



Universal Pre-Kindergarten Parent Handbook

I. Introduction:

The following pages contain policies, procedures and general information for parents. This information is particularly important for children who are beginning day care or are about to enter a group program for the first time. Also included are forms that must be completed and returned prior to your child beginning day care.

A. Separation

Our goal is to provide a sense of safety, of comfort, of "this is OK" which is transmitted to each child as the parent talks to people, laughs, puts the child's belongings in a cubby, or sits on the floor to build with blocks. Saying a short happy good-bye when the time is appropriate will help your child know you think he or she is in a safe place.

It is difficult for a child to arrive and then have a parent either leave too quickly or remain too long. A short time for transition is helpful and will ease the tension of separation, without dragging out of the good-bye until it becomes "painful". Devise a routine for your leaving and try to stick to it. Children love rituals. Hang a jacket; get a child involved with a toy, etc. All of these things will make for an easier transition.

If a child is having a problem separating, the teachers have had lots of experience in this area and will be happy to assist you. Also keep in mind that sometimes a child who has had no problem initially can react at a later time. This is not unusual. Children, as we know, are constantly going through stages. Do not take it personally and feel guilty that its something you or the teachers have done. It can happen at any time and for any number of reasons.

While we recognize the value of natural separation, we also realistically face the time constraints placed on working parents. Our staff can be counted on to give the necessary nurturing and reassurance to all children and will be available to talk to parents about how things are going.

II. Procedures and Policies:

A. Health

All children are required to have a physical examination by their physician prior to attending school, along with the health and diet information required in Attachments C and D. It is especially important that the physician list on the appropriate form the exact dates of all inoculations.

An annual fee of thirty dollars (\$30) is required by the Lexington School for children to have access to Lexington Health Services staff. This fee is payable at the beginning of the school year in September, or at such time as the child registers for the program.

B. Toys from Home

Parents are asked to discourage children from bringing toys or gadgets to school. When these things are broken or misplaced, it causes unnecessary grief. You are, however, invited to bring in things that are of interest to the class – like a leaf, a flower, seashells, books, etc. Materials used for arts and crafts are always welcome. Occasionally, a child needs a “security blanket/toy”, and articles of this nature are accepted as long as needed.

C. Birthdays

If your child would like to celebrate his/her birthday in school, we would be happy to plan a simple party. We ask that parents provide cupcakes, cake or ice cream, candles, plates and napkins. Please do not send in party bags. You may, however, donate a book or tape to the class. Teachers welcome new books and we have printed nameplates, which we will place into the book jacket in your child’s name.

D. Illness Policy

It is the responsibility of each parent to see that their child is well before sending her/him to school. The child should be kept at home whenever there is any doubt if he/she is ill. If a child is ill during the night, or has an unusually poor night’s sleep, he/she should be kept at home the following day. Please be sure not to send your child to school if he/she is starting to snuffle. This is usually the first sign of a cold. Since we want to keep our children well, it is to everybody’s benefit that the children with the beginning of a cold be kept home. Even though the child has no temperature, the early stage of a cold is usually the most contagious period. A restful, quiet day at home will help prevent a severe cold.

A child should be free of fever for at least 24 hours before he/she returns to school. In case of a contagious disease or exposure to such, parents are asked to notify us at once, even if this occurs during vacation periods. All parents will be notified by us when a child in the group has a contagious disease.

It is unlawful for us to administer medication. If your child needs a mid-day dosage, you or a designated person may come to the Center to dispense the required medicine. If this is not possible, please ask your physician to adjust the dosage to times of the day when you can administer this medication.

E. Teacher-Parent Conferences

Teachers will schedule conferences with parents to discuss the child's school progress and home development. Conferences will be held during lunchtime for staff who work at Lexington, and during the evening for outside parents. Teachers are available at other times or for additional conferences by appointment only.

F. Snacks

There is a morning breakfast-snack and a mid-afternoon snack for all classes.

Please do not send children to school with chewing gum or candy. We encourage healthy snacks.

G. Clothing

The following is a list of items we will need in school:

- A complete labeled change of clothes.
- An extra labeled sweater.

Please dress your child in comfortable, washable clothes. Bring a complete set of seasonal clothing that can be left in school, with each piece labeled. We encourage a great amount of independence. Clothing should be simply made so that a minimum of help is needed in dressing and undressing. Please do not send your child with belts, buckles, suspenders, etc. Sweats are easy to pull on and off. Jackets, sweaters and shoes worn to school should be labeled, as should both mittens, boots, raincoats, hats, etc. We cannot be responsible for unlabeled items.

Because our creative endeavors sometimes turn out to be quite messy, we ask that you send your child in clothes that are not "dressy". Our smocks do not catch everything! Children will enjoy themselves more if they do not have to worry about getting dirty.

Weather permitting, we will be going outdoors almost every day, so be sure to dress your child accordingly. We have no arrangements for children who have been out sick, so please do not request that your child be kept inside upon his/her return to school. Children should be well enough to participate in all activities. As the weather gets colder, please make sure that your child has a pair of gloves (mittens for the younger classes) in the cubby. Boots should be large enough to put on easily.

H. Children's Work

Children work hard at their projects and achieve a great sense of accomplishment. Our focus is on the act of doing; the process is stressed, not the finished product. Please be aware of this attitude in relation to your child's work. The work that a child brings home has been created with love and great patience and for this reason; we ask that you remember to take home all finished products. All-important seasonal and holiday projects will be done by all of the children. Children will however, occasionally do another activity on your child's day off. Whenever possible, your child will make-up these projects, but teachers cannot make-up each and every painting or gluing project.

I. Center Closings

In case of school closings resulting from inclement weather, we will follow the same procedure as is used in the Lexington School. If the School is closed, the Child Care Center will be closed. Please tune-in to your local radio stations for school closings or call the Switchboard early in the morning.

J. Communication

Instructions to teachers about your child should be in writing. Arrival can be a hectic time and teachers cannot always remember verbal requests, a change in pick-up times, a new telephone number, etc. Lengthy discussions at the door are discouraged so that teachers can help your child with separation. Every classroom has an 'IN' box with a pad and pen for your convenience.

We believe that it is important that there be a close-working relationship between home and school. Just as parents want to know what happens at school, the staff wants to know about your child's experiences at home. A note about such things as unusual changes in sleep or appetite, special irritability or unusual situations at home, will prepare teachers to be of special help at school. Family changes such as illness, a new family member, an impending move, etc., should be reported to the teacher. It is also essential that we be promptly notified in writing if your home, work or emergency telephone numbers change.

K. Picking-up Children at the Center

We will not release your child to anyone who is not authorized for pick-up. Please notify us in writing of any changes or additions to the list of people who are authorized to pick-up your child. Even with your prior authorization, when an approved non-family member appears at Lexington to pick-up your child, these people will be required to produce identification. Given our concern for the safety and well being of your child, we will not accept telephone messages authorizing a different person to pick-up your child.

- L.** Those wishing to enroll a child in Child Care for the part of the day not covered by Universal Pre-Kindergarten may speak to the Director. If there is room available, your child may attend both programs.

III. The Program:

A. Developmental Goals

Activities for the child's social and physical development, as well as his/her psychological and intellectual growth are stressed. The growth of the total child is our paramount concern. Problem solving and independence of thought and activity are encouraged. Learning is guided through the active use of various materials. The program is individualized and the staff has time to observe each child's development and interests and can select materials best suited to motivate and challenge each child. A great deal of emphasis is placed on caring and mutual respect. Enrichment of the environment is continuous and includes an array of materials from which the children are free to choose according to their interests. We provide an unpressured environment in which to learn.

B. Objectives and Philosophy

Our prime and most important objective is growth in self-concept since we believe that a child must have a healthy ego in order to learn and to mature. To this end, we focus on:

- Making friends and learning to get along with others. Children are helped to learn to share, cooperate, listen to each other, handle conflicts in socially acceptable ways, and take responsibility for their actions and the result of their actions as they impinge on other children. Fostering self-confidence and self-respect by valuing children's ideas and work is encouraged. Teachers listen to children with genuine interest and talk with them rather than at them.
- Developing children's inner controls by helping them learn to delay gratification, accept limits and routines and handle emotional impulses.
- Approaching activities in an individualized and age-appropriate way. We believe in the child's innate and natural desire to learn and provide a great variety of materials along with an unpressured environment in which this desire to grow can flourish. Throughout the year, teachers will create many opportunities for learning. Children will be encouraged to take part in these activities. Children however, are given the freedom to choose to do other things within the structure of the individual classroom. They will learn by doing.

IV. The Children:

The following goals are integral to the Lexington Child Care Center:

- Respect for the child: Accept and cherish him/her as a person with a full range of emotions, perceptions and sensitivities. Refrain from thinking and talking about a child in superficial terms. Avoid preconceived notions like "little boys are more aggressive than..."
- Listen to children attentively, seriously and with genuine interest.
- Work with the child from where he/she is (i.e., realize that different children come to us with different life experiences, attitudes towards adults, themselves and their peers; different reactions to stimuli, routines, tone of voice, to each other and to "adult authority").
- Recognize and accept children's eccentricity. One kind of behavior may be acceptable from a child just beginning to adjust to the program, while the same behavior may be unwelcome from another child who has been with us for a longer period of time.
- As a teacher, show emotions and interpret them. "I am happy because..." "It makes me angry when..." We are aware that we are a model for the child when learning to cope with his/her feelings.
- Interpret other children's emotions and reactions – teach cause and effect behavior: "Joshua is sad because you won't let him play;" or "Do you know why Matthew hit you?" He was angry because you grabbed his toy;" or "It's hard for you to wait".
- Work with the assumption that a child is willing to learn self-control and needs your help. He/she is not fighting with you, the teacher, but with himself. Acknowledge each step with a simple private comment so he/she knows you are aware and supportive, even in failure, and will continue to help.
- Refrain from value judgments: "You are a bad boy." If children use this phrase, say,

“He is not a bad boy. There are no bad children. Sometimes, children do not always remember to do what’s best.” Use phrases like: “I did not like what you did”, “You work hard”; “I like the way you used your words” and/or “You did a good job cleaning the table”.

- Be protective of children’s rights – the right to be heard, to have ideas accepted, to solitude, to possessions. We do not make children share, rather appeal to their good will and generosity, with better results and no resentment.

We welcome your cooperation and welcome your participation.

**Enrollment Application for the
Lexington Child Care Center – Universal Pre-Kindergarten**

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ Apt. No.: _____

_____ Home Telephone No.: _____

Mother's Name _____ Home and/or Business Telephone No. _____

Mother's Address if
Different than Child's: _____

Father's Name _____ Home and/or Business Telephone No. _____

Father's Address if
Different than Child's: _____

Person to call in case of emergency
(in addition to parents): _____ Telephone No.: _____

Type of Insurance: _____ Policy No.: _____

Applicant for the 12 month program: or the 10 month program:

No. of days per week (3-days minimum; please check): M T W Th F

Please list the names of all persons who are authorized to pick-up your child from school. If this changes, please notify us of this fact in writing:

1. _____
Name Relationship

2. _____
Name Relationship

3. _____
Name Relationship