



PARENT HANDBOOK 2023-2024

Little Learners at Washburn Tech
5724 SW Huntoon St.
Topeka, KS 66604-2117
785-670-3312 (center)
785-670-3395 (director's office)

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Welcome

Welcome to Little Learners at Washburn Tech. We are excited you have chosen us to care for and instruct your children.

We are fully licensed by the state of Kansas and staffed with highly trained early education professionals dedicated to caring for and educating young children. In addition, we are fortunate to have students who are pursuing careers in the early childhood field to work with the children.

Our role is not only to facilitate the learning of children, parents, and one another, but also to work as partners in the important work of Washburn Tech staff and students. We are pleased to be a part of these endeavors.

Families are an important part of our center. We believe that honest, effective communication between our staff and parents is essential to providing quality care for the children we serve. Please feel free to contact us at any time regarding questions, concerns, or comments you may have.

Parents must attend an orientation prior to their child/ren's first day of care. This gives the parents an opportunity to see the facility, meet the staff, review necessary paperwork, and have initial questions answered.

Please read this handbook carefully and make it available for future reference. When you enroll your child at Little Learners at Washburn Tech, you agree to abide by the policies set forth in this handbook.

Overview of Program

Little Learners at Washburn Tech was created to serve a distinct population. Our on-site early education center primarily provides early education services for Washburn Tech and Washburn University staff and students, although we welcome children of parents not affiliated with Washburn Tech/University as well.

Since our center is an early education lab staffed by not only early education professionals but also Washburn Tech Early Childhood Education (ECE) students, we have a unique ability to provide smaller staff/child ratios than other early education facilities which provides more individualized attention for each child. The ECE students receive academic instruction and then can immediately employ their new knowledge and skills in the early education center. The students will plan learning experiences to help develop each child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills.

Our center is proud to have knowledgeable, highly trained caregivers/educators who are committed to providing a safe, warm, nurturing environment in which the children may learn, grow, and reach their full potential. The team carefully evaluates staff and student performance to insure the children are provided age-appropriate, enriching learning experiences that meet each child's developmental level.

Our facility also partners with other community programs. The Outreach Storytellers provide Storytime with Boomer Bear once a month to enrich our literacy offering. Playful Penguin Music visits our children once a week to provide additional music experiences to our children. All employees, students, and volunteers are carefully screened, and their information is kept on file.

The center is set up with learning centers such as art, manipulatives, block play, science, language arts, and dramatic play where the children are in small groups. We also have large group times when the children listen to stories, sing songs, and play active games. We have an outdoor playground for large motor development and a nutrition area with a full-service kitchen to teach good eating habits.

Philosophy

The goal of Little Learners at Washburn Tech is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where each child can learn and grow at his or her own pace.

Staff provide developmentally appropriate activities for both structured and free choice activities. We strive to foster an environment where children can develop a positive self-concept through their interactions with staff as well as their fellow playmates.

We believe in the dignity of each child and work to instill that respect for others in the children cared for at our center.

Admission Policy

Little Learners at Washburn Tech is available to Washburn Tech/University staff and students. We also accept children of parents not affiliated with Washburn Tech/University, although preference for care openings is offered to those currently attending school at or employed by Washburn Tech/University.

If care is needed, but there are no available openings, parents may ask to have their child/ren put on our waiting list and we will contact them when an opening becomes available.

Little Learners is licensed for two separate units of care. Children from age eighteen months to three years of age attend our toddler unit. Children from three to six years of age attend our preschool unit. Our center is not licensed for school-age care, so we do not serve children once they have started kindergarten.

Upon acceptance into the center, parents must complete an enrollment packet. This packet includes a variety of forms needed to fulfill licensing requirements and our needs as a center. **All forms must be on file with the center before the child is able to attend.** It is the parents' responsibility to notify center staff of any changes that need to be made (i.e., address, phone number, insurance information) as well as providing us with an updated immunization record when necessary. This information is essential in case of an emergency.

The first three weeks of care is a trial period in which the child adjusts to the center and the children cared for. During this period, if the parents or the center decide that the child is not adjusting, either party may decide to terminate care without any notice. After the initial trial period, parents need to provide at least two weeks' notice if they decide to withdraw from the early education center. If a child permanently withdraws from care, unused days will be deducted from the billing.

Hours of Operation

STUDENTS: Little Learners at Washburn Tech is open for care Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. for students. These hours provide students 15 minutes before and after classes begin and end to drop off and pick up their child/ren. If a parent needs care before or after that time to meet with a teacher, the staff must be notified the day before to assure that we are adequately staffed to care for the child. Students involved in clinicals will be allowed care for their child/ren 45 minutes before and after their scheduled clinical for drop off and pick up of their child/ren, but only on the days the student is participating in off-campus clinical training.

STAFF: Staff using our center will be able to drop their child/ren off at 7:30 a.m. and pick them up by 4:00 p.m. to allow them preparation and clean-up time in their classroom before and after class.

COMMUNITY: The center is open for care from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for community parents. This is to accommodate varying work schedules. Individual schedules will be determined by the working hours of each child's parents. If a parent needs care before or after his/her normally scheduled hours, staff must be notified the day before to assure that the center is adequately staffed.

For the safety of the children, we ask that parents pay close attention to their children upon dropping them off and picking them up. Because our center runs along a "street" where students, staff, and visitors are traveling to find parking, we recommend that parents park in our circular drive facing the direction needed so their child can exit the vehicle from the building side of their car. This will help minimize the chance of a child getting too close to the street area and being injured.

If anyone other than the parent or guardian is picking up the child, that person must be listed on the medical record form with address and phone number noted as well. Only persons listed on this form are allowed to pick up the child. For the child's safety, staff will ask for photo identification of anyone they do not recognize.

Staff or ECE students plan and prepare snacks. Our lunches are catered by G's Catering. Lunch is served to children attending all day at approximately 11:15 a.m. Snack is served at approximately 9:00 a.m. and 1:40 p.m. Breakfast is served to children of parents involved in clinicals at approximately 7:00 a.m. To adequately plan meals, please notify the center as soon as possible if your child/ren will not be attending.

The center is open whenever the campus buildings are open. A schedule for the year as well as monthly calendars are provided to parents. If it is a day in which classes are not in session, parents must notify the director at least a week in advance if their child/ren will be attending to make sure the center is adequately staffed. Although the center staff will attempt to contact parents in advance of these days to determine their child's attendance, it is the parents' responsibility to notify the center. Please keep the schedule handy so it can be referred to when necessary.

Security System

Little Learners is fortunate to have a security system in place to keep our children safe. All access doors always remain locked. People dropping off and picking up children will need to ring the doorbell in the hallway or the intercom at the main west entrance. A staff member will open the hallway door or remotely unlock the door at the main entrance. If you are standing back from the main entrance door, staff may ask through the intercom for you to move towards the door so they can see who is waiting before allowing you access. This is for the protection of the children in our care.

If another authorized person is picking up a child, s/he will need to use the main entrance, hit the intercom button, and staff will remotely unlock the door. If the person is not familiar to the staff answering the intercom, s/he will be asked for photo identification before gaining access to the center.

Fees

Little Learners at Washburn Tech will bill for care on a weekly basis. Actual fees differ based on whether the child is scheduled to attend on a full-time or part-time basis, whether the child is cared for in the toddler or preschool area, and whether the parent is a student, staff, or community member.

Little Learners at Washburn Tech does assess an enrollment fee equal to one full week of care for each child and is imposed when parents sign the parent agreement. This fee is non-refundable if the child does not attend but is credited to the first week of care when the child begins.

Parents are charged for each regularly scheduled day of care during which the center is open regardless of whether the child attended. Billing for shortened weeks, such as Thanksgiving, are billed for the number of days the center is open. In addition, "optional days" of care occur when the center is open, but classes are not in session on campus. If care is not needed on such a day, the parent is not billed for the day. For staffing needs to be determined on these days, it is essential that parents notify the center director in advance of whether their child will need care. Furthermore, if a child is absent for five or more consecutive days due to illness, arrangements may be made with the Program Director regarding billing. These situations are managed on a case-by-case basis.

Parents are billed electronically for early education services on the Friday preceding the billed week of care. Payments can be made with the cashier either in person or by calling 785-670-3363. Parents may also use the secure drop box in the Business Office door to submit payments after hours. **Little Learner staff do not handle any fees.**

Payment is due to the cashier by the last day of the week of care as indicated on the billing. A due date will be included on all bills. Failure to pay before the next week begins results in parent contact on that Monday as a reminder of the outstanding balance. If payment is not made by the end of the day on Monday, care is suspended until the balance due is paid in full. Parents will still be responsible for payment for those days the child cannot attend as those days are regularly scheduled days of care. Failure to pay within 1 week after the due date results in loss of future care for the child. At that time, collection

through the State of Kansas Set-Off program is initiated. If failure to pay is due to extenuating circumstances, parents may contact the Little Learners Program Director and Washburn Tech Bookkeeper to discuss payment options.

In addition, late fees are imposed on parents arriving after their scheduled pick-up time. Parents are charged \$10 for every 10 minutes or portion thereof until they arrive to pick up their child. All late fees are billed on Friday with the next week's billing.

All student records and program completion certificates are held until all accounts are paid in full. In addition, parents will not be allowed to enroll in any program at Washburn University or Washburn Tech until such holds are lifted upon full payment.

Checks returned from the bank marked NSF are assessed a \$30 NSF charge for each check returned. If Washburn Tech receives two checks for non-sufficient funds during the enrollment year, the parent is asked to pay future charges by cash or money order.

Little Learners at Washburn Tech does contract for services with DCF for qualifying parents. Contact the Little Learners Program Director for information.

Special Needs

Being an equal opportunity institution, we accept all children regardless of developmental level. Upon accepting a spot at Little Learners, parents are asked to bring to the director's attention any issues their child might have which may affect their child's educational progress. The director speaks with the parents regarding our ability to address these needs with being a training institution for prospective teachers. It is the parents' decision whether they feel this environment can successfully meet their child's educational needs.

If a child is enrolled that has special needs, we collaborate closely with the parents and any other support personnel (TARC, local education agency, etc.) to provide the best learning environment possible for the child.

Communication between staff, parents, and outside agency stakeholders is essential. If it is determined that we are not adequately meeting the child's needs, the parent can withdraw the child at no additional expense.

Communication

It is essential to the well-being of every child for parents and staff to function as a team. Please share any thoughts, concerns, or changes in your child's daily routine with center staff. Staff, in turn, will share pertinent information about your child's day. At times, it may be necessary to schedule a short conference time. These may be conducted at any time throughout the year.

Staff will use email, letters, texts, calendars, and notes to share information such as upcoming events and supplies needed. Please check your child/ren's storage cubby daily as well as your email account so you can stay informed.

Little Learners utilizes the Brightwheel online platform to facilitate communication and checking children in/out. All parents/guardians/authorized pick-ups are invited to join Brightwheel. Depending on the status of the individual determines what access to children's information each person has. When signing children in or out, a full signature must be written to comply with DCF regulations. Please do not just initialize the signature area.

If your child/ren will be absent or later than typical, please notify the center as soon as possible. Feel free to call the center at any time at 785-670-3312 or message staff through Brightwheel.

Parents are free to visit the center at any time, but please consider if this will cause undue stress to your child/ren or disrupt the daily routine of the children.

At the beginning of the year, arrival time can be a stressful time for both the parents and the children. When you drop off your child/ren, please give staff any necessary information, remind your child you will be back later, tell them goodbye, and quietly leave. Linger can make transitioning into the day more difficult for the child. Usually, the child will adjust to the activities very quickly once the parents have departed. We will assist with that transition and contact you if needed.

Remember it is essential that all information is current. We must be able to reach you. If on any given day you will not be available to pick up your child/ren in

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an emergency, please let us know which of your emergency contacts to contact first. Make sure that the contact person knows he or she needs to be available at the number you provide.

Behavior Management and Discipline Policy

Little Learners at Washburn Tech uses a positive approach to discipline. We promote and model instructive behavior guidance that will establish positive behaviors to assist each child's development and sense of self-worth. Positive reinforcement, redirection, verbalization, natural consequences, and calm-down times all work together to promote a safe environment for all the children.

All the discipline methods serve to teach the child self-regulation and positive choice-making. The center complies with the state licensing regulations. No corporal punishment or discipline deemed harmful to the child is ever used.

In general, no child is allowed to hurt themselves, others, or property. If a child is being disruptive or violent, a parent is notified, and the child is supervised in an area away from the other children.

All efforts to correct a child's inappropriate behavior are made by the staff. It is vital that parents and staff work together to maintain open communication channels and a cooperative atmosphere to assist the child in learning alternatives to inappropriate behavior.

Little Learners at Washburn Tech does reserve the right to discontinue service at any time for behavior that threatens the safety of the other children, staff, or students.

Health and Illness Policies

All medical conditions, allergies, etc. need to be noted on the medical record form. This includes any food allergies your child/ren may have.

The center's illness/exclusion policy focuses on the needs and behavior of the ill child and the ability of the staff to meet those needs without compromising the care and health of the other children. Children should be fully able to participate in all activities, including outdoor play. If a child is not well enough to go outdoors, he/she is not well enough to be in school.

Children are kept at home if they are running a fever, vomiting, having diarrhea, or exhibiting any signs of a contagious or infectious illness. These may include, but are not limited to, rashes, conjunctivitis (pink eye), mouth sores, lice or scabies, severe coughing, or congestion. Parents must be respectful of the other children and families, and not send an ill child to the facility.

Guidelines for exclusion of children from childcare are set by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and must be followed. A copy of this form is provided upon enrollment.

If your child becomes ill during the day, you will be called to come and pick up your child immediately.

Children may be readmitted to the center under the following conditions:

A. With a physician's statement that the child is free from communicable disease, and that returning poses no risk to the child or others.

OR

B. If visibly free from communicable disease, free from fever without benefit of fever reducing medications for 24 hours, and free of vomiting and/or diarrhea for 24 hours while on a normal diet.

Safety and Emergencies

It is important that parents list anyone authorized to pick up their child on the medical record form. Children are released only to the persons listed in the child's file. It is helpful if the parents inform the staff if someone other than the usual person will be picking up the child. For the child/ren's safety, staff will ask for the identification of anyone they do not recognize.

The center has monthly fire drills and monthly tornado drills during tornado season. Our emergency evacuation plan is posted by each exit.

Basic safety rules are reviewed regularly with staff, students, and children. Children are never unsupervised and there is always a supervising teacher present in each unit.

In case of a medical emergency, one staff member will stay with the child while another contacts the parent, administration, and ambulance, if needed. If the parent does not arrive before the ambulance, a staff member will go to the hospital with the child. That staff person will have the child's file as well to present necessary information to the hospital. Someone will stay with the child until a parent arrives and all questions have been answered to the hospital staff's satisfaction.

All children must have current immunizations and a current health assessment on file as of the first day of attendance. It is the parents' responsibility to give any updates to the child's immunization history throughout the year to the child's teacher. Please note that we must have a copy of the pink immunization card or a computerized printout from the doctor's office on file to verify immunizations.

All Little Learners at Washburn Tech staff and ECE students are required to meet Kansas Licensing requirements including, but not limited to, training in first aid, illness, and abuse and neglect. They also must pass a TB test and KBI background check.

Medications, Dietary Considerations, and Nutrition

Prescription and over-the-counter medications can be given only if the parent signs a center-supplied authorization form. Prescription medication must have a prescription label with the child's name and date on it. All, prescription and over-the-counter, medicines must be in the original containers. Medications are not accessible to children and are stored in a locked container or cabinet.

Medication(s) cannot be left in bags or cubbies. Any over-the-counter medication that is taken orally must follow these same guidelines and requires a parent authorization form. In addition, sample medications require written instructions from the doctor on a prescription form. Over-the-counter medications such as sunscreen, lip balm, etc. need to be listed on the medical record form where parents can list medications of which their doctor has approved use. Please note that although acetaminophen, cough syrup, etc. are listed on that form, an authorization form is still needed since these medications are taken orally.

If a child's diet must be modified for health reasons, a physician's written statement is required. If a child's diet is modified for cultural or religious reasons, the parent is asked to put the request in writing. The center staff may not be able to accommodate every dietary restriction. If this occurs, parents may be asked to provide a substitution which staff will gladly serve.

Parents of children with food allergies need to inform staff upon enrollment of each allergy so staff can ensure that the child is not exposed to the allergen. All staff and students will be informed of the allergy so snacks/meals can be planned accordingly, or appropriate substitutes provided.

The center provides two snacks and lunch every day. In addition, children of parents involved in clinicals are provided breakfast before the rest of the children arrive. Center staff and ECP program students plan and make snacks and breakfast for the children. Our lunches are catered by G's Catering. These meals meet Kansas requirements and are nutritionally balanced.

No outside food or drinks are to be brought into the center. This includes candy and gum. If a child arrives with food items, he/she will sit at the snack table

until finished. For health and safety reasons, food may not be stored in the child's cubby.

On your child's birthday, parents are invited to provide a special "treat" for everyone to help celebrate their child's special day. Please visit with staff regarding quantity and appropriate items.

Clothing

Please dress your child for a busy day of play. We will be painting, digging in dirt, climbing, crawling, and running. While we try to protect the children's clothing, accidents do happen, and children do get messy.

Clothing and shoes should be seasonally appropriate and provide safety on the playground and on walks. Appropriate play shoes are particularly important for your child's safety and comfort. All shoes should have a back to help keep the footwear in place when running. Because children take their shoes on and off in the center before/after playing on the playground, please make sure the shoes are easy on/easy off.

Parents must provide diapers and wipes for their toddler children. Notes will be sent home when our supply is running low.

Preschool children need to be able to manage their own bathroom needs, therefore, their clothing should be easy for them to manage. Simple clothes, in which preschoolers can dress themselves, help build self-esteem and give them confidence to succeed in all areas of development. Pay close attention to any fasteners your child may have difficulty manipulating.

Licensing regulations require every child to always have at least two changes of clothing in their cubby. These clothes must be seasonally appropriate and include a shirt, pants/shorts/skirt, underwear, and socks. Take care to check the clothing regularly to ensure that the size and season are appropriate. All clothing must be clearly marked with your child's name.

Because the children do remove their shoes when entering the center, we require one pair of socks for each day of care with a minimum of two pairs to meet licensing requirements. These socks are left at school and laundered at the center.

Since we are required to spend an amount of time outdoors daily, please remember to provide appropriate clothing. These may include hats, mittens, sweaters/jackets, and boots. For warm weather, dress your child in lightweight clothing so that he/she does not become overheated.

Outdoor Play

Weather permitting, children will have outdoor play time each day as required by the state licensing regulations. Outdoor play is an integral part of each child's healthy growth and development so it is important that children always have seasonally appropriate clothing and footwear so they can safely enjoy this activity.

If the playground is too wet, children may take walks on a designated route on campus. This allows them much-needed fresh air and a change of scenery.

Naptime

All children will rest quietly for at least one hour every day at approximately 1:30 p.m. (toddlers) and 2 p.m. (preschoolers). Children who do not fall asleep may play quietly at 3 p.m.

Cots and bedding are provided for each child. If your child/ren rest best with a special blanket or soft toy from home, that item may be brought and kept in the cubby until naptime.

When arriving to pick up your child/ren, please be respectful of this rest time by entering quietly. If you need to speak on your cell phone or to staff, please do so in the office, classroom, or entry area.

Please do not use the intercom system or doorbell between 1:30 and 3:30. If you arrive between those times, please notify staff using Brightwheel or call 785-670-3312. After 3:30, parents may again use the intercom system or the doorbell. The child will be brought to the appropriate door by center staff.

Personal Possessions

Except for a naptime item, please do not allow your children to bring personal items from home. By bringing them into the early education center, the items are at risk of being damaged by another child which can lead to hard feelings.

Show and tell opportunities will be provided periodically for the children. The children may bring something from home on those days to talk about with the other children. Before and after show and tell, the item will be stored in the cubby.

Little Learners at Washburn Tech Calendar Fall 2023-Summer 2024

August 14	First day for new enrollees
September 4	Labor Day; Center closed
September 22	No classes; optional day
October 27	No classes; optional day
Late Nov/Dec	Center In-Service; Center closed
November 22	No classes; optional day
November 23-24	Thanksgiving break; Center closed
December 14-21	No classes; optional days
Dec 22-Jan 1	Christmas break; Center closed
January 2-5	No classes; optional days
January 15	MLK Day; Center closed
February 16	No classes; optional day
March 11-15	No classes; optional days
April 12	No classes; optional day
May 9-10/13	No classes; optional days
May 14	Center closed; Preschool graduation
May 15	Summer session begins
May 27	Memorial Day; Center closed
June 19	Juneteenth; Center closed
Late June/early July	Center In-Service; Center closed
July 1-5	Maintenance Week; Center closed
Late July/early Aug	Center In-Service; Center closed

Red font indicates date to be determined. As much notice as possible of the exact date will be given.