

# North Branch Early Learning Center

6655 Jefferson St.  
North Branch, MI 48461  
810-688-7147



## Parent Handbook

## **MISSION STATEMENT/ PHILOSOPHY**

The Mission of the North Branch Early Learning Center is to foster growth through life experiences by making a positive difference in the lives of children. Our commitment is to promote active learning in a safe and supportive environment, appreciating children as individuals with unique gifts and special talents.

Our goals are to:

- To provide safe, dependable, affordable quality care for school-aged children
- To expand the use of school facilities to meet the needs of the community
- To provide a variety of activity options designed to enhance the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of children
- To recognize and encourage development of individual interests and talents
- To provide a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere where children feel welcome and secure

The staff consists of Early Childhood Paraprofessionals who provide a caring, consistent environment conducive to the total development of children. The staff work under the instruction of the coordinator. Before staff are hired, a Comprehensive Background Check is completed.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The North Branch Early Learning Center is located at the North Branch Educational Services Center 6655 Jefferson Street, North Branch, MI. 48461. The center consists of Fun Before and After School (FABS) Childcare, Little Learners Tuition Preschool, and The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Preschool Program.

North Branch Early Learning Center policies and procedures comply with state licensing standards. Since May 28, 2010, licensed centers are required to maintain a licensing notebook which contains information about licensing inspection reports, special investigations, and corrective actions. Parents must also sign a statement that they are aware of the availability of the licensing notebook. Reports from at least the last three years can be found at: [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare)

North Branch Early Learning Center family handbook and policy manual contain additional policies, procedures, and guidelines that the staff follow in handling regular program practices and emergencies. These policies refer specifically to the operations and activities of our center and North Branch Area Schools.

North Branch Early Learning Center does not discriminate against race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital/family status. North Branch Early Learning Center and North Branch Community Schools are an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

FABS Child Care information:

FABS Child Care Center is open weekdays from 6:00 AM–6:30 PM. The program follows the school calendar. The center will be closed during holiday vacations: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and spring vacations, Memorial Day, & 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

FABS center will be open on snow days, half-days of school, early release days, and summer break, provided we have adequate attendance and have electricity.

If school is dismissed early because of snow or bad weather, FABS center will be open. Enrollees will need to check the box on ½ sheet schedule indicating where your child is to go if dismissed early – to FABS, home, or another location or if school is cancelled due to snow/weather.

-The program activities offer a fun-filled schedule designed to meet the interests of elementary-aged children.

Before and after school activities include:

- Outdoor or indoor large motor activities
- Choice of games, books, puzzles, blocks, art activities
- Quiet time for relaxing, doing homework, reading, etc.
- Group activities
- Computer Activities

A nutritious snack is served in the afternoon session.

Little Learners Preschool Information:

Little Learners is a high-quality half day tuition-based program for 3 and 4 year-olds, with two or three day-a-week options. If your child will be 3 years old and potty trained on or before September 1st or 4 years old on or before December 1st they will be eligible to attend that school year. We provide a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate program which provides age-appropriate activities to support growth.

Classroom Options:

- 3 year old classroom Tuesday & Thursday 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM
- 3 year old classroom Tuesday & Thursday 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM
- 4 Year old Classroom Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM
- 4 Year old Classroom Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

## **ENROLLMENT/ ADMISSIONS**

Enrollment is open to children who live within and beyond the North Branch Area Schools community. The center is inclusive, non-sectarian and non-discriminatory. FABS accepts children ages 3 to 12, with the requirement that preschoolers must be potty-trained before enrollment. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

A child cannot participate in the program until the required paperwork (listed below) has been submitted. This is a licensing requirement and cannot be waived.

Registration fee and the following forms must be completed prior to a child's attendance:

- Child Information Card (Completely filled out)
- Program Choice Form
- Parent Contract Agreement
- Registration Form
- Good Health/Physical Restriction Form (for school-age childcare only)
- Health Appraisal/Immunization records & Birth Certificate (Preschool age only)
- 2 proofs of residency (Little Learners Preschool only)

Enrollment forms may be filled out and completed online through Brightwheel. Alternatively, forms may be picked up at the North Branch Early Learning Center office. Completed forms must be turned in at the North Branch Early Learning Center office prior to the child's first day of attendance.

**Registration Fees must be paid in advance of care.**

## **SNOWDAYS & WEATHER DISMISSALS**

FABS is open on snow days and weather related dismissals. If you want your child(ren) to come to FABS on snow days you simply mark the box on the 1/2 schedule sheet. If you sign your child(ren) up for snow days – **YOU MUST** call and cancel if they are not attending or your account will be charged for the full time they were scheduled. Continued availability is subject to adequate enrollment and attendance.

If North Branch Area Schools close due to inclement weather, Little Learners preschool will also be canceled. The program calendar accounts for these closures, and tuition will not be reimbursed for missed days.

## **FEE SCHEDULE**

The FABS program is supported by user fees.

- Payment for estimated hours of use is due **IN ADVANCE**.
- On or before Friday your child care schedule should be turned in to the center with payment for the times scheduled.
- Cancellations must be made prior to scheduled time of arrival to avoid incurring a \$5 charge. If cancellations are made in advance the unused money stays in your account for future use.
- **No child's fees may fall more than one week behind.** In case of financial hardship contact the coordinator for making arrangements for payments. DHS recipients are responsible for all billing fees until DHS services begin.
- Online payment can be made through the Brightwheel app. An account balance can be viewed any time on the Brightwheel app. If you need assistance setting up Brightwheel, please reach out to the center.
- Cash payments can be dropped off at the center in an envelope with the child's name, parent's name, date and amount written on the envelope. Envelopes are available in the center if you have need. Checks or money orders are payable to "North Branch Area Schools." A \$15.00 fee will be assessed for all returned checks.

A non-refundable registration fee of \$15.00 per child (\$40 maximum per family) is required at the time of registration for the school year. School year registrations are mandatory for children, full-time or part-time, joining the school year program until the end of May. Registration for the summer program is separate from the school year.

FABS Hourly Fee:

\$3.50 per hour, per child. With a maximum daily charge of \$35.00 per child.

**Early Drop-offs (before 6AM) & Late Pick-ups (after 6:30PM) will incur an additional \$1 fee (each 5 minutes) & possible expulsion from the program. Children must be signed in/out by an adult (at least 18 years old).**

Little Learners Tuition Fee Policy:

There is a \$20.00 non-refundable registration fee for all Little Learners preschool sessions.

3-Day sessions meeting Monday/Wednesday/Friday

- Total \$950.00 or 8 monthly payments of \$118.75

2-day sessions meeting Tuesday/Thursday

- Total \$690.00 or 8 monthly payments of \$86.25

## **DELIVERY & RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

When bringing your child(ren) to the center he/she must be accompanied into the child care center by a parent or responsible adult who shall sign-in the child(ren) in person using the Brightwheel app by scanning the QR code on their phone or using our kiosk.

Parents may park in the visitor parking on the west side of the building or on Banker Street. Adults will need to walk up to the main entrance located on the west side of the building (door #6) to sign child(ren) in or out. Children will be released only to the parent or legal guardian or those persons authorized by the parent in writing.

**Please notify staff if someone different will be picking up the child(ren), even if their name is on the “Child Information” release listing.**

Individuals picking up children may be asked for identification.

## **CUSTODY SITUATIONS**

In cases of custodial situations, the custodial parent must be the parent to fill out the registration papers and emergency information. In cases where the non-custodial parent is not allowed to have contact with the child(ren), the staff will need a copy of the divorce decree or restraining order to have on file. This information must also be reflected on the “child information” form.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Students attending FABS & Little Learners may be able to ride a NBAS school bus if they are located on a current school bus route and if there is ample space on the bus. This decision must be approved by the transportation dept. The DEAN Transportation Department phone number is 810-688-3660. Families choosing to use school bus transportation must complete a transportation request form. Forms are available on Brightwheel or can be picked up at the North Branch Early Learning Center office.

**Please note there is no mid-day transportation available.**

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Occasionally, staff will organize field trips, and parents will receive a written notice at least one week in advance. Guardians must submit a signed permission slip before their child(ren) can participate.

Permission for walking field trips is included in the permission/agreement form signed at enrollment.



2:15-3:15 p.m.	Outside/ Gym	Half Day: Outside/ Gym
3:15-3:30 p.m.	Bathroom Break	Half Day:Bathroom Break
3:30- 4:00 p.m.	Snack	Half Day:Snack
4:00- 4:15 p.m.	Reading	Outside/Gym/ Free Choice
4:30- 5:00 p.m.	Larger Group/ music & movement	
5:00- 6:30 p.m.	Free Choice	Snack/Free Choice

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

Outdoor exploration is important to every child's well-being and development. At the North Branch Early Learning Center, children will go outside every day except in the case of inclement weather. Please send your child with the appropriate outdoor gear for the weather. We even go out in the winter months unless the windchill/temperature is below 10 degrees. In the case of inclement weather, we will offer indoor play incorporating large motor movement as much as possible.

## **REST TIME**

Included in the afternoon schedule is a rest period. Each preschool-age child attending a full day at the center will be resting on a cot in the afternoon. Children are encouraged to sleep or lie quietly so others may sleep. Children need to bring a small blanket and a small pillow that may be left at the center. Children may also keep a stuffed animal in their nap items to snuggle with at rest time if they would find it comforting (please do NOT send plastic animals or action figures). Please label ALL items clearly with your child's name.

## **WITHDRAWAL / TERMINATION**

One week's written notice must be submitted to the preschool coordinator if you are withdrawing your child from any North Branch Early Learning Center program. All tuition due must be paid through the withdrawal date.

Upon the discretion of the coordinator

and after a reasonable effort on the part of staff to integrate a child into the program (including a conference with the parent) a child's participation may be terminated if:

- The child continually exhibits inappropriate or disruptive behavior that interferes with other children's safety or the quality of the program.
- The child is frequently picked up late
- The parent repeatedly does not call in the event of a child's absence
- Fees are not paid as required
- The child leaves the premises without permission
- The child does not meet the health requirements ~ meaning their health appraisal is not on file or immunizations are not up to date (Preschool age children only).
- The parent fails to follow program policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook.

## **ABSENT CHILDREN**

FABS-The staff assumes responsibility for your child. A weekly schedule must be submitted when registering. If your weekly schedule rarely or never changes you may mark the "permanent schedule" box on your weekly sheet. If your child will not be attending regularly (same times, same days) a new schedule must be submitted on Friday for the following week. Schedules and schedule changes may be made on Brightwheel or using a paper form that can be picked up at the center.

If your child will be absent on a scheduled day you must message the center on Brightwheel or call the center. The North Branch Early Learning Center phone number is 810-688-7147.

During the school year there is a \$5.00 charge if your child is scheduled to come and does not show up & we do not receive a cancellation call prior to the scheduled time.

\*During the summer we need to have 24 hr. or more notice of cancellation or your account is billed for that day's scheduled time.

Little Learners- If your child will be absent on a scheduled day you must message the center on Brightwheel or call the center. North Branch Early Learning Center phone number is 810-688-7147. It causes staff concern when your child is absent without an explanation.

**In the event a child has extended unexcused absences the staff has the right to dismiss the child from either program (FABS/ Little Learners).**

## **FOOD**

During the school year, school aged FABS students will have the option to eat breakfast at their school building. Preschool aged FABS students will have the option to eat breakfast and/or lunch at the North Branch Early Learning Center. A nutritious afternoon snack will be served to all FABS students and is included in the tuition.

**On no school days, half days, field trip days, during the summer (when the cafeteria is closed or unavailable) children need to bring all meals and snacks from home.**

Little Learners parents need to provide a healthy snack and water bottle for their child daily.

All food containers from home need to be labeled with the child's name.

Any/All food allergies should be brought to our attention! If your child has food allergies, documentation must be provided from a physician, along with an action plan and medication (if necessary) prior to attendance. If needed, guardians must submit a [Special Dietary Accommodations form](#) prior to attending (form is also available at the center). Food served by the center will be of sufficient quantity and nutritional quality to

provide for the dietary needs of each child according to the meal requirements of the Childcare Food Program as administered by the Michigan Department of Education.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Specific procedures and instructions for emergency evacuation of the center are posted. Fire drills are practiced by classrooms and also by the school building as a whole. Tornado/shelter-in-place drills are done at least three times per year. Lockdown drills (in the case of an outside threat) will also occur at least once per year. A log is kept for all drills. Emergency procedures shall be reviewed with staff no less than twice a year.

\*All emergency and evacuation routes are posted in highly visible areas in each classroom.

For additional information about emergency evacuations that require children and staff to proceed to designated safe areas on school grounds and off school grounds at North Branch Wesleyan Church , please request to see the comprehensive emergency plan available at the school's front desk.

## **MEDICATIONS**

All medications will be administered under the following conditions:

- Prescription medicine must be in the original container bearing the pharmacy label, physician's name, child's name, instructions, and name and strength of medicine.
- Non-Prescription medications must be in its original labeled container and labeled with the child's name.
- Guardians must complete and sign the [Medication Permission form](#) (also available at the center) as well as bring the medication.
- Guardians must bring us the medicine personally. **CHILDREN MUST NEVER TRANSPORT MEDICATION TO AND/OR FROM SCHOOL.**

## **HEALTH / SAFETY**

Each child's health and safety is a matter of importance. Attention will be stressed with the children on good health habits. Despite all efforts contagious illnesses can be easily transmitted.

Therefore it is requested that a child be kept home if he/she has:

- been vomiting &/ or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- a temperature over 100'
- a severe cough
- sore or discharging eyes or ears
- an undiagnosed rash
- has a communicable disease
- Been on antibiotics for less than 24 hours.

It is requested that you notify us if your child will not be attending and the nature of the illness. You will be notified as soon as possible if your child has been exposed to any contagious disease while in our care. A physician's certificate of health may be required prior to readmitting a child who has been absent due to a contagious disease, extended illness or injury.

In case of an emergency the staff will make an immediate attempt to contact the parent/guardian. When a parent cannot be reached the staff will contact the person(s) designated on the "Child Information" form. In emergency situations an ambulance may be called at the parent's expense. It is in the best interest of your child to that you keep us updated on phone numbers, emergency numbers, and other pertinent information.

If your child has an allergy or medical condition, please indicate this on the "Child Information" form.

If a child becomes ill, the parent/guardian will be called immediately to have the child picked up. If the parent cannot be contacted, the caregiver will call the next person on the child information card until somebody is reached. The child will be cared for in a separate comfortable place in the classroom until they are picked up.

## **STAFF RATIOS**

The primary care provider is a trained adult experienced in working with elementary age children. FABS staff have up-to-date CPR & First Aid Certification and all state required screenings and training. Adult/child ratio is based on the youngest child attending. One or more carefully selected assistants insure that the child to adult ratio is:

- 1 adult to 10 children – ages 3 to 4
- 1 adult to 12 children – ages 4 to 5
- 1 adult to 18 children – ages 6 to 12

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

The ultimate goal of discipline is to assist the child in becoming a self-disciplined, mature adult who accepts responsibility for his/her actions. At each age a child can assume some measure of self-control and therefore responsibility for his/her actions. The goal is to foster self-control and self-discipline, as it is appropriate for each age and to support the children as they practice and master these skills.

Consequently, the following principles of developmental discipline guide the action of the staff.

1. Understand developmental characteristics, behaviors, and needs. Be honest, reasonable, and realistic in the expectations of children.
2. Focus on/give positive attention for appropriate behavior. Ignore inappropriate behavior as much as possible. Try to keep the "no's" to a minimum.

3. Anticipate and plan ahead to prevent possible problems. Structure or restructure the environment to prevent possible problems. Redirect a child to avoid potential problems or conflicts.
4. Be consistent. Make rules that can be enforced.
5. Identify and accept a child's feelings. Correct behavior by telling the child what he/she did wrong, then tell the child what to do in a positive statement.
6. Remain calm.
7. Remember the long range goal of SELF-DISCIPLINE. Give growth-fostering direction. Encourage independence. Offer choices and allow children to make as many decisions as possible within the necessary limits.

The staff, parents and any other persons are PROHIBITED from using the following means of discipline while in the North Branch Early Learning Center:

1. Hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting a form of corporal punishment.
2. Restricting a child's movements by binding or tying him/her (appropriate physical restraint may be necessary to prevent self-injury or injury to other persons or facilities).
3. Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
4. Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest or necessary toilet use.
5. Confining a child in an enclosed area such as a closet or locked room.

When preventive and structural measures do not work and external discipline is required, the child is (1) removed from the immediate situation to a nearby area and (2) required to sit and regain control. After a few moments a staff person discusses the situation with the child, helping them find appropriate means of dealing with a situation and at the same time making clear the limitations placed on their behavior and the reasons why.

In exceptional cases, additional alternatives may be employed, such as temporary removal/suspension, and requests for evaluation and/or consultations. Cases will be handled on an individual basis in cooperation with parents and in accordance with the school district policy on discipline.

## **BITING POLICY**

Children bite for many reasons. Some of the reasons include:

- A sensory experience
- Teething
- Frustration - perhaps if the child lacks language skills
- Anxiety - to relieve tension

Parents will be notified when their child is involved in a biting incident. Staff will meet with the parents to discuss possible reasons and solutions to the biting behavior. Staff will handle each biting incident with appropriate techniques. They will use their voice and a facial expression to show that biting is unacceptable. Staff will speak firmly, saying, for example, "It hurts when you bite," or just "We only bite food." Positive attention will be given to the child who has been bitten. The child who bites will be removed from the scene and moved to another learning area.

## **CLOTHING**

Children should dress in simple clothing that is free of complicated fastenings and totally washable. Children are encouraged to use the bathroom independently. If the weather permits, the children will be going outdoors and will need clothes that keep him/her comfortable. Hats, mittens, snow pants and boots are a necessity once winter arrives. Keep in mind the unpredictable weather in autumn and spring, and provide him/her with a sweater or jacket. Please clearly label all items of clothing brought to the center.

For children 3-5 years of age, please provide a labeled change of clothing to be left at the center for the child including: underpants, socks, shirt and pants. It should be sent in a small resealable (like a Ziploc) bag, labeled with the child's name.

## **PERSONAL ITEMS FROM HOME**

Your child will have many toys to enjoy in the classroom. We ask that personal items such as toys, games, and books be left at home. The North Branch Early Learning Center will not be responsible in the case of lost or broken toys.

## **FAMILY-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION & INTERACTIONS**

We know families are BUSY! We value any level of input and participation that you are comfortable providing!

One way that we share information with family members is during informal exchanges daily as children arrive and depart. We hope that you will ask your child's teachers questions, make suggestions, and share information that helps us learn about your child(ren).

Our caregivers will share classroom information in a variety of formats. Sending paper or electronic newsletters, emails or Brightwheel updates. We encourage parents to join our North Branch Early Learning Center Facebook page.

Parent volunteering is welcome in the classroom. Prior to volunteering in the classroom, all adults MUST have a central registry clearance letter on file. A clearance form may be picked up at the center. It is recommended that parents wait until children have had an opportunity to adjust to the new situation before a visit is planned.

Please share suggestions, problems or concerns with the center's coordinator, Lisa Bazinaw at 810-688-7147. Parent-school communication is vital to the well being of children.

Staff will make every effort to keep you informed about your child's day. If there is information about your child or family that you think will be helpful to the staff, please share this with them. They will use that information to help meet your child's needs.

### **PARENT NOTIFICATION OF THE LICENSING NOTEBOOK**

North Branch Early Learning Center maintains a licensing notebook which contains all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans (CAP) from May 27, 2010 to current date.

The licensing notebook is available to parents for review during regular business hours.

Licensing inspections and special investigation reports from at least the past two years are available on the childcare licensing website at: [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).