

HANDBOOK FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Welcome!

We welcome you to the Good Earth Learning Center and to the partnership we will share during these early school years.

The need for good quality early education is great, and Good Earth Learning Center strives to meet that need by providing nurturing educational experiences. Good Earth Learning Center has chosen to meet quality standards that are substantially higher than the minimum requirements. Our goal is to help your child explore and begin to understand the world around us and to lay the foundation for future academic pursuits using outdoor classroom time at every possible opportunity.

This handbook includes program policies and important information you will need as we share this year. We hope you will read the handbook carefully. If you have questions, please call us.

Please talk to us often. Thank you for choosing the Good Earth Learning Center. We're glad you are here!

Warmly,

Angie Horn
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What You Need To Know Before Your First Day

Good Earth Learning Center Hours

Preschool hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Day camp hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Orientation

New families participate in an orientation meeting or conference with the director. If you have not attended an orientation, contact the center director.

What to wear

Your child should dress for an active day. We suggest comfortable, washable play clothes. Sneakers and socks are best for active play. Your child will get dirty!

What to bring

You will need to provide a sack lunch for your child every day.

Good Earth Learning Center provides snacks and school supplies for children.

Your child needs a complete change of clothes at the center (shirt, shorts/pants/skirt, socks, underwear). Be sure to write your child's name in each piece of clothing. Give the clothes to one of the teachers in your child's classroom.

Arrival and Departure

Preschool age children plan to arrive between 7:50 and 8:00 a.m. Park in the visitor parking and walk with your child to the preschool classroom. To pick up your preschool child, arrive between 2:50 and 3:00 p.m. Come to the preschool classroom to call for your child. Be sure to sign your child in each morning and sign out in the afternoon.

Day Camp children plan to arrive between 7:50 and 8:00 a.m. To pick up your day camp child, arrive between 3:20 and 3:30 p.m. Be sure to sign in your child in the morning and sign your child out in the afternoon.

Release of Children

No child will be released to persons not authorized by a parent or guardian.

What You Need to Know the First Week

Attendance Policy

Preschool children must be picked up promptly at 3:00 p.m. (aftercare available upon request)
Please call the center if your child will be absent.

Illness

Children who are ill will not be admitted to the center.

Meals and Snacks

Children will need to bring a sack lunch each day. We will not heat up meals. Good Earth Learning Center will provide snacks and milk.

Behavior Guidance

Our program uses a variety of positive guidance techniques to help children learn appropriate behaviors and develop self-control. Physical punishment and threats are not used by our staff.

Toys from Home

Children are encouraged to leave their toys at home.

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ 1: What if my child is sick?

If your child is ill, please keep your child at home. Be sure to call to let us know why he/she will be absent. If your child becomes ill during the day, we will call you.

FAQ 2: What school supplies does my child need?

All supplies are provided by Good Earth Learning Center.

FAQ 3: Do you teach the children anything?

Preschool children learn in unique ways, so our activities may not look like “school”. Our teachers plan activities that help children increase their thinking and creativity skills. Children’s experiences will strengthen their literacy skills and encourage them to investigate the world around them. In other words, we’re teaching early reading, math, science, social studies, health, music, art, and more!

FAQ 4: Can my child bring a toy or DVD?

We do not watch TV or DVDs—there are so many interesting things in the world to explore and learn! We prefer that children leave their toys at home.

FAQ 5: What if there’s a tornado?

Your child’s safety is our first concern. We practice emergency drills every month so that children and staff know what to do. Emergency drill procedures are posted in each classroom.

About Our Program

Purpose

The purpose of the Good Earth Learning Center is to provide a safe and caring environment in which each child can play, explore, learn, and grow.

Our Philosophy

We believe...

That children learn by using their senses and by moving.

That each child learns and develops at his/her own pace.

That children learn through language and rapidly developing their language skills.

That preschool children need hands-on experiences with a wide variety of materials.

That families and program staff are partners in supporting the child's development and learning.

Attendance

Hours.

8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. We expect parents to pay for the entire week even if the child does not attend.

Late Pick Up.

We expect preschool children to be picked up promptly at 3:00 p.m. and day camp children to be picked up promptly at 3:30 p.m. (Children who are enrolled in After Care will be transitioned into that program at 3:00 and 3:30 respectively.) Two things happen when you are late picking up your child. First, your child becomes anxious about why you are late. Second, staff (who have responsibilities after children depart and who have lives outside of the center) may have to stay at school past their scheduled time and are late for their afternoon or evening commitments.

If children are picked up after 3:05 p.m. by the school clock, a \$15 late fee will be charged per child. After 3:20 p.m. by the school clock, an additional \$15 will be charged per child.

Before and After Care.

For your convenience, child care is offered before 8:00 a.m. and after 3:00 p.m and 3:30 p.m. for day camps. Your child must be enrolled in before and after care before we can provide this service. Contact the center director for details about hours and fees.

Absences

If your child must be absent from school, please call to let us know. Illness and family emergencies arise from time to time.

Staff

All staff members are required to participate in on-going training in child development and early

childhood education. Our staffing maintains a ratio of 1 adult to 7 children in the preschool program and 1 adult to 10 children in the day camps.

The center director initiates a background check on every new employee, as required by current licensing requirements. In addition, references from previous employers are required.

Curriculum

Our activities are planned around your child's individual needs, abilities, and interests. Because children learn through their senses and by moving, it may not look like school to you! Teachers use play experiences to help children learn skills and concepts. Activities encourage exploration, creativity, and problem solving. We will use outdoor classroom time as often as possible. The staff works with children to enhance their learning and development in all areas: social-emotional, physical, language/literacy, and intellectual.

Our program has chosen to use Grow it, Try it, Like it. Because the routine food choices of young children are determined by their families and adult caregivers, Grow It, Try It, Like It! links activities at child care centers with resources for use at home. Children are encouraged to try new fruits and vegetables again and again throughout this delightful resource. Children touch, smell, and taste new fruits and vegetables. Children also learn that fruits and vegetables are grown from plants or trees in the ground. Planting activities help children connect the delicious food choices at the table with the different growing conditions and plants that produce fruits and vegetables.

We will also use 7 Habits for Happy Kids and Leader in Me, a Covey program, to guide children to be responsible, show initiative, be creative, learn to set goals and meet them, to get along with people of various backgrounds and cultures, and to resolve conflicts and solve problems.

Health

Illness

For the good of all children and the teachers, please keep your child at home if he/she is ill. If symptoms appear during the day, we will call you to pick up your child immediately.

If your child is exposed to a contagious illness, we will send a notice home with your child or contact you by phone or e-mail. Please let us know if your child has been exposed to a disease away from school so that we can watch for symptoms.

State health regulations require that children with the following symptoms be excluded from child care.

Fever over 101 (taken orally).

Diarrhea (3 or more watery stools in a 24-hour period).

Vomiting (2 or more occasions within the past 24 hours).

Rash that is not obviously associated with diapering, heat, or allergic reactions to medications.

Sore throat if associated with fever or swollen glands in the neck.

Severe coughing leading to gagging, vomiting or difficulty breathing

Pink eye

Untreated scabies, head lice or the presence of nits

Multiple sores in the mouth with drooling

Ring worm

Impetigo

Immunizations

Every child in the Center must be fully immunized. A photocopy of the child's current immunization record is required at the time of enrollment. Please remember to provide a new copy if your child receives additional immunizations during the school year. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in termination of your child's enrollment.

Medication

Our program staff does not administer medication to children. However, if your child has a medical care plan that requires medication during the school day, please contact the center director to make these arrangements. We will work with you to administer medications necessary to sustain life (i.e. heart, lung, and diabetic medication). This requires written permission from parents and written directions signed by the physician ordering the medication. Antibiotics, cough syrup, Tylenol, etc. are not considered life sustaining. Parents are welcome to come to the center to administer medications they wish their children to have.

Injuries

Minor injuries will be treated with appropriate first aid and you will be informed about them on an accident report. Accident reports are placed in children's cubbies for parents to pick up.

You will be called to the center immediately if your child sustains a more serious injury. In

cases that we perceive to be potentially life threatening, we will call an ambulance to transport your child to a medical facility and will direct you to meet the ambulance. All costs for the ambulance and medical fees are the responsibility of the child's family.

Nutrition

Children are required to bring a sack lunch. We will serve one snack per day.

Snack 8:30 am

Lunch 11:00 am

Snack 2:30 pm

The sack lunch you provide for your child **MUST** meet the nutritional requirements of the US Department of Agriculture.

Food Allergies

Please notify your child's teacher if your child has food allergies. You will need to bring a statement from your child's doctor confirming the food allergy and including any special instructions or emergency procedures. Snack items with equivalent nutritional value will be substituted for allergy-causing foods.

Rest

Children are offered an opportunity to rest after lunch. Children have sleeping mats or cots labeled with their names. Clean sheets are provided weekly, or more often if needed. Children may bring from home a small blanket, small pillow, or stuffed toy. Children are not required to go to sleep. Non-sleepers may rest quietly with a book, while lying on their cots/mats.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is not just recess, but is an extension of our indoor learning opportunities.

All children will play outdoors every day, weather permitting. We will use outdoor classroom time at every opportunity. The length of outdoor play times is adjusted according to the weather. Factors such as humidity and wind are considered in determining whether children will be able to play outdoors and how long they will stay out.

If children are healthy enough to be at the center, they are healthy enough to go outdoors. Please dress your child for the weather, especially cool mornings in fall and spring. Sneakers with socks, or other similar shoes, are best for running, climbing, and enjoying the outdoors. Remember to send your child in play clothes. We will get dirty!

At enrollment, parents sign a consent form for sunscreen to be used as needed.

Safety and Emergencies

Release of Children

No child will be released to persons not authorized by a parent or guardian. If we have any doubt that the person picking up your child has not been authorized by a parent or guardian, we will not release the child until we contact you.

Emergency Procedures

Evacuation procedures for fire and other emergencies are practiced monthly. Severe weather drills are also conducted every month. When severe weather is in the area, the director monitors weather reports and alerts staff to be prepared to quickly move children to safety. Emergency procedures are posted in each classroom.

Weather-related Closings

When Cabot School District closes due to severe weather, our Center will be closed. Closings will be announced on local tv stations. The center director will also post school closings on facebook. If the closing is announced in the middle of the day, please pick up your child immediately.

Abuse Reporting

Our teachers are required by state law to report suspected child abuse/maltreatment. This includes non-accidental injuries, such as welts, bruises, cuts, burns, scratches, and broken bones. Suspected sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect are also reported. Child neglect is defined as abandonment, lack of food, utilities, shelter, or lack of supervision.

Teachers are trained to recognize indicators of possible abuse. If they fail to report suspected abuse/maltreatment, teachers can be charged with a Class C misdemeanor. Reports are confidential and are considered allegations until an investigation is completed. The phone number for the Child Abuse Hotline is posted on the parent bulletin board near the sign-in sheet.

Interviews by DHS and Other Agencies

Any staff member or children in attendance may be interviewed by Child Care Licensing, by the Division of Child and Family Services, and/or by law enforcement officers for the purpose of investigations or to determine compliance with licensing requirements. Child interviews do not require parental notice or consent.

Children's Needs

Clothing

Children in our program are active and creative. So that your child can fully participate in all the activities, please follow these guidelines when dressing your child for school.

- Children can easily manage clothing for toileting: fasten and unfasten buttons, zippers, snaps, buckles.
- Clothing is washable and durable enough to permit vigorous play.
- Clothing is inexpensive so that soiling, damage, or loss will not cause great concern.
- Shoes are sturdy and protect the child's feet. Sneakers (with socks) are the best choice.
- Flip flops, sandals, and open toed shoes can be hazardous.
- Clothing is appropriate to the weather conditions. Children will spend time outdoors every day. Be sure to send jackets, sweaters, coats, gloves, hats as needed.
- ALL clothing is labeled with the child's name. The program is not responsible for lost clothing items.

Change of clothes at school. Every child must have a complete change of clothes at school (socks, underwear, shirt, shorts/pants/skirt). Please check periodically to see if your child's change of clothes needs replacing. If a change of clothing becomes necessary during the day, the soiled clothing will be placed in a bag with your child's name on it.

Cubbies

Children are provided with cubbies as a means of keeping their belongings together. Please check your child's cubby each day for notes, art projects, and other items that need to go home.

Toys

We have many materials for the children to explore. Please encourage your child to leave his/her toys at home. It is often difficult to share a toy with a group and the toy may get broken. Toys that resemble weapons are not permitted. If your child has a special toy, expensive toy, or toy with many pieces, please keep it safely at home. For reasons of safety, no latex balloons are allowed in the center.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special occasion to share with friends. If you would like to provide a simple snack for the group, please plan the date in advance with your child's teacher. We love your children and want them to be healthy, so please avoid high sugar/salt/fat items (cupcakes, cookies, gingerbread men). Party napkins and plates can make graham crackers and apple juice seem quite festive! Your child's teacher can suggest appropriate snacks that your child's friends will enjoy.

Behavior Guidance

Our goal is to help children learn acceptable behavior and develop self-control. Our program is designed to promote positive and enjoyable learning experiences and to build trusting, respectful relationships. A well-planned schedule, classroom arrangement, and curriculum, along with a well-trained staff, significantly reduces instances of inappropriate behavior.

However, when children do make mistakes in behavior, we use the following guidance techniques.

- Tell the child what he/she CAN do
- Give choices whenever possible, but only when the child really has a choice
- Support children in learning to solve their own problems and work out conflicts
- Re-direct a child to another activity
- Help children learn how to play with friends

Physical punishment and threats are never used by our staff.

Limits of Behavior

- You may not hurt others.
- You may not hurt yourself.
- You may not hurt animals.
- You may not hurt toys and equipment.

Guidance Policy

At enrollment, parents will be given a written copy of our behavior guidance policy. Parents will also sign an acknowledgement that they have been informed of the policy.

Pattern of Inappropriate Behavior

When a pattern of inappropriate behavior emerges, parents are required to meet with our staff. The goal will be to work together to find a solution to the problem behavior and resolve the difficulty.

Children with Special Needs

Our program accepts all children. No child is denied enrollment due to special medical, health, or developmental needs. We will work with special services providers to ensure that your child has the supports needed to foster development.

Transitioning

As children grow, they may move to a different group within the center or into kindergarten. We will work with you to make the transition a positive experience. We will plan activities for the children and provide suggestions to you that will help your child bridge from preschool to kindergarten.

Family-Staff Partnership

Confidentiality

All information about children and families is considered confidential. Staff members and volunteers will maintain the confidentiality of each family and of each child's educational records.

Communication

We use a number of methods to communicate between center and your family.

- Talk to your child's teacher at drop-off and pick-up time.
- Read posted weekly lesson plans and daily schedules.
- Read special event notices posted near the sign-in sheet.
- Read the information on the parent bulletin board.
- Enjoy the photos, children's work, and other documentation of children's activities. These are posted in your child's room and throughout the center.
- Check your child's cubby for notices.
- Talk with you in a parent-teacher conference
- Share information in center-wide parent meetings
- Visit the center! You are welcome to drop by any time.

Orientation

Families who are new to our program are expected to attend our fall parent orientation meeting. During this time we will explain policies and procedures and answer your questions. If a child enrolls during the year, the family will be asked to participate in a 30-minute orientation conference with the director.

Daily Arrivals and Departures

A parent or authorized adult must accompany children into and out of the center at all times, and must sign children in and out. Arrival and departure times are very busy; for safety, please hold your child's hand in the parking lot.

Drop-off and pick-up times are opportunities to exchange information with our staff. As staff members are greeting children, parents often have lots of information to give us. Please help us do a good job—if it's important for us to know, write it down and hand it to a staff member.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice a year at a time that you will be able to attend. We look forward to these special opportunities to talk about your child's progress. Parents or teachers may wish to request additional conferences as needed.

Meetings and Special Events

Family events will be planned throughout the year. We encourage your family to participate in

these special activities. Notice of these events will be posted on the parent bulletin board.

Photographs and Video

Teachers use digital cameras and digital video to record children's activities. Documentation of children's activities is used for families to see what their children are doing in the center, and also for children to recall what they have been doing. You will see photographs throughout the center. Video may be used occasionally during meetings or special events.

Photographs and video may also be used occasionally to inform the community about our program. Our staff may also share photographs and video with other teachers in professional meetings, classes, and workshops.

During the enrollment process, parents will sign a release for their children to be included in photographs and video.

Advisory Group

A parent advisory group will be formed at the beginning of each year. This group will work with the director to make recommendations for program improvements and to help plan special events.

Family Library

The center has a small library of books and videos on child development and parenting. Topics include behavior guidance, developmental characteristics, and special concerns (going to the hospital; step-parenting, for example). The center director can assist you with these materials and can also refer you to resources at the public library.

Enrollment

Eligibility

We accept all eligible applicants until our maximum enrollment is reached. To review eligibility requirements, contact the center director.

Enrollment

During the enrollment process, parents will attend an orientation session and will complete all the necessary forms.

Withdrawal

If your child will be withdrawing from our program before the end of the school year, please inform us as soon as possible. This allows us to help your child prepare for a new experience. Also, we can notify another family who may be waiting for a place in our program.

Good Earth Learning Center Handbook for Families

Center policies and procedures are outlined in the Handbook for Families. During your family's orientation the Center staff will review the handbook with you, including the following policies.

- Children interviews by licensing staff, child maltreatment investigators, and/or law enforcement
- Kindergarten Readiness Skills
- Licensing compliance record
- Notification of injuries
- Notification of contagious illness
- Policy on administering medication
- Product recall list

I have received a copy of the Center Handbook for Families and have reviewed the information listed.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date