



PARENT HANDBOOK

Our mission is to provide a safe and joyful atmosphere where your child can learn and grow through play-based, educational activities that are intentionally designed for each developmental stage.

Curriculum: The Learning Garden at Gardenside Christian utilizes multiple curricula to ensure exposure to numerous subjects through STEAM and play-based, hands-on learning activities that will provide appropriate enrichment and stimulation at each learning stage.

These activities will include (but are not limited to):

- Science and Nature Exploration (extended time outdoors for enhanced learning opportunities)
- Learning Centers (designated areas that provide exciting and interesting experiences)
- Sensory Exploration (touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing, movement/balance)
- Fine Motor Activities (construction, zippers, buttons, opening and closing sandwich bags, pre-writing and writing skills)
- Gross Motor Activities (climbing, playground, dancing, throwing, catching, kicking)
- Mathematical Skills (measuring, weighing, numbers, counting and other mathematical concepts)
- Alphabet and Letter Recognition using Alphabet Stories curriculum (including pre-reading skills)
- Shape Recognition
- Color Recognition
- Weekly Kindermusik class (Music and Movement Enrichment)
- Weekly Sign Language (Simple ASL signs taught in a fun, interactive class)
- Art (process vs product, imagine, build, design, create)
- Circle Time when age appropriate (songs, stories, movement, weather)

*All to include the embedding of Christian principles through modeling and role play.

Schedule: The Learning Garden runs September through May on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM and follows the Fayette County Public Schools Calendar for holiday breaks and weather related closings.

School Closings: When FCPS are closed for holidays such as Presidents Day, and scheduled breaks- Fall Break, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Spring Break, TLG will also be closed. We also follow the same weather and illness closings as Fayette County Public Schools. We typically do not close for FCPS NTI days.

Early dismissal: Our staff will notify you directly via phone, text or email. Please watch for announcements on television stations or www.fcps.net for weather related early dismissal.

Classrooms: The Learning Garden classrooms are designed for children close in age and ability. Class size will be limited to no more than 10 per class and will always exceed state ratios.

Your child should be one by August 31 of the current year to enroll unless other specific arrangements are made.

Enrollment: The Learning Garden enrolls on a first come first serve basis, with the exception of returning families, siblings and church members, who hold preference in placement. To enroll your child, please submit a completed registration form with your registration/materials fee.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdga1_7kMnYKXlb9n1ERGpi7S0xNoKI6YeZLugvVfS68UtPZO/viewform

Fees: The Learning Garden operates 3 mornings a week, M-W-F. Annual tuition is as follows:

3 Days per week: \$3,150.00 per school year, payable in monthly installments of \$350.00 per month.

2 Days per week: \$2,115 per school year or \$235 per month.

1 Day per week (limited number available) \$1,215 per school year or \$135 per month.

A \$75 non-refundable annual registration/materials fee is required to reserve your child's spot in our program. Please keep in mind that The Learning Garden at Gardenside Christian is a self-supporting, non-profit program and that tuition goes directly back into the program to be used as teacher salaries and to ensure a program of excellence. Therefore, tuition is due whether or not your child is present for all days registered for during that month. Tuition can be paid monthly and is due by the first Wednesday of every month. Registration and Tuition payments can be made by going to our on-line giving page here:

<https://forms.ministryforms.net/embed.aspx?formId=3c5a0bff-cd6f-48af-983b-dee07f2d244c>

Choose either one-time or recurring gift, then use the drop-down arrow to select Learning Garden. We encourage using Recurring ACH Debit as your form of payment. A late fee of \$15 will be invoiced for payments not received by the second Wednesday of each month. Please contact Meghan Simonsen at 770-820-6970 if special circumstances exist which will interfere with tuition payment. Parents will be held responsible for payment of bank charges for any returned check for insufficient funds. If more than one check is returned for insufficient funds during the year, all remaining tuition payments must be paid in cash or ACH Debit. You will be responsible for payment unless your child withdraws from the program following the withdrawal procedures outlined below.

Withdrawals: A 30 day written notice to the director is required to withdraw from the program. If notice is not given you will be required to pay the following month's fees.

Personal Belongings: We ask each child to bring a tote bag or backpack with extra clothing/diapers and to transport papers and projects. A lunch box and **non-spill** cup or water bottle is required. All bags, lunch boxes, cups and containers must be **clearly labeled** with your child's first name and last initial. Parents are required to send their child with an extra change of clothes as well as diapers/wipes/underwear.

Daily Reports: The one year old classroom teachers will send home a daily report with each child. These reports will be brief, sharing such information as what the child enjoyed, how the child ate, notes about behavior, bathroom information and specific needs. Teachers in all classrooms will have an open line of communication with parents daily. In addition, each classroom will have their own ClassDojo group page where parents may go to view photos and comments regarding activities for each day.

Behavior: Positive redirection will be used to encourage appropriate behaviors. If the undesirable behavior persists, a child may be asked to take a short break in the "calm down/reading area". Continual behavior issues will be discussed with the director and the parents. If necessary, a conference can be arranged to create and develop strategies to help with improving behavior patterns.

Biting: The Learning Garden recognizes that it is developmentally appropriate for toddlers to explore with their mouths, which sometimes leads to biting. If a biting incident occurs, an incident report will be filed for both children involved. If a biting incident occurs three times with the same child, teachers, parents, and the director will work together to brainstorm solutions to deter the child from choosing this behavior. After the third incident, the child will be sent home for one day. Although it is rare, a child who continues to bite after all efforts are exhausted may be asked to leave the program.

Incident Reports: If a child is injured in the classroom or during outside play, a staff member will administer first aid and the director will be notified immediately. Severe wounds, cuts, and strains/sprains will be reported to the parents immediately. All other injuries will be discussed with parents at Pick Up. All accidents (minor or major) will be recorded on an Incident Report and kept on file with the director for one year.

Arrival & Departure: Our day begins at 9:00 AM. Parents are responsible for bringing their child into the building through either the doors at the main entrance or the side entrance across from the gym. Please check your child in upon arrival. We ask that parents then wait with their children until their classroom opens at 8:55 AM. This allows teachers to complete setting up for the day's activities. Our day ends at 1:00 PM. Parents are responsible for picking their child up from their assigned classroom. We do ask that you arrive on time as your children will be excited to see you 😊 (If an emergency occurs causing you to run late, please contact Meghan Simonsen at 770-820-6970 asap to let her know). If you are picking up prior to dismissal please contact the director as we keep doors locked during program hours. Sometimes watching a friend leave early can upset classmates so teachers will have gathered your child's belongings and placed them in his/her cubby outside of their classroom. Please Note: A \$5.00 charge may be added for each 10 minutes a parent is late for pickup. We have this policy to help us pay the teachers for their extra time.

Security: Security cameras are located in our hallways and doorways and overseeing our parking lots. To help us keep your child safe, please present the guardian sticker you received at check-in to your child's teacher when picking up. All doors will be locked at 9:20 am and will remain locked until 12:45 pm. Please notify the director or your child's teacher if you are planning an early pick up or if someone on your release list will be picking up instead. Photo ID is required for ANYONE other than a parent who is picking up a child. Children will ONLY be released to parents or those listed on the child's pickup list (please discuss any unique circumstances with the director and teacher).

Snacks & Lunch: Please send a nutritious **individually packaged snack** and a lunch provided in separate containers (and **clearly labeled Snack or Lunch**) with your child. Also include a non-spill cup of water. Please do not send foods that need to be microwaved or refrigerated. *Please note: Some classrooms or the entire program may be NUT FREE! This will be determined by the number of children with these allergies and the severity. We appreciate your understanding of this type of allergy and our concern for the safety of our students. We will alert you in advance if this will affect what you pack for your child.

- No glass containers
- All cups, water bottles, lunch boxes, individual containers, and backpacks **must be labeled with your child's first name and last initial**. If not labeled, teachers may write your child's name with a Sharpie permanent marker.
- The Director will notify parents at any point during the year of any allergy restrictions that may change for your child's classroom.

Birthdays: If your child's birthday is during the school year, you may bring in a special treat to celebrate their day! Please let the teacher know when you plan to celebrate your child's birthday. In the case of summer birthdays, your child may celebrate their special day toward the end of the year. If you would like to send invitations for a private celebration, please bring enough for all the children in the class. If you are hosting a birthday party and are not able to invite the entire class, please invite by mail or phone.

Illnesses: Our goal is to ensure that all the children are safe and healthy while at The Learning Garden. We need the help of all parents with this endeavor. **Please notify the director promptly if your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness.** This will help to minimize the possible spread of said illness to classmates/teachers. If your child is sick, he/she will be more comfortable and will recover more quickly when resting at home. If your child misses a scheduled day due to an illness or for any another reason, their tuition fee for the day is still required to reserve their placement and to cover teacher salaries. In addition to procedures to protect against contagious illnesses, children will NOT be permitted to attend if they have the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4 or above
- Diarrhea (3 or more abnormally loose stools within 24 hours)
- Severe coughing
- Difficulty or rapid breathing
- Nasal discharge that is thick, productive, and discolored (yellow or green)

- Yellowing skin or eyes
- Redness, discharge, burning or itching of the eye or matted eyelashes
- Fever (must be fever free for 48 hours without Tylenol or Ibuprofen.)
- Untreated infected skin, spots or rashes
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting (must not have vomited for at least 24 hours)
- Cold sores around the mouth ● Impetigo or active Chicken Pox
- Any acute infectious diseases (Head lice, HFMD, Staff, Meningiti, RSV)

Note: Children must be symptom free for 48 hours before returning to TLG. Should any of the above illnesses occur while in attendance, the director will call the parents as soon as possible to come pick up their child. With the exception of an epi-pen or inhaler, NO MEDICATION, PRESCRIPTION OR OVER THE COUNTER, (INCLUDING SUN SCREEN, DIAPER CREAMS & OINTMENTS) CAN BE ADMINISTERED BY OUR STAFF.

- If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease after your child has attended TLG, please let the director know as soon as possible so precautions can be made to prevent the spread of illness. A child's name will never be released in such an instance.
- If your child is being treated with antibiotics, they should be on the medication for at least 24 hours prior to returning.
- If your child has a clear runny nose or other symptoms due to allergies, please let us know.
- Never place medications in your child's lunchbox or backpack.

Please notify your child's teacher and the director of any special medical circumstances concerning your child.

Dress: We recommend that your child come dressed to play! Play will include floor activities, water play, painting, outside activities, gym time, arts and crafts, etc. With these mentioned activities comes the possibility of soiled clothing. Dressy shoes and sandals can be a safety concern in gym and outdoor play areas. Please be sure your child wears sturdy shoes that don't slip off easily. Dress your child for the weather. We play outside as the weather permits, even in light rain or snow, so please include hats, coats/jackets, and gloves as needed. Teachers will use their best judgement when determining outdoor activities, but our goal is to go outside for fresh air every day (even briefly)!

Photographs: We will take photos during the year of the children as they participate in our program. We like to highlight our activities and events for our parents, our church, and program advertising. These photos may also be used by the teachers for craft activities or posted in your child's closed classroom Facebook group. We might also use your child's image on our website. If you do not want your child to be photographed, or do not want their image used publicly, please indicate so on your child's information form that will be provided upon enrollment. We respect your decision regarding this topic.

Toilet Training: The Learning Garden staff asks that all children enrolled in our four year old classes be completely toilet trained. This means that the child has both full bladder and full bowel movement control, is able to clearly communicate to the teacher that he/she needs to use the bathroom, and are able to wipe themselves independently and are not using diapers or pull-ups during the day. Teachers in this group will happily assist children with washing their hands and fastening clothes when they need help. We are also happy to assist you in toilet training your younger child but ask that until your child can go the entire day without accidents that you continue to send them in pullups. This ensures your child's comfort and reduces the spread of germs in the classroom. We understand that it is completely normal that set-backs sometimes happen and that in those instances it may be necessary to switch back to pull-ups until we are back on track again.

Non-Discrimination Statement: The Learning Garden program does not discriminate in any way in our acceptance of children.

Additional Remarks: The Learning Garden at Gardenside Christian Church is a smoke free facility.

Please contact Meghan Simonsen at 770-820-6970 with any questions or concerns.