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2025 – 2026 Little Sprouts Parent Manual

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A MESSAGE TO PARENTS

Welcome to the ESP Little Sprouts Early Learning Program! We are excited at the opportunity to love and nurture your child during this very magical time of learning and development. We provide care for Murfreesboro City Schools employees children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. Our center is fully licensed by the TN State Department of Education. We provide a variety of early learning activities and experiences that are developmentally appropriate and aligned with the TN ELDS.

Our commitment to you:

- Provide consistent, nurturing care to every child.
- Provide engaging developmentally appropriate learning opportunities.
- Provide feedback and communication with you about your child's life at school.

MISSION STATEMENT

With intentional planning in our classroom activities and environment, we will:

- Promote learning by providing opportunity to use problem solving and critical thinking skills through scaffolded exploration and discovery-based play.
- Encourage personal and shared responsibilities by establishing expectations through instruction, routine, modeling, and positive reinforcement that demonstrates responsibility for self, the classroom, and the community.
- Teach developmentally appropriate skills by utilizing state and national standards to drive differentiated instruction that ensures students' cognitive, developmental, and social growth.

TUITION AND FEES

Annual Registration Fee: *$100 per child*

Infants Room: *$265/week*

Toddlers Room: *$260/week*

Movers Room: $260/week

Preschool: *$255/week*

Sibling Discount: *$25/week*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- *Because we typically have a waiting list, tuition will begin on the agreed upon start date to reserve your child's spot. Failure to begin payment at that time will result in forfeiture of your spot.*
- Little Sprouts will not prorate for any absence. When you enroll, you are reserving a space for your child whether they attend or not. Once you are accepted into the program, you are responsible for your weekly rate.
- All tuition will be billed weekly, and is due regardless of student attendance, snow/weather days, holidays, or other scheduled or unscheduled days out **excluding** fall, winter, and spring breaks. Drop-in is not available.
- All billing is completed through our online portal EZChildTrack.
- If you are a substitute for MCS and wish to enroll your child in Little Sprouts, you must work a minimum of 3 days (21 hours) per week.

POLICIES

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HOURS OF OPERATION

The Little Sprouts Program will operate on the Murfreesboro City Schools Teacher Calendar, with hours of operation from 6:30 am – 5:00 pm each day. Parents will be assessed fees as outlined below for late arrivals.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children must be brought in by you (or a person you have authorized). They must be signed in by 10:00am. Be sure that whoever brings your child (or picks up) has their sign-out code and ID. Movers and 3s and 4s will arrive and leave through their classroom's exterior door at the Mitchell Neilson Primary Building. Infants and Toddlers will be located in the Little Sprouts Building across the street from Mitchell Neilson Primary. You will enter your child's classroom. On arrival, please share any pertinent details regarding your child for the day. The Tadpole's App is available for you to fill out any instructions and/or changes that may be different than a normal day. If you are bringing breakfast for your child to eat, please do not leave your child eating at a table unsupervised.

Any child arriving after 8:30 am must have already had breakfast prior to arriving and be ready to join in the day's scheduled activities.

Your child will be released only to you or those that you have designated as authorized to pick up through EZChildTrack. A valid government-issued ID will be required to be shown upon pick-up. All authorized persons must be at least 16 years old and have their own code through EZChildTrack. At the end of the day, the caregiver will share information with the parent about the child's day. Parents will receive a written note for infants, toddlers, and twos. In the event that a parent or other authorized person arrives to pick up a child and he or she appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, Murfreesboro City Police Department will be called. A ride home or other appropriate assistance will be offered in order to ensure the safety of the child.

LATE PICK-UP

A late check-out charge of $10.00 per child for every 10 minutes, or a portion thereof, after 5:00 PM will apply. The fee schedule is as follows:

- 1 - 10 minutes late, $10.00 per child
- 11 - 20 minutes late, $20 per child
- 21 - 30 minutes late, $30 per child

Failure to comply with the 5:00 PM closing time on three occasions per semester will result in expulsion from the Little Sprouts Program. You must appeal to the Coordinator of ESP for reinstatement.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If severe weather is in the forecast, Little Sprouts administration will closely monitor the weather along with the administration at the school. We will follow the established guidelines for the safety of all children. Please refrain from calling your child's teacher or the director.

In the event that MCS calls for an early dismissal related to inclement weather, the Coordinator of ESP will determine the closure time of Little Sprouts and communicate accordingly.

CLASSROOM GROUPING

Little Sprouts Building: Infants (6 weeks - 12 months) - Toddlers (12 months - 24 months)

Mitchell-Neilson Primary Building: Movers (18-36 months) - Preschool (3 years - 4 years)

Children 6 weeks - 36 months will be assigned based on developmental needs.

Any child entering the preschool classroom should be potty trained.

CURRICULUM

Little Sprouts will use the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum for all age groups. This curriculum is research based and will focus on studies that promote play, exploration, and discovery. Through each child's learning process, we commit to:

- Help each child develop a positive self-image
- Provide for each child's safety and well-being
- Help each child develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively
- Provide opportunities for children to develop age-appropriate self-help skills
- Provide opportunities to develop large motor skills and coordination through physical activity, play, and creative movement
- Help children develop fine motor skills and coordination for future reading and writing
- Help children learn to problem solve and make decisions through active involvement in learning activities and allowing them to make choices

SCHEDULE

The daily schedule is posted in each classroom. The schedule is a framework for planning and organizing the daily routine and experiences for children and may be different based on the age of the child. Infants follow their own biological needs. They are fed, changed and nap when they need it. Toddlers and Twos are changed/taken to the toilet before transitions in the day and as needed. As children grow older and their needs change, adjustments are made to the schedule.

REST TIME

Infants

All babies will nap according to their developmental needs. We will strive to find a common nap time where the majority of babies like to take their nap in the morning and in the afternoon to ensure that each child has the opportunity to get the sleep they need to thrive. During these quiet periods, developmentally appropriate activities will be provided for those who are awake or have outgrown two naps. Cribs will be provided for those that are 6 weeks-12 months. Parents will provide crib sheets, a blanket, and "lovies" as needed.

Toddlers/Movers/Preschool

We are required to provide a rest period of at least one hour. This will follow lunch each day. During the morning, we will alternate between active and quieter activities. Every child will be encouraged to sleep, but they will not be forced. Quiet, developmentally appropriate activities will be provided for those that have outgrown their nap time. Cots will be provided for each child. Parents will provide crib sheets, a blanket, and "lovies" as needed.

CLOTHING AND SUPPLIES

Clothing

- Please label everything with your child's name.
- It is important that children are dressed appropriately for outside play and inside activities (painting, gluing, playing on the floor, etc.)
- Provide an extra set of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, and socks) in a gallon size bag labeled with your child's name on it. This will need to be changed seasonally.
- Please dress your child comfortably so that they may learn through play and participate freely in all activities.
- Closed toe shoes are required. Flip flops and open toe sandals do not provide adequate support and protection for outdoor play. Crocs and similar shoes are discouraged.
- Children need to be dressed according to the weather for outdoor play. We will go out every day unless it is raining, or it is too cold. We will also adjust our outdoor time when the temperatures are very hot.
- Bows, pins, and clips in your child's hair should not be small enough to be a choking hazard.
- Children should not wear necklaces or dangling earrings (studs only).

Supplies

Please label all of your child's belongings.

- Diapers
- Wipes - two packs per month and then as needed
- Diaper cream
- Seasonal changes of clothes (at least two at all times, more may be necessary if potty training)
- Sunscreen (if over 6 months, you must also provide written permission for us to apply it and for us to keep on file)
- Formula, baby food, juice, and other foods for your child (All foods must be clearly labeled with your child's name. Milk or formula will be placed in the refrigerator immediately)
- A full-size crib sheet for cribs and cots and a lightweight blanket (Muslin swaddle blankets are the most ideal for all age groups because they are both lightweight and warm)

MEALS AND SNACKS

Infants

Parents will supply all breast milk/formula, milk, cereals, baby food, and bottles. Target sheets will be provided for all infant parents at the time of enrollment and then will be available as your child's needs evolve. Target sheets will allow you to communicate the times and directions for all feedings that will need to occur during the day. Our teachers will work diligently with you to ensure that your child receives what they need to thrive.

Bottle Feedings

If a child is being breastfed, all breast milk must be dated when expressed and have the child's name on it. Fresh breast milk will be stored for 24 hours in the refrigerator and up to 2 weeks in the freezer. Milk that exceeds this period will be discarded. If you are using formula, please advise on your target sheets your preferred method of preparation. Please note for all bottle feedings that after the child has been fed, any contents in the bottle will be discarded. No bottles will be served with cereal or any other food product in them unless we have written authorization from the child's pediatrician.

Cereal and Baby Food

Generally, parents begin to provide semi-solid food for children 4-10 months old unless otherwise directed by the physician. Food that the child has never had should be given at home first before it is brought to the center to be fed to the child. This helps in determining if there are any allergic reactions to the given foods. Little Sprouts must be informed if children have food allergies or if they cannot tolerate certain foods so that notifications can be posted. All baby food must be unopened and in the original containers. We cannot accept previously opened containers. Please let us know if you want to split a container of baby food between feedings so that we can ensure that we do not feed directly from the container. Once we feed directly from a container, we can only use it for that one feeding and then we must toss it. Please plan so that your infant has their morning bottle at home or that you can feed it to them after your arrival. This will allow staff to give each child and parent the attention that they need as they are arriving.

Toddlers/Movers/Preschool

We will provide breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. We will provide a menu each month. Breakfast will be served around 8:00 am and lunch will be served around 11:30 am. Afternoon snack will be after nap time around 3:00 pm. If your child is dropped off after 8:30, they should have breakfast prior to arriving. We understand that parents are still introducing new foods to their child during this stage. If there is a snack that is on the menu for your child that you are not ready to introduce, please communicate that with your child's teacher. An alternative can be provided, or you may send in something else for them to have. While we strive to maintain a schedule for all our classrooms, if your child is hungry, we will feed them.

CELEBRATIONS AND PARTIES

Children's birthdays are special, and parents may provide a treat if they desire. Arrangements should be made with your child's teacher several days in advance. If the birthday falls on a day when Little Sprouts is closed, an alternate celebration date can be arranged. Please remember to provide enough so that each child may have a treat. Because of state regulations regarding the serving of food, the treats must be purchased commercially. Please contact your child's teacher, so they can help you in selecting safe, allergy-free, healthy, age-appropriate treats.

INFORMATION UPDATES

Please inform Little Sprouts if you have changes to your address or telephone numbers. It is imperative that you let us know if you have a change in any of the information for your emergency contacts. Alternatively, you can log into your parent portal and submit changes to adult information there.

If there are changes to your child's routine or any situations that may make your child worried or upset, please let their teacher know so that they will have a complete picture of what is going on in the life of your child.

Custodial Documents

Foster parent and adults with guardian status of children attending Little Sprouts must provide copies of the following legal documents as applicable:

- Temporary custody order
- Statements of guardianship
- Divorce decrees
- Restraining order
- Termination of parental rights

SAFETY

Accident/Incident Reports

An accident report will be completed for any child who has a center related injury requiring first aid. Parents will receive a copy of the report on the day of the accident. Families and/or emergency personnel will be contacted immediately if the child shows signs of significant injury. An incident report will be completed to report behaviors or other situations that are not considered accidents.

Safety Guidelines

- No child will ever be left alone or unsupervised
- All staff have access to a phone for emergencies
- Guardians and authorized pick-ups are responsible for signing the child in and out each day and are required to show ID
- Fire, tornado, and other emergency drills are held regularly with documentation recorded
- A plan is posted indicating staff responsibilities in case of fire, emergency and weather alerts
- A first aid kit is located in both the Little Sprouts building and in our classrooms at MNP
- All staff will be certified in CPR/First Aid

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

- We are required by law to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Serpvices. Reports may be made when:
- Children come to school with suspicious cuts, bruises, or abrasions on their bodies
- Children have trouble with urination, bowel movements, or other related problems and medical causes have been ruled out
- Children continually come to school without proper clothes, very dirty, or tell of situations which may indicate abuse and/or neglect
- A child's well-being is threatened by the neglect of his or her physical and/or emotional needs

Each day at drop-off, Little Sprouts staff will do a quick visual head to toe check. This allows us to ask questions about their well-being and ensure that we can give them the level of care that they need and deserve. We encourage you to do the same in the afternoons when you pick up your child. Should you ever have any concerns, please contact the director. If you have an immediate concern, please contact child protective services at 877-237-0004. Our role is to report and not to investigate.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Little Sprouts cannot provide care for sick children. The Murfreesboro City Schools sick child policy will apply for Little Sprouts. This means that you cannot send your child to school if your child wakes with a fever and takes a fever reducer to arrive at school fever free.

Please use the following guidelines and do not send your child, if they exhibit the following symptoms:

Fever of 100.4 degrees or more	Pediculosis (Head Lice)
Frequent cough	Rash/skin infection
Sore throat	Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
Diarrhea (2+ episodes)	Covid-19
Vomiting (1 episode)	Flu
Hand, Foot, and Mouth	Chicken Pox

The current MCS Illness Guide is available here for your convenience.

Any child who has a fever of 100.4 degrees or greater, one who has vomited one (1) time, or has had two (2) episodes of diarrhea must be immediately picked up from Little Sprouts. A notification of fever or symptoms with the date and time will be given to you. A child must be symptom and fever free for 24 hours before returning to Little Sprouts. Any illness requiring a visit to the doctor must be accompanied by a physician's approval to return to school care. If a child has diarrhea as a result of medication, teething, or allergies, doctors must specify this either in writing or by a phone call before the child can return to the program. A child with an ear infection can return to school the next day if they are feeling well enough to participate in activities and is fever free. Please bring in verification of a doctor's visit.

Medications

We follow Murfreesboro City Schools Medication policy. Medications will only be administered with written documentation from a health care provider and the signature of the parent or guardian granting permission. Parents and guardians are encouraged to give the first dose of any new medication to monitor for possible adverse reactions. Please provide medications in its original container or unopened box in a bag labeled with your child's name, dosage, and authorized physician's name. Inhalers must have doctor's original orders attached. Parents will complete a medication dosage form and review instructions with their child's teacher prior to medication being administered.

Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Please provide the sunscreen and/or bug spray that you would like for us to use on your child. Please label it with your child's name. We will also need a signed sunscreen application form granting us permission to apply sunscreen and/or bug spray to your child.

Immunizations

Proof of Immunizations are required before your child may attend.

Parents must provide the Tennessee Immunization form (usually a yellow or blue sheet). The only exceptions are:

- Medical Exemption – You must provide documentation from a physician stating the child is exempt from immunizations. A physician's letterhead and signature are required and should be attached to the TN Preschool Immunization Certificate with documentation of physical.

- Religious Exemption – You must complete a religious exemption form from your school nurse. This must be signed by parents and attached to TN Preschool Certificate with documentation of physical.
- Temporary Immunization Certificate- Must be completed by physician stating student is in the process of completing immunization requirements and date the next immunization is due. This certificate expires one week from the stated date and student will be suspended.

BEHAVIOR

We will use positive methods of discipline that are considerate of the child's age and developmental level. During these early years, children are developing confidence and self-control, and our environment respects each individual child so that the children will feel that their world is a warm, friendly place. The children's caregivers look for meaningful ways to show children why hurtful and aggressive behaviors are not acceptable. Children are not allowed to hurt themselves or others and caregivers will never hit children or use physical punishment.

Little Sprouts will follow the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) guidelines that teach coping skills and discourage inappropriate behavior. The guidelines are as follows:

- There will be no time-out for infants and young toddlers. Young children should not be isolated, nor should they be ignored or left without proper stimulation. Infants or young toddlers who do not understand why their behavior is unacceptable should gently be directed to more acceptable behaviors or activities.
- We will hold realistic expectations of the child's behavior. Knowledge of child development aids in understanding when children are merely experimenting with their boundaries and when they are behaving inappropriately.
- Consequences should immediately follow the child's behavior. When children experience immediate repercussions for harming others, they understand more clearly why we are disciplining them. Adults should offer children positive alternatives to their actions, for example, asking a child to help rebuild a block structure he has knocked down is more productive than removing him from the area entirely.
- Children will never be alone but may be given space for themselves if they want it. Young children need the support of adults to work out their feelings. Adults who respect the feelings of children are teaching the children to respect the feelings of others.
- When the caregiver must use time out, it does not last longer than it takes for the child to calm down. After the child is calm, the caregiver will explain what appropriate and inappropriate behavior is. The child must clearly understand why the timeout was given. Time-out should never be humiliating, nor should it make children feel threatened or afraid.
- Methods of discipline are tailored to the individual child. Children develop their abilities to control themselves at different rates. We take into consideration the needs of the individual child to understand that no single technique will work with every child every time. Our goal is to teach children how to solve their problems with love and support.

Behavior Intervention Action Procedures45 for Children

1. **Calm Down Period**
    - A child may sit out for a duration appropriate to their age or until they have fully regained control of their body and can clearly express readiness to rejoin the class.
2. **Initial Intervention**

- Approach the child calmly and speak in a soothing tone.
- Ask the child what's going on, offer guidance on appropriate behavior, and help redirect them toward positive actions.
- If necessary, ask the child to apologize, allow them a brief moment to self-regulate, and then encourage them to re-engage with the class.

3. **Second Intervention**

    - If behavior persists, speak with the child again.
    - Clearly present two options: follow expectations or take a break to calm down.
    - If the child is unable to choose, inform them that the teacher will make the decision. Redirect the child to a designated area to self-regulate until they are ready to participate.

4. **Continued Behavior or Severe Disruption**

    - Repeat steps 2 and 3 as needed.
    - If the child exhibits extreme outbursts or meltdowns, escalate to step 5.

5. **Administrative Intervention**

    - If behavior continues after step 4, an administrator will be called to assist.
    - The administrator may temporarily remove the child from the classroom to allow both the child and the teacher time to calm down and reset.
    - Once the child has calmed and discussed the behavior with the administrator, they may return to class.

6. **Ongoing Disruptions**

    - If disruptive behavior resumes after re-entering the classroom, the child will receive a behavioral write-up.
    - The administrator will determine whether to contact the parent/guardian and decide if the child may remain at school or needs to be sent home. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis.

7. **Suspension Protocol**

    - If a child is sent home twice within a Monday–Friday week, they will be suspended the following school day.
    - If the second removal occurs on a Friday, the suspension will take place the following Monday.
    - Breaks or scheduled days out will not count toward a suspension day.
    - If a child is sent home for the second time prior to a break or day out, the suspension will be enforced on the first school day following the break or day out.

8. **Tracking and Escalation**

    - Step 7 may be repeated up to six times per semester (August–December for Semester 1, January–May for Semester 2).

- After the second occurrence of step 7, a parent meeting will be scheduled to develop a corrective action plan.
- After the fourth occurrence, the ESP Site Coordinator will be notified and a meeting will be scheduled with parents/guardians, Little Sprouts Site Director, and the ESP Coordinator to determine additional steps.
- After the sixth occurrence, the parents will be asked to seek alternative childcare arrangements.

Biting

Biting and other aggressive behaviors may occasionally occur in a childcare setting. While these behaviors can be upsetting for everyone involved (the child who bites, the child who is bitten, their parents, and the caregivers), they are a common and developmentally normal part of early childhood, particularly among infants and toddlers. When biting or aggression occurs, the following steps will be implemented:

- We will review and follow our policies prior to considering terminating enrollment
- We will talk with parents/guardians to try to solve the problem together
- We will set a reasonable time limit for working on biting and if it continues to be a problem, we will give parents adequate notice to find other care

Biting/aggression can often be expected when toddlers are in group care. When children are bitten it is very upsetting to us, and we also recognize how upsetting biting is for parents. We never want our toddlers to bite, but we know that they bite for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons are not related to behavior problems. It is our goal to focus on effective techniques that address the specific reason for the biting. These are our three main responses when biting occurs:

- Care and help for the child who was bitten.
- Help for the child who bit so that he/she learns other behavior.
- Examination of our program to stop the biting.

Staff Response

When there are episodes of ongoing biting, we develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques, and timelines to address it. We do not use any response that harms a child or that will not be effective. Generally, "time out" for children three and under is not effective, however, for the child who bites, a calm and peaceful minute or two away from the other children may be helpful. It slows the child down and provides a change of scenery and gives everyone time to recover from the incident. Caregivers will remain calm for this strategy to be effective.

First Aid

We give immediate attention and, if necessary, first aid to children who are bitten. We clean the wound with soap and water and we offer to put ice on the bite if the child is willing. If children are bitten on the top of their hands and the skin is broken, we recommend that they be seen by their health care provider.

Parents Informed

When children bite or are bitten, their parents are informed personally and privately the same day. In both situations, biting is always documented on our standard incident report form which is completed and

signed by a teacher and the director. It should also be signed by the parent. One copy is given to the parent and the other copy is kept in the incident report file in the office.

Confidentiality

We try to keep the name of the child who bit confidential. This is to avoid labeling and to allow us time to work on stopping the biting. Confidentiality is sometimes breached due to the school community in which many of our parents work. However, it is our goal to maintain confidentiality.

Training

Once a year, near the start of the traditional school year, toddler caregivers will attend a training session on biting. In addition, we will make available printed material on biting to parents and staff. We will collaborate with parents to help alleviate concerns and frustrations they have about biting.

Excessive Biting

- If a child inflicts 2 bites in a one-week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is bruised or broken or the bite leaves a significant mark, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
- If a child inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is bruised or broken or the bite leaves a significant mark, the parent will be asked to come pick their child and the child will be suspended for the next day. (If it falls on a Friday, the suspension will take place on Monday).
- If the child returns that same week after the day suspension has taken place and bites again in that same week the child will be asked to be picked up and remain out the remainder of that week.
- If there is a second occurrence where a child inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 5 weekdays.
- If there is a third occurrence where a child inflicts three bites in a one-week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the parents will be asked to make other day care arrangements.
- If a child, who has been through steps 1 and/or two, goes 4 weeks (20 business days) without biting, we will go back to step one if the child bites again.
- If a child bites twice in a 5-hour period, the child will be required to be picked up from day care for the remainder of the day. This will not count towards any suspension.

EXPULSION

We will make every effort to work with the parent or guardian to ensure a cooperative approach for children having difficulties with behavior. A parent may be called at any time the child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by staff. The parent may be asked to take the child home immediately. In cases where a child is physically harming themselves, another child, or a teacher, then the child may be restrained to prevent injuries

from occurring. The following steps may be taken regarding children who display chronic disruptive behavior, upsetting to the emotional or physical well-being of another child or an adult.

- **Initial Consultation**

The Program Director may request that the parent or guardian meet for a conference. The problem will be defined on paper. Intervention strategies will be discussed. The best solution toward solving the problem will be agreed upon by the Director, teacher, and parent or guardian.

- **Second Consultation**

If the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parent will again be asked to meet with the Director and teaching staff involved. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, and establish a new, or revised, approach to solving the problem.

- **Withdrawn**

When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made toward solving the problem, the child may be withdrawn from Little Sprouts at the discretion of the ESP Coordinator and Assistant Superintendent of HR and ESP. The Coordinator can withdraw any child for physically harming another child, or teacher, without going through the consultation process, if deemed necessary, for the safety of children and staff.

WITHDRAWAL

If you are an MCS employee and you leave the district during the school year, you will forfeit your spot with Little Sprouts at that time.

If a parent wishes to remove a child from care, the parent must give a written notice of two (2) weeks or otherwise be charged tuition for one (1) week after the child leaves the program.