, creative activities, and discovery activities. At 1:30 pm, children will be taken to a designated room for quiet time. Cots will be available for naps. Parents/guardians may send a blanket, pillow, and/or favorite stuffed animal all marked with the child's name. Storage is available for these items Monday through Friday. After a sufficient amount of quiet time, children who are not napping will be taken to a designated room for learning center time.

SUMMER SCHOOL

LTP may offer a summer school program if enough teachers and students indicate a definite interest in the program.

SPECIAL SERVICES WITH BCSC

LTP, in association with BCSC, accommodates children from the BCSC Community Preschool in LTP classes. The LTP Director and the BCSC Early Childhood Specialist determine appropriate student placement and staffing. BCSC is responsible for full monthly tuition, registration fee, and materials fee. The LTP Director, the LTP Board, and/or the BCSC Early Childhood Specialist review the effectiveness of this association each year.

SPECIAL SERVICES WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES

LTP will work with community agencies to provide LTP and/or Extended Care services to children in their care. Childcare is subject to availability within the Indiana State Licensing Standards for staff to children ratios.

ENROLLMENT, REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION POLICIES

ENROLLMENT GUIDELINES

The maximum number of children, which can be accepted in the LTP program, shall be naturally limited to available space and staff. Guidelines for maximum enrollment will be in accordance with Indiana State Licensing Standards.

Exceptional children will be considered for enrollment by individual evaluation of the LTP Director, the LTP Assistant Director, and the LTP teaching staff. LTP Board members may be consulted as needed in making evaluations. No special programming or specially trained LTP staff person is available for specific attention which may be needed by a mildly handicapped child, abused or neglected child, or one learning English as a Second Language. However, such children will be given every consideration by the program staff if parents/guardians, BCSC, or other local family service agencies that deem LTP programs to be of benefit to the child in question make such requests.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

Registration for the following school year begins during the winter term and is on going until classes are full. Upon registration, the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director will give new families an Enrollment Form and Registration Bill. Current families will receive an Enrollment Form attached to their next Tuition Bill, which will also include the registration fee. A child is officially enrolled when the Enrollment Form has been filled out, signed, and returned to the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director accompanied by the non-refundable registration fee. In the event that any information on the Enrollment Form changes throughout the school year, please notify the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

The following forms will accompany the first month's Tuition Bill sent to the enrolled families in July:

--Child Information Form – background information to help the teachers better understand the child and his/her family.

--Emergency Release Form – form that gives authorization to the LTP staff to obtain medical treatment for the child in case of an emergency when a parent/guardian cannot be reached.

Completed forms and the first month's tuition payment must be returned to the LTP office prior to the beginning of school.

A copy of the Parent Handbook and additional forms, such as the Child Safety/Emergency Card, Walking Field Trip Permission Form, Photo Permission Form, and Parent's Notice will be given to the families at the yearly Open House. These forms should be returned to the LTP Director's office the first week of school.

In the event that any information on the above forms changes throughout the school year, please notify the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director.

PERMISSION SLIPS

A permission slip is required for all field trips and must be signed by the parent/guardian acknowledging that he/she is aware of the field trip. This permission slip will contain the time and date of the field trip.

- A blanket Walking Field Trip Permission Form covering all walking field trips will be kept on file in the LTP Director's office for each child.
- A separate Individual Field Trip Permission Form will be required for each field trip involving transportation.

A signed Photo Permission Form will be kept on file in the LTP Director's office for each child.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CHILD'S RECORDS

Personal information about children and families will be kept confidential in files in the LTP Director's office. The LTP Director and the LTP Assistant Director will have access to all records. Teachers will only have access to records of children in their classroom. They must first obtain permission from the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director to check information in a child's file.

PAYMENT OF TUITION AND FEES

Tuition is based on a fee for the entire regular school year, divided into nine monthly billings. Tuition remains the same each month regardless of holidays, vacations, snow days, illnesses, or number of weeks in the month; therefore, no refunds can be given. For current tuition fees, please see the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director. Children cannot attend on days other than their scheduled days unless the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director gives previous approval.

Non-refundable registration fees are billed upon registering for the following school year. An individual fee is \$50 and a family fee is \$75.

Extended Care fees for the previous month will be billed on a monthly basis. A \$10 late pick-up fee will be billed per child for each 15-minute increment the child is picked up after LTP closes for the day.

Statements are billed a month in advance and issued by the first day of the month. All payments are due by the 5th day of the month in the LTP Director's office. Checks are to be made out to Learning Tree School and your child's name should be written in the memo portion of the check. A late fee of \$10 will be billed for payments that are paid after the 10th day of the month. A \$25 fee will be charged for all payments returned for non-sufficient funds.

END-OF-FISCAL YEAR STATEMENTS

An End-of-Fiscal Year Statement itemizing tuition and Extended Care fees will be issued upon request.

PAST DUE ACCOUNTS

The LTP Director, the LTP Assistant Director, and/or the LTP Board Finance Manager will contact a delinquent account on or near the 10th day of the month to be reminded that payment is due. If payment is still not received after several days, a letter will be mailed stating our policy and requesting payment.

If the request for payment is still being ignored, a second and final letter will be mailed stating that payment has not been received. More importantly, it will state that they will be required to withdraw their child from LTP if they have not made their account current as of the next school break (i.e. Fall Break, Christmas Break, or Spring Break). Soon after this letter is mailed, the recipient will be contacted to schedule a conference regarding their account situation and pending withdrawal from LTP.

The child will not be allowed to return to LTP after the indicated school break if their balance has not been paid in full by that break. Exceptions to this policy will only be considered after a consultation between the parent/guardian; the LTP Director and/or the LTP Assistant Director; and the LTP Board Finance Manager.

Scholarships

Registration for LTP programs shall be offered to families in need based on size, income, and special circumstances. Anyone seeking financial assistance may apply for a scholarship. A Scholarship Application will be available from the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director or on the website. Priority will be given to children already enrolled in the program when circumstances change in the family.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/guardians are asked to bring the following with each child daily in the LTP provided bag:

1. Change of clothing in a re-sealable baggy (for warm/cold weather)
2. Diapers or training pants, wet wipes, and diaper rash ointment (if needed by the child)
3. Sipper cup marked with child's name for children in the Toddlers and 2's classes
4. Other items such as toys, books, etc. will be at the teacher's discretion

Candy, gum, money, toy guns, or other items that promote the use of physical force as a main source of problem solving are items not allowed at LTP.

Parents/guardians are invited to be a part of LTP by volunteering in the classroom, making classroom materials at home, or assisting in planning activities for his/her child's class. Parents/guardians are encouraged to submit suggestions and help make school improvements. We value our parents'/guardians' input.

Parents/guardians are asked to notify the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director of any changes in address, phone number, emergency numbers, etc.

VOLUNTEER AND VISITOR INFORMATION

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are welcome in all classes and need to wear a nametag, which is to be worn at all times. Interested volunteers may contact a teacher, the LTP Director, or the LTP Assistant Director for more information.

All classroom and/or school volunteers need to fill out a Request for Limited Adult Criminal History Information form prior to volunteering in the classroom or at a school function. The Request for Limited Adult Criminal History Information form can be obtained from the LTP Director's office and once completed returned to the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director. The LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director will notify the potential volunteer once the background check has been completed and he/she is eligible to volunteer at LTP.

VISITORS

LTP encourages parents and guardians to visit the school. They are to notify the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director of their presence and pick up a nametag, which is to be worn at all times. Visitors will arrange to talk to the staff outside the classroom if necessary.

PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Each classroom teacher will determine classroom policy on bringing personal possessions to class. Children may be asked to bring items from home for show and tell and/or to assist them with separation anxiety or comfort. Please be sure to label all possessions, including coats, bottles, sipper cups, diaper bags, extra clothes, and lunches.

DRESS

The children will be outside for gross motor activities or to walk to the library or around the neighborhood. Please be sure to dress your child appropriately for the weather. During cold weather, please be sure your child has a hat, coat, mittens/gloves, and boots (if it is messy). Please be sure the children's clothes are manageable for toileting and dressing. Your child may be going up/down stairs, playing in our playroom, or on the playground. For this reason, please be sure the shoes your child wears to school are safe to walk and run in.

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP PROCEDURE

For the safety of the children during drop-off and pick-up times, LTP maintains the following procedures:

Parking

Ample parking is provided in the FUMC east parking lot for drop-off and pick-up. Please do not use the handicapped spaces in the parking lot unless you have a handicapped sticker or permit. Please be sure to park only in marked spaces. An adult must walk the child to class and out to his/her car.

Drop-Off

Classes begin at 9:00 am and classrooms will open at 8:55 am. If you need to drop-off your child earlier, place the child in the Morning Extended Care program. Children should not be dropped off except at their classroom or the Morning Extended Care room, and will not be allowed to leave the classroom on their own or without an authorized adult.

Pick-Up

NO CHILD WILL BE RELEASED TO ANYONE, REGARDLESS OF WHO THEY ARE, WITHOUT THE DIRECT PERMISSION OF THE LEGAL PARENT OR GUARDIAN. Please pick up your child from the designated area, which may include his/her classroom, the playroom (Room 213), the playground, or an Afternoon Extended Care designated room. If you need to pick up your child early, please notify the teacher so he/she can make arrangements to have your child ready.

In order to pick up a child(ren) from LTP, the designated adult must present their state issued photo id (i.e. drivers license) to the classroom staff if they are not recognized by the staff member as the parent/guardian/usual pick up person. No child will be released

to anyone who is not in possession of the photo id. Upon presentation of photo id, the staff member will verify that person is on the parent/guardian provided list of approved pick up persons, then the staff member will release the child(ren).

In the event that the designated adult is not on record for pick up, either with a note from the parent/guardian or through the classroom/office pick up list, the LTP Director, Assistant Director or the Extended Care Coordinator will call the parent/guardian to verify authorization for pick up. Upon that authorization the child(ren) will be released.

Children, who are not picked up by 11:30 am and are not scheduled to attend the Extended Care program, will be taken to the Afternoon Extended Care designated room. A \$10 late pick-up fee will be billed per child for each 15-minute increment the child is picked up after the regular scheduled LTP class. If a problem arises and you are going to be late, please call the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director. Late charges apply and are billed for all morning programs, as well as the Extended Care program.

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

Please report your child's absence to the LTP office (812-378-2825) as soon as possible.

If the parent/guardian will be late in picking up the child, please contact the LTP office as soon as possible. Family vacation dates should also be given to the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director if the child will be absent.

HEALTH

SICK CHILDREN

Children must be well enough to participate in all activities. Please call about any questions concerning health.

In order to protect all children, we ask parents/guardians to keep their children home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms within 24 hours before the school day:

- **A fever over 100 degrees F (37.8 C)**
- **Signs of a newly developing cold or severe cough**
- **Diarrhea, vomiting, or an upset stomach**
- **Any discharge or drainage from the eyes, nose, ears, or an open sore**
- **Any sign of lice or their eggs**
- **Any unexplained rash**

If a child is brought to school exhibiting any of these symptoms, the parents/guardians should be referred to the LTP Director and/or the LTP Assistant Director, who will determine if the child may stay at the school that day.

If a child should become ill, the child will be taken to the LTP Director's office. The LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director will notify the parents/guardians and/or call the emergency contact number. In an emergency situation, LTP will use the Emergency Release Form and take the child to the hospital emergency room.

If a child contracts lice, the child should be kept home until completely clear and nit free. When the child returns to LTP, he/she should be taken to the LTP office to be checked before returning to the classroom.

In the event a child contracts a communicable disease, the parents/guardians or teacher must notify the LTP Director and/or the LTP Assistant Director immediately. All staff and parents/guardians of children who have come in contact with the infected child shall be notified. After a serious or infectious illness, a physician's statement is required before a child may be readmitted to the classroom.

MEDICATIONS

If your child requires medication or supplement to be administered during the school day, please discuss the issue with the LTP Director and/or LTP Assistant Director and the child's teacher, as well as complete the appropriate forms.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

LTP will ensure that the children are in a clean, healthy environment. Children will wash their hands before they begin food preparation, have a snack, or eat lunch. Tables on which food will be prepared or served will be cleaned before they are used for food service. Staff members will clean children's messes as soon as possible.

DIAPERING/TOILET TRAINING/PERSONAL HYGIENE

LTP staff will assist children in becoming independent in toileting and/or changing diapers as needed. When children show signs of readiness for toilet training, staff members will work with parents/guardians and assist in toilet training. Children will be taught to dress and undress and to use the potty seat. An adult will stay with the child until the child is finished. This activity must be a calm and positive experience for the child.

LTP staff will assist children in learning the steps of hand and face washing and nose wiping to encourage independence. LTP staff will teach children how to turn on water, use soap, wash, rinse, dry their hands and faces, and wipe and blow their noses when necessary.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum is planning of all activities that take place in the classroom. LTP's curriculum provides children opportunities to learn in an environment that incorporates developmentally appropriate materials and activities. Children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language growth are the focus of group activities and interest centers. The curriculum will include hands-on activities to challenge the children to experience and explore their surroundings as they learn to develop their large and fine motor skills, to interact with each other, to express themselves, to think on their own, and to be creative in their work and play. Literacy, math, science, social studies, and the arts are explored in a variety of age-appropriate experiences.

Flexible activities allow children to learn and grow at their own pace. The overall goals of the curriculum are that the children will know they are special, that they can learn more about whom they are, and that learning is fun and never-ending. The classroom activities are based on LTP's philosophy and goals, utilizing The Creative Curriculum as a basis.

Spiritually, we present Christian values and introduce children to stories of Christianity, as well as stories of other faiths and traditions.

GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITIES

The classroom teachers will be responsible for planning activities for gross motor time. Developmentally appropriate activities may include music, games, and activities stressing certain skills or group games.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Holiday celebrations, involving Christianity and other faiths and traditions, are encouraged in the individual classrooms as part of the curriculum. Holiday decorations will appropriately reflect Christian values.

BIRTHDAYS

To encourage self-esteem and each child's uniqueness, we encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) and their child to celebrate their child's birthday with the class. Each classroom has its own policy on celebrating birthdays.

FAITH AND CULTURE STORIES

LTP seeks to embrace children of all cultures and faiths. LTP stresses in many ways values common to people of many faiths, including love, respect, caring, and responsibility toward self and others. Each year a selection of Christian stories will be offered. In addition, stories from other traditions reflecting these values will also be offered.

FIELD TRIPS

Teachers may plan field trips to supplement the classroom curriculum. A nominal fee per field trip may be charged.

Parents/guardians will be invited to attend and informed of their responsibility to provide an appropriate car seat or booster seat, based on current state requirements, for their child if the children will be riding in cars for the field trip.

Signed Individual Field Trip Permission Forms must be returned by the parent or guardian, for each child prior to the field trip.

Parents may be contacted to serve as reliable transportation which includes two unrelated adults per vehicle for field trips in which driving is necessary. Drivers need to be 21 or older and hold a valid driver's license. Prior to the field trip, all volunteers need to show their driver's license and current car insurance card to the LTP Director or the LTP Assistant Director. A copy of both will be made and then kept with the Individual Field

Parent drivers must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Doors are to be locked at all times.
- Seat belts are to be worn by all vehicle passengers based on current state laws and regulations.
- Children should be properly buckled into car seats or booster seats based on current state laws and regulations.

SNACKS

A snack will be given mid-morning to the children. Children will be asked to provide snacks for the classroom on a rotating basis. A snack calendar will be provided to parents/guardians. Please to talk to your child's teacher about good examples of snacks.

Please do not send breakfast with your child unless previously approved by your child's teacher.