



Parent Handbook & Operational Policies

Quality Care Since 2003

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter	3
Mission Statement.....	3
Our Curriculum.....	3
Family Participation.....	4
Parental Communication.....	5
Limiting Technology	6
Parent Education	6
Grievance Procedures	6
Policies & Procedures	7
Admission	7
Enrollment Procedures.....	7
Student Participation.....	7
Confidentiality	7
Days & Hours of Operation	7
Closure Days.....	7
Hot/Cold Weather Policy.....	8
Inclement Weather	8
Arrival/Departure.....	8
Arrival Time at the Center	8
Attendance & Absences	9
Electronic Device Policy.....	9
Payments.....	9
Delinquent Accounts & Refunds	9
Late Pick-up Penalties.....	9
Returned Check & Declined Payments Fees	10
Withdrawal Policy	10
Discipline & Guidance.....	10
Bullying & Challenging Behaviors Policy	11
Biting.....	11
Birthdays	12
Lost & Found	13
Health & Safety	13
Precautionary Practices	13

Emergency Preparation Plan	13
Child Immunization Requirements	13
Vision and Hearing Screening Requirements	13
Employee Vaccinations	14
Medical Emergencies	14
Lock Down Policy	14
Illness & Exclusion	14
Medication	15
Meals & Food Service	15
Items from Home	16
Sun Screen	16
Photo Release	16
Animals at the Centers	16
Outdoor Play Space	16
Child Abuse Prevention Policy	17
Gang-free Zone	19
Policy Updates	19
Early Childhood Campuses	19
Texas Rising Star	19
Breastfeeding Information & Resources	19
Toileting	19
Napping	20
Transitioning to the Next Class	20
School-Age Campuses	20
Outdoor Play Equipment	20
Field Trips	20

Welcome Letter

Dear Parents:

The Learning Ladder is delighted to provide you with a copy of our Parent Handbook.

At the Learning Ladder, we are committed to helping parents balance work and family responsibilities, while providing the very best care for children. We understand that your child's development and education is very important to you. Our goal is to support you as a busy working parent and as your child's first and most important teacher.

Childhood is a magical time of discovery that sets the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement. We recognize the growing physical, intellectual, social and emotional competence of children. They are eager to explore their world and discover how the adult world works; children thrive on challenges, friendships, clubs and responsibility. They want to create, build, act out new dramatic possibilities, explore, and most importantly, not to be given more of the same or be treated like "little kids." Our program reinforces and nurtures children's drive to learn with new challenges and opportunities to get out into the world.

At the Learning Ladder, we help children prepare for success in school and in life. We welcome you to our family as you and your child embark on a wonderful journey.

Anna Coker
Owner & Founder

Mission Statement

To meet the needs of parents by providing a fun and safe learning environment where children can fulfill their full potential by participating in academic activities, purposeful play, and art-enriched experiences that ensure children are prepared for success in school and life.

Our Curriculum

Learning Ladder's curriculum is based on the Texas Education Agency's guidelines and recommendations for each age division including the Pre-K Guidelines. Learning Ladder also uses the requirements for the highest quality level of TRS for the amount of exposure to each area of development and learning. Below are the areas of learning with a description that Learning Ladder focuses on.

Creative Expression – Provide opportunities for children to explore, and discover how things feel, look, and appear on different surfaces in open-ended art. Ensuring children have the opportunity to express their ideas and feeling through self-expression in the areas of art, music, and movement.

Positive Self-esteem – To promote emotional development of self-concept and increase the level of conscious awareness of their feelings, thoughts, abilities, likes, and dislikes, as well as awareness of their body in space.

Social Skills – To help children develop meaningful and rewarding relationships by offering them facilitative support. To encourage awareness of and interest in other people.

Cognitive Skills – Promote cognitive development by supporting growth in children's thinking, reasoning, and understanding. Supporting children in the following developmental areas: observation, classification, making comparisons, making predictions, problem solving, and discovery.

Communication Skills – Opportunities for children to expand their listening skills, enrich their vocabulary, refine their social use of language, and further develop their grammar skills. Provide a print-rich environment that contains a plethora of written materials that are meaningfully represented so children can read them, as well as drawing and writing materials that are readily available for children to explore and use.

Health and Well-being – To promote personal safety and health, hygiene, health nutrition, and wellness and to encourage involvement so that children can be successful. To promote physical activity and limited screen time.

Each Learning Ladder classroom posts the lesson plan for their age group each week. For any questions or details about your child's classroom, please schedule a conference with the teacher and director.

Learning Ladder believes our curriculum promotes active life-long learning and allows children to become independent thinkers and problem solvers. We also believe with teaching staff and families working together, our children can achieve anything!

In order to meet our goals for each child, we provide an environment that allows children to make choices, be treated as individuals and learn at their own pace.

Our teaching staff plans activities, both free-choice and teacher-directed, to enhance the activity centers as well as the children's interests.

The Learning Ladder also uses developmentally appropriate assessments for each child. These tools track each child's individual growth and allow teaching staff to appropriately plan activities for each child.

We use monthly themes however, these themes are just guides used for each age group. There are many other activities being promoted that are not included in our monthly themes but are active components of our curriculum.

Family Participation

Our curriculum works best when teachers and parents work together. Each of us has something valuable to contribute.

Only you have in-depth knowledge of your child. You know best your child's interests, fears, joys, patterns, and past. You are most familiar with the world your child is trying to understand. You know about the relationships between the members of your family, and you have shared many of your child's experiences.

This in depth knowledge makes you central to your child's learning process and a very valuable resource for us as teachers. If you share with us what is happening with your child at home, we can better understand your child. We can deal with both positive and difficult events through reassuring stories, soothing activities, imaginative dramatic play, and extra love and attention. We strive to nurture each child's unique qualities and potential while supporting families through strong partnerships.

Parents are partners in every aspect of curriculum: helping to set goals and priorities, planning, evaluating, and sustaining the learning through coordinated experiences at home. Parents are always welcome at the Learning Ladder. If at any time a staff member can assist you or answer concerns or questions regarding your child, please feel free to ask. If you require a longer conference period an appointment can be made at the earliest time possible.

Parents are welcome to review a copy of the minimum standards and the child-care center's most recent licensing inspection report at any time. The most recent inspection will always be posted as well as how to contact the local Licensing Office, the Child Abuse hotline, and the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service website.

- ✓ Information on Licensing standards or procedures can be obtained by calling 1-800-862-5252 or visiting www.dfps.state.tx.us
- ✓ You can contact the DFPS office: Decatur 940-627-2188, Gainesville 940-665-9315
- ✓ To report abuse and/or neglect please call 1-800-252-5400

Parental Communication

The Learning Ladder feels that open communication with parents is important for the welfare of the child. Parents or teachers can request conferences at any time. Both the director and teachers welcome parents' thoughts and suggestions. Parents will be notified in person, by telephone and/or in writing if:

- Any changes are made to the operational policies or enrollment agreement.
- Any changes to tuition or fees.
- Medication was administered to a child (*Authorization for Medication Form*).
- There was an injury to a child that required medical attention by a health-care professional (*Telephone and Injury / Illness Form*).
- Discipline or a behavior situation arose.
- Has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the Learning Ladder.
- A child had been involved in any situation that placed the child at risk.
- A child had less serious injuries such as a minor cut, scratch and bites from other children that required first-aid treatment.
- If any child or employee has contracted a communicable disease that requires reporting to the Texas Department of Communicable Diseases.
- When any child in Learning Ladder has an outbreak of lice or other infestation according to the Texas Department of Health in 25TAC*97.7(*in person, telephone and/or flyers*).

We have many ways of communicating with our parents. Listed below are several ways the teachers, parents, and director can be in communication together.

- **Initial meeting with parents:** When you enroll your child, the director or teacher in charge will tour you through the center and answer any questions you may have at that time. You may wish to share any concerns about your child with the director, tell what you expect from the program, etc. Please tell us if your child takes any medication, behaves in any certain way, or has any special traits the teacher needs to be aware of.
- **Teacher – Parent conferences:** Parent- teacher conferences are offered twice a year and any other time the parent or teacher requests one. These meetings are great ways to share in the learning experience of your child.

- **Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)**- This committee of parents is used to talk about things such as fundraisers, policy changes, and the goings-on at the center. The meetings are held twice a year. This is a voluntary committee and is open to any of our parents. We encourage all parents to be as involved as possible in this area as the meetings may impact changes made in the center.
- **Parent information board or binder**-The parent board/binder is a great place to look for important information pertaining to the center such as licensing information.
- **Information Sheets & Booklets**- Learning Ladder offers information to parents on a variety of topics such as teething and biting, learning through play, and bedtime rituals. If you have questions, we will be happy to help you.
- **Weekly lesson plans**-Each classroom has a weekly lesson plan posted for your review. The lesson plan contains information about what the class is studying and what activities are planned.
- **Newsletter**- Learning Ladder has a monthly newsletter. Once a month you can pick up the newsletter and it can be e-mailed as well. The newsletter contains information about the center and activities your child may have been involved in.
- **Daily check in / checkout**- This time is a very busy time for the teachers. If you need some time to talk to the teachers, feel free to set up an appointment with your child's teacher to talk longer.
- **Social Media**- Each Learning Ladder center hosts a private Facebook page where parents can go to find information and keep up to date.

Limiting Technology

In order for our staff to communicate with you well, we ask that you do not have your cell phone out while in the center. Often times, the teaching staff will have something to tell you or your child will want to share their day and their work with you. Please take the time to give the staff and your child your undivided attention.

Parent Education

Learning Ladder strives on helping families. In order to accommodate this, Learning Ladder has several resources available to parents to better understand child development, parenting skills, nutrition and how childcare and education works to serve you. These include information sheets and booklets available in the office, Parent Advisory Committee meetings and "Parent Café" nights. For more information on these or any other resources, please contact your center's director.

Grievance Procedures

- Parents are encouraged to discuss specific concerns related to classroom issues with their child's teacher.
- If the parent and teacher are unable to reach a resolution, either may request a meeting with the teacher and director.
- If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved from this meeting, the matter may be referred to Anna Coker, Learning Ladder's owner.
- Concerns related to non-specific classroom issues (e.g. safety, curriculum, etc.) will be referred to the center director.

Policies & Procedures

Admission

No child will be denied enrollment on the basis of his/her race or religion. We do retain the right to deny enrollment if space is not available for a particular child's age group.

Enrollment Procedures

The following procedures are all required before a child can be in attendance at a Learning Ladder center.

1. Admission form completely filled out
 - a. Photo release form signed
 - b. Tuition agreement form signed
 - c. Handbook acknowledgement signed
2. Immunization records for children in the Early Childhood programs
3. Health Care Professional Statement in the Early Childhood programs

Learning Ladder requires an updated admission information form to be filled out annually. If you need to update information before that time, please see your campus director or e-mail the accounting department.

Student Participation

The Learning Ladder is an independent owned center. Due to staffing and budgetary restrictions certain restrictions apply to student participation. All students must be physically, emotionally, socially and mentally capable of handling our daily routine and teacher to child ratio in all activities.

Confidentiality

All information concerning an individual child and his/her activities in the program are confidential. Written records of individual children are kept and can only be obtained by the director, parent or state office.

Days & Hours of Operation

In general, Learning Ladder is open Monday through Friday of each week. The exceptions to this will include up to 10 holidays and any unplanned bad weather days.

- Gainesville: 7am-5:30pm
- Decatur ISD: 6:30am-6:00pm
- Decatur Afterschools: End of school to 6:30pm, Camp: 6am-6:30pm
- Boyd: 7am-6pm

Closure Days

Full time students' tuition will not change or be prorated due to closure. Learning Ladder is closed on the following holidays and reserves the right to close days prior to or following the holiday if it falls on a weekend:

- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day

- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

Hot/Cold Weather Policy

It is Learning Ladder's goal to keep every student safe. Therefore, when temperatures are excessive, students will have limited or no recess according to the following policy:

Weather Conditions

If heat index or temperature is 95-99 degrees, recess is limited to 10 minutes. If heat index or temperature reaches 100 or above, recess is indoors.

If wind chill reaches 40-45, recess is limited to 10 minutes. If wind chill is at or below 40, recess is indoors.

We will go by either the heat index or temperature, whichever is higher for hot weather and wind chill or temperature whichever is lower in cold weather.

Students will also stay indoors if it is raining or snowing.

Air Quality

If the Ozone alert is orange, outdoor recess is limited to 10 minutes. If Ozone alerts are red or purple, no outdoor recess will be allowed.

Please dress your child appropriate for the weather and in play clothing to maximize the benefits of their experiences. Please assume your child will go outside since weather can change throughout the day.

Inclement Weather

Learning Ladder generally follows the local school district if closing for weather. Learning Ladder management can choose to open on time, late, or close early if management chooses. Families will be notified through phone calls, e-mail and/or text message about such closures. In general, tuition will remain the same, up to five inclement weather closures per year.

Arrival/Departure

For full day services please accompany your child into their classroom. Each child shall have direct contact with a teacher or assistant upon arrival to assure that an adult is aware of the child's presence in the class. The parent is required to sign the child in and out, noting the time. A sign in/out area with the needed supplies is located near the front door. If a child is being picked-up by a person unknown to the staff, they will be required to present valid identification. This provides us with a written record of the child's attendance, hours in our program, and persons who bring and/or pick-up the child.

For Afterschool services: Because the Learning Ladder afterschool program is a drop in program, Learning Ladder will not contact or call a parent if a child does not come into the program. It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of where the child is supposed to be afterschool.

When a child comes into Learning Ladder, the staff will ask the child how they are feeling that day in order to make sure the child is well enough to attend care.

Departure: Children will only be released to a parent or a person designated by the parent. If a child is to be released to any other individual than to a parent, a valid identification card of the person picking up will need to be presented.

If your child is picked up after the center is closed, you will be charged a late pick-up fee.

Arrival Time at the Center

Children thrive upon routine! At the Learning Ladder, our curriculum starts the moment the child walks in the door, but activities begin promptly at 8 am. Arriving before activities begin allows your child to

settle in and get the most out of their learning throughout the day. When arriving consistently late, a child might miss a section of curriculum prudent to their continued success in kindergarten. Children must arrive before 9:30am to be admitted into class. This will allow the school to schedule staff appropriately. Any child who is not at the center at 9:30am will be considered absent for the day.

Attendance & Absences

We understand that the needs of each family are different, and we want to encourage families to spend as much time together as they can.

If your child will not be in attendance on a day they usually attend, please inform the director. If a child misses three or more regular days, the director will call the family to check up on the child.

Electronic Device Policy

During a student's stay at the Learning Ladder, no devices such as, but no limited to, cell phones, hand-held game systems, and computers from home will be allowed to be used. As such, Learning Ladder is not responsible for broken, stolen, or missing personal items. Each student is expected to keep up with his/her personal belongings.

Payments

All families who enrolled after July 1st, 2015, will use the Tuition Express Automated Payment Processing to pay tuition and fees, excluding late pick-up penalties or those who have a signed district contract. Tuition Express will automatically deduct the tuition charges that are shown due on your account in full. Families previously enrolled will be allowed to use Tuition Express or a previously accepted form of payment such as cash, check or money order. If your account becomes delinquent, Learning Ladder reserves the right to require you to use the automatic payment method.

Delinquent Accounts & Refunds

Tuition is due on Monday of each week and is considered late after Tuesday. If an account is delinquent, Learning Ladder has the right to refuse further service until the account is brought current.

You will sign an agreement form at enrollment stating that you will keep your account current. All unpaid accounts will be turned over to a collection agency. Parents will be notified prior to this procedure. Any balances left unsettled will be sent to a collection agency after 30 days.

In general, if you choose to withdraw your child mid-week, you will still be charged for the entire week. If you prepaid past that time period, you can contact the Learning Ladder's administration offices to have a refund check issued. Learning Ladder will send the check to the last address on file for the account.

Late Pick-up Penalties

Late pick-up penalties will be charged if a student is picked up after center operating hours.

If you pick your child up after closing you will be charged a fee of \$1 per minute for each child. You will also be required to sign a late pick up form at the time you pick up your children. The form will contain the amount you will be required to pay for your late pick-up.

Phone calls to notify of late pick-up, before the center closes, will not exempt a late fee charge.

Returned Check & Declined Payments Fees

There will be a \$35.00 service charge for all returned checks, in addition to a \$15.00 late payment fee. If the client takes care of the check before it is returned to the center, the account will not be billed a \$15.00 late payment fee. When the center receives a returned check from a client, we will no longer accept checks as a method of payment from that client.

If a payment, made through the Tuition Express, is declined, a fee of \$15 will occur.

Withdrawal Policy

If a parent decides to withdraw from the program, a two week notice is required. Any parent failing to do so, will be charged their normal tuition rate for two weeks. All balances will be sent to collections after 30 days of the last day the child attends the program.

Discipline & Guidance

Discipline and guidance at the Learning Ladder will be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child.
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
- Only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction will be used.
- Praise, encouragement and daily reminders of expected behavior as well as redirection will be utilized.
- As a last resort, brief supervised separation or time out from the group, appropriate for the child's age and development, will be used and limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There will be no harsh, cruel or unusual treatment at Learning Ladder. This means:

- No corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment.
- Punishment associated with food or toileting.
- Pinching, shaking or biting a child.
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument.
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth.
- Humiliating, ridiculing, or yelling at a child.
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

We do not think of discipline as punishment. Our goal is inner discipline, the result of an evolving process occurring within the child. Through appropriate adult-child interaction, anticipatory guidance, well established guidelines for appropriate behavior and active listening to children's responses, teachers get to know the children individually and discern the additional limits and adjustments they need. Over a period of time we expect that children will internalize the concept of self-control and acquire some measure of inner discipline. When a problem arises, these are the steps our staff takes toward reaching these goals:

1. Staff will work with the child, discussing the problem, suggesting and supporting behavior changes, explaining and redirecting.

2. If a pattern of negative behavior persists, the director will talk with the parent(s) in order to obtain assistance and suggestions for developing effective approaches with the child. A behavior plan may also be initiated.
3. If all reasonable approaches are exhausted, the pattern of negative behaviors continues, and/or the child's actions are a threat to the well-being and safety of other children and/or staff, parents may be asked to remove the child from the child care program.

Bullying & Challenging Behaviors Policy

For all challenging behaviors, Learning Ladder uses the following process, and can skip any steps, if behavior is out of control:

1. Teacher uses different techniques to improve behavior.
2. The teacher begins documenting the behaviors, including when, where, and who was involved. The teacher notifies the director of the behavior.
3. The teacher uses suggested techniques from the director to improve the behavior.
4. A parent/teacher/director meeting is set. A Behavior Plan, with a time frame is set up.
5. The teacher uses the behavior plan to direct their actions with the child.
6. A follow-up meeting is held to see if the behavior has improved. If the behavior has improved, the plan is continued.
7. If the plan cannot be reformulated to work with the child's behavior, the child is expelled from the program.

The US Department of Justice defines bullying as the following:

"Bullying includes assault, tripping, intimidation, rumor-spreading and isolation, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, destruction of another's work or property, and name-calling. Bullying also includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual propositioning, and other forms of sexual abuse. Bullying also includes ostracism (many times based on perceived sexual orientation) and hazing."

Bullying entails repeated acts by someone perceived as physically or psychologically more powerful. Not all taunting, teasing, and fighting constitutes bullying.

At the Learning Ladder, we do not tolerate bullying. If a child feels he/she is being bullied, please notify the center director immediately. Also please put your concerns in writing so we may address them. We ask that if your child has not given many details, to have the appropriate director of Learning Ladder be a part of the discussion with the child. Learning Ladder will then take appropriate steps to separate the children, and if needed, remove the bully from the program.

Learning Ladder will work with students and families in the hopes that each child can interact with the group as a whole. If steps to correct challenging behavior are not successful, the student may be asked to find alternate care.

Biting

The following is an excerpt from the National Association for the Education of Young Children:

Biting is a typical behavior often seen in infants, toddlers, and 2-year olds. As children mature, gain self-control, and develop problem-solving skills, they usually outgrow this behavior. While not uncommon, biting can be an upsetting and potentially harmful behavior....

Some children bite instinctively, because they have not developed self-control. For example, when 3-year-old Marcus grabs a doll from his 2-year-old sister Gina, her first

response is to bite him and grab the doll. She doesn't stop to think about other ways to act or the result of her actions. But there are many other reasons why children may bite.

A child might bite to:

- Relieve pain from teething.
- Explore cause and effect ("What happens when I bite?").
- Experience the sensation of biting.
- Satisfy a need for oral-motor stimulation.
- Imitate other children and adults.
- Feel strong and in control.
- Get attention.
- Act in self-defense.
- Communicate needs and desires, such as hunger or fatigue.
- Communicate or express difficult feelings, such as frustration, anger, confusion, or fear ("There are too many people here and I feel cramped").

- See more at: <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite#sthash.xrSMjz1N.dpuf>

At the Learning Ladder Early Childhood Centers, we do several things to prevent biting:

- We use low teacher to child ratios.
- We have developmentally appropriate schedules and lesson plans to help keep the children engaged and appropriately active.
- We balance high and low energy activities, to reduce boredom.
- We arrange our classrooms using developmentally appropriate practices to limit over and under stimulation.
- We have duplicates of favorite toys.
- We educate staff on developmentally appropriate practices, recognizing the signs that a child might bite, and prevention of biting.
- We have information about biting available for parents.
- We feed children no less than every three hours.

When a bite occurs at the Learning Ladder, we explore the following techniques as needed:

- We care for the child who was injured first.
- We talk to the child who bit.
- We write an incident report, to be signed at pick-up.
- We inform the injured child's parents.
- We assign staff to shadow the child who bit in order to discourage further injury.
- We reflect on the environment, schedule and lesson plan to see if there are changes needed in order to prevent future bites.
- We add anti-biting curriculum to the lesson plan.
- If a child bites excessively, we talk to their parents and a behavior plan is created.
- If the behavior plan and follow-up with the parents does not help, Learning Ladder reserves the right to dismiss the child from care.

Birthdays

Learning Ladder has the following practice pertaining to the celebration of birthdays: if only some children are being invited to a birthday party, we ask families to mail invitations from home and if all students in the class are invited, invitations for a birthday party may be distributed at school.

To celebrate birthdays, some parents may choose to send a “special treat” to school to be shared at some point during the school day. Please bring a store bought item, with the ingredients label attached, so that the staff can assure that the ingredients are safe for all children in the class. All of Learning Ladder is nut-free. We ask that families keep this in mind when providing birthday treats. Learning Ladder offers “Birthday Kits” for your child’s class birthday party. The kits come in several sizes and prices. They are big enough to serve all the children in your child’s class. We will have the party for you while your child is in class on their birthday. Please see the office to get prices and more details.

Lost & Found

Lost and found items are collected with the hope of finding owners! Lost and found items will be placed in a prominent place. We encourage you and your child to check for all belongings. At the end of the 30 days, all unclaimed items are donated to local charities.

Health & Safety

Precautionary Practices

Annually, staff receives training on emergency procedures regarding strangers in the building, bad weather, environmental hazards, etc. Both staff and children practice fire and tornado drills on a monthly basis.

Emergency Preparation Plan

If the time arises that we would need to evacuate the children from the building or relocate, we will follow the steps below.

- Move children to a safe place (playground area).
- If the children need to be relocated, we will transport them by available vehicles to:
 - DISD: Carson Elementary, 2100 US 287 S Business, Decatur
 - GISD: Temple Baptist Church at 1811 E California St., Gainesville or Chalmers Elementary at 1745 FM 3092, Gainesville
 - DISD Afterschool: Learning Ladder DISD located at 403 S. Hill St., Decatur
 - Boyd: Boyd High School, 700 Knox Ave, Boyd
- Diagram for fire exits and severe weather have been provided at the end of this handbook.
- All employees in charge of the children will bring their class rolls with them.
- Management will then notify all parents where to pick-up their child.

Child Immunization Requirements

If a child is enrolled in any early childhood program, Learning Ladder must be provided with a copy of their current shot records, before a child can start. After enrollment a copy of updated shot records must be provided to the Learning Ladder each time the child receives new shots.

Vision and Hearing Screening Requirements

Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36, requires that all children enrolled in a Department of Family and Protective Services licensed child-care center in Texas that are the age of four by September 1st, must be screened or have a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems. Children enrolled in public schools receive this examine through the school district. Learning Ladder’s Early Childhood campuses have the option below.

Learning Ladder has staff trained through the Texas Department of State Health Services who can provide this screening to your family while your child is in care for a fee of \$10. Or you can have your child screened at your physician's office at a visit. If you choose to have it done at your physician's office, please provide us with a copy of the results for your child's file at time of admission or following the day of the visit.

Employee Vaccinations

As staff in a childcare facility, the safety of the children in our care is extremely important. As such, staff will be required to have the vaccinations required at high school level of education at the time of graduation. Proof of this can be a High School diploma or a vaccination record.

Learning Ladder highly recommends that staff also get a DTap or Tdap booster, a Pertussis vaccine (whooping cough), and an annual flu shot.

Medical Emergencies

If a child has a medical emergency, the child will be given First Aid or CPR as needed and/or as indicated by medical emergency services. If a critical illness or injury requires the immediate attention of a physician, Learning Ladder staff will contact 911. The physician identified in the child's record will be contacted and the parent will be notified immediately.

Lock Down Policy

In the event of a lock down, ALL doors will remain locked for the day or until deemed safe. All outside activities will be canceled.

At the Learning Ladder, your child's safety is our number one priority. All precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of your child during a lock down!

Illness & Exclusion

If a child becomes ill while at the Learning Ladder, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child as soon as possible, but no more than an hour later. The child will be cared for apart from the other children, under appropriate supervision until the parent arrives.

The Learning Ladder will not admit a child if an illness prevents them from participating comfortably in activities, including outdoor play. The Learning Ladder cannot provide care for a child whose illness may compromise the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in the program. The Learning Ladder reserves the right to deny care if the child exhibits any of the following:

- Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, Rectal temperature of 101.4 degrees or greater, or Armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater – accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea (3 or more), two or more vomiting episodes, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes.
- Pink eye or eye discharge.

Any child sent home due to illness can return to care under one of the following circumstances: the child has seen a health-care professional and has written instructions saying the child is able to return or the child is symptom free without medication for 24 hours.

Children diagnosed by a health-care professional with a communicable disease, must provide medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious. Communicable disease that exclude a child from care are defined by the Texas Department of Health in 25TAC*97.7

Medication

Learning Ladder does not administer medication at the afterschool program.

During full day care Learning Ladder will follow the following medication policy:

Learning Ladder will administer medication to children if:

- Medications prescribed by a physician licensed to practice in the State of Texas must be provided by the parent in a container with the prescription label affixed. That label must have the student's name, drug name, and direction concerning dosage and schedule. Parents need to fill out a "Parent Request for School to Administer Medication" form. Forms are valid for six months.
- OTC (over the counter) medications will be not be given unless they are accompanied by a request from a physician and the parent provides the medication. (This means Tylenol, aspirin, OTC cold preparations, etc.)
- Homeopathic or herbal preparations will be treated as OTC medications.
- Management staff will dispense medications. Management will keep a log indicating times, dates, and dosage of medication given.
- Parents must fill out a medication form stating the exact time that the medication is due. Learning Ladder will comply with the following dosage policy:
 - If the medication is to be administered three or more times a day, Learning Ladder will only give one dose.
 - The only exception to this is if a prescription designated a specific time (Ex. With morning and afternoon snack.) to give the medication.

Meals & Food Service

All Learning Ladder centers provide an AM & PM snack. Snacks are whole grain and/or USDA Food Program approved. Liquids and foods warmer than 110 degrees Fahrenheit will be kept out of reach of children until they are cooled.

All Learning Ladder campuses require parents to bring a packed lunch. If your child's lunch needs to remain at a cool temperature, please provide an ice pack in order to maintain that temperature.

Learning Ladder provides refrigeration for formula and milk for infants and toddlers. Because you are choosing the items in your child's lunch, you are responsible for the nutritional value and meeting your child's food needs for that meal. For lunch ideas, you can visit the following websites:

<http://blog.foodnetwork.com/healthyeats/2012/08/27/10-fresh-brown-bag-lunches-for-kids/>

<http://kidscooking.about.com/od/backtoschoolrecipes/a/26-Brown-Bag-Lunch-Ideas-For-Kids.htm>

All Learning Ladder campuses are nut free. Learning Ladder enforces this policy due to the high amount of children who suffer from anaphylactic shock from this allergen. If your child's lunch includes an alternative, such as Wowbutter, please write this on the food's container and inform the staff in the classroom. Staff are educated on food allergies and they take precautions to ensure children are protected. For more information about foods that cause an allergic reaction, please visit this website:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/feeding/food_allergies.html

Each month, there will be an informational sheet about healthy food habits at or near the check in station of each campus.

Learning Ladder does not reward or punish using food.

Items from Home

- An extra set of clothing.
- To avoid things be lost or broken, please do not allow children to bring toys from home.

<u>Infant</u>	<u>Toddlers, Two's & Pre-K</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diapers and wipes• Formula, or breast milk, food, milk, bottled water (if desired)• Tylenol for teething infants, with a <u>doctor's prescription</u> (kept in the office)• Extra clothes, burp rags• Extra bottles labeled with the first name and last initial• Sleep sack *if your child is twelve months or younger• Blanket *if your child is twelve months or older	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socks and tennis shoes• Sippy cup labeled with the first name and last initial• Outer clothes that are weather appropriate• Labeled blanket and small pillow• Diapers and wipes and/or lots of extra clothing for toilet training

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothing. Sometimes learning gets messy!

Sun Screen

Learning Ladder requires all parents who would like sunscreen applied to their child provide a bottle of store brand SPF 50 or higher in a lotion form (no aerosols). The bottles will be used as community bottles and will only be applied to those children who have contributed. When the supply for the class is low, you will be asked to contribute another bottle.

Photo Release

You will be required to sign a photo release at the time of admission. Any photos taken at Learning Ladder will only be used for the purpose of Learning Ladder such as: on the children's lockers, art work, or the centers website.

Animals at the Centers

Several classes have class pets. Class pets can encourage learning in a fun and friendly atmosphere in multiple subject areas such as math (How much to do think he weighs?), geography (Where does he live?), and science (What does he eat?). We understand you may have questions about the animals in your child's classroom or building and the director will be happy to talk to you about the animals. Allergy concerns are taken seriously. If your child's classroom has a class pet, please make sure you have signed the acknowledgement.

Outdoor Play Space

Each Learning Ladder campus has an outdoor play space to facilitate gross motor development and play. The locations of the playground is as followed:

- DISD Kids Camp- At the back of the west wing of the building.
- GISD- Each classroom has a door leading to the playground used.
- School-Age Campuses- Carson & Young- At the back of the building. Rann- South of the building, next to the door to the classroom.

- Boyd- At the end of the classroom hallway, there is an exit onto the Pre-K playground. Younger children walk through the Pre-K playground to enter their playground.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

The mission of Learning Ladder is to nurture all children entrusted to our care in a warm and loving environment. In keeping with that purpose, this policy seeks to assure that our center is continually working toward providing an environment safe from physical and sexual abuse for those participating in, receiving and providing childcare services. All employees shall seek to provide open lines of communication with parents. We will operate with an open door policy allowing parent access to programs at any time.

Texas law says anyone who thinks a child, or person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to DFPS (Department of Family & Protective Services). Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony.

All Learning Ladder staff attends annual training in prevention techniques for and the recognition of symptoms of abuse and neglect as well as the responsibility and procedure for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.

The four types of Maltreatment are:

- **Physical Abuse** is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.
 - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
 - Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns (including cigarette burns), without adequate explanation, with or without unusual patterning that might indicate the use of an instrument or human bite
 - Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
 - Lack of reaction to pain
 - Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
 - Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
 - Fear of going home or seeing parents
 - Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
 - Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs
- **Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.
 - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
 - Obvious malnourishment, stealing or begging for food
 - Lack of personal cleanliness, torn or dirty clothing
 - Child unattended for long periods of time
 - Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
 - Frequent tardiness or absence from school

- **Sexual Abuse** includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.
 - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
 - Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
 - Evidence of injury to the genital area
 - Pregnancy in a young girl
 - Difficulty in sitting or walking
 - Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
 - Sexual comments, behaviors or play
 - Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
 - Sexual victimization of other children
- **Emotional Abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.
 - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
 - Over compliance, low self-esteem
 - Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
 - Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
 - Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
 - Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

Texas law says anyone who thinks a child, or person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to DFPS. Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony.

Employers are prohibited from retaliating against caregivers who make reports in good faith.

To make a report:

- Call the Abuse Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide at 1-800-252-5400.
- Make your report through the secure web site www.txabusehotline.org. A response will be received within 24 hours.
- Email reports are not accepted.

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) manages community-based programs that prevent delinquency, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of Texas children; helps communities enhance services provided through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; assists communities in identifying prevention and early intervention needs, and supports the development of, and modifications to, new and existing programs designed to prevent or reduce poor outcomes for children, youth and their families.

A few of these community organizations in the Wise County area are:

- Department of Family and Protective Services
 - www.dfps.state.tx.us
- Family Connection
 - <http://ccdounseling.com/family-connection/>

- Jennifer Mountain, LCSW 940-627-5328 x3
- Wise County Christian Counseling
 - Offers counseling on a sliding scale
 - <http://www.wiseccc.org/>
- Wise Hope Shelter & Crisis Center
 - www.wisehope.org

These organizations are here to help you when you are in need. If you need help contacting any of these organizations please see your center director.

Gang-free Zone

All of our childcare centers are gang-free zones. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of our centers is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the centers location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. You may contact your local municipality or court house for information about obtaining a copy of a map if you choose to do so.

Policy Updates

Policies are reviewed and updated annually if needed.

Early Childhood Campuses

Texas Rising Star

The Texas Rising Star (TRS) program is an accreditation program through Workforce Solutions. This program requires centers to implement and maintain a higher quality of care for children. The standards include higher education requirements for staff, quality interactions, and curriculum and lesson plans that meet all of the children's developmental and learning domains.

Breastfeeding Information & Resources

Learning Ladder encourages mothers to breastfeed. If you would like to breastfeed your child, you are welcome to the center any time during the day. You will be welcome to use the chair in the infant classroom to feed in.

Learning Ladder has a copy of "The CDC Guide to Strategies to Support Breastfeeding Mothers & Babies" that every parent is welcome to look at or borrow.

Toileting

When you feel your child is ready start toileting independently, we ask that you begin teaching your child at home. At the Learning Ladder, we will provide support and encouragement for what you have implemented. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the toilet, more so than at your home.

Therefore, we will continue to use diapers or pull-ups until your child can and consistently announces the need to use the bathroom and can control him/ herself for a few minutes beyond that announcement. When the child has reached this point, training pants with plastic pants may be used. We recommend that panties or underwear not be used until your child has naptime and bedtime control established. We also recommend dressing children in "user-friendly" clothing as much as possible as they will want dress on their own and clothing with too many "gadgets" makes it harder for

the child use the toilet within a timely manner. We understand this is a trying time for both the child and parents. We, as a team, will get through it.

Napping

All children under the age of five are required by state law to have a rest time. We will provide a safe, quiet place for your child to rest. Please supply the Learning Ladder with your child's favorite blanket. Please take the blankets home on Friday to launder them for the following week. While children are not required to sleep, they are required to rest quietly as to not disturb others/

****Infants**

Infants, 12 months and younger, will be assigned a crib for their rest times and will always be placed on their backs to sleep, unless there is a signed sleep position medical waiver on file. In that case, a notice will be posted on the infant's crib. An infant younger than twelve months will not be allowed to sleep with a blanket, pillows, or toys in their bed. Infants, who are walking, will be using a cot or mat to sleep on, in order to transition to the toddler class.

****Preschool Children**

Preschool children will be assigned a cot or mat for rest time. Children who wake up before the rest is over will be guided in finding a quiet time activity to engage in so as not to disturb any sleeping children.

Transitioning to the Next Class

When moving children from class to class we will notify the parents and provide the information of what the parents and children can expect from the new class. Parent-teacher talks can also be held. Class changes are not always made by a change in age (birthday) but rather when developmental changes and advances occur and the child is comfortable developmentally and emotionally with the changes.

School-Age Campuses

Outdoor Play Equipment

Although the outdoor play equipment meets satisfactory standards for the Independent School District, the outdoor play equipment may or may not meet Minimum Standards for Childcare licensing. If you are uncomfortable with your child(ren) using this play equipment, please tell Learning Ladder staff and inform us in writing and we will make sure your child is restricted from playing on this equipment. If you have further questions, please ask your center's director or call the School-Age Coordinator at your convenience.

Field Trips

During full day activities, school-age students have the opportunity to participate in field trips. Parents will be notified of the field trip in advance and a signature for each field trip is required before the student can attend the field trip. If a child's self-control is in question prior to a field trip, that child may not attend.

Costs of field trips are built into the full-time rate, but part time students will be charged separately for the trip if there is any entrance or admission fee if they attend on that day.