

# Policy Packet 2023



## *The Learning Grove*

*Rooted in Learning, Laughter, & Love*

1241 Claim Jumper Lane

Billings, MT 59105

Open 7:15AM-5:00PM

Licensed & Insured

PV: 109520

406-208-0920

[thelearninggrovemt@gmail.com](mailto:thelearninggrovemt@gmail.com)

## OUR MISSION

AT THE LEARNING GROVE, OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE CHILD CENTERED CARE, FOCUSED ON A SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES KNOWLEDGE, AND INSPIRES A LIFE LONG LOVE OF LEARNING. WE USE THE REGGIO EMILIA SYSTEM TO HELP GUIDE US ON OUR MISSION. WE BELIEVE TRUE LEARNING HAPPENS NOT THROUGH OUR TEACHING, BUT THROUGH THE CREATION OF A SPACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN. WE BELIEVE OUR ROLE IS TO SUPPORT THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AS THEY DEVELOP AND LEARN THROUGH THE 100 LEARNING LANGUAGES BY EXPLORING THE WORLD AROUND THEM.

Welcome to The Learning Grove! We are excited for your child to join our childcare family and learn and grow with us. As we start on your child's educational journey together, know that we value open communication. Our door is always open, so feel free to stop by, call, or email us any time with any questions or concerns you may have.

As The Learning Grove becomes your child's home-away-from-home, know that our staff works diligently to provide the safest, most nurturing learning environment for our students. We hope you will find The Learning Grove to be a warm, welcoming space where children are free to explore, express, create and investigate as they learn about the world around them.

We are just as excited about your child's upcoming early childhood journey as you are! Welcome to the family and let us know what we can do to make the experience the best it can be for you and your child.

Sincerely,

*Shelby Kuchinski*

Owner of The Learning Grove LLC

## Meet The Owner

Hi! My name is Shelby Kuchinski! I am the owner & director of The Learning Grove. First off, I want to thank you for trusting me with your biggest blessing! Children are the most amazing gift, and I feel honored to be a part of their journeys of growth and learning.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself! I am 26 years old. I have been married to my husband, Keith, for over 5 years now. Keith is now a retired marine and a general contractor, so our house always has ongoing projects. We have three children: Hadley who is 5, Lincoln who is 3, and Wesley who is 2.

I started The Learning Grove during my husband's 9 month deployment in May of 2022. The Learning Grove is a state licensed group childcare facility. We are licensed for 15 kids a day, with 6 under the age of 2. We have 4 main teachers, and 1-3 support staff members depending on the time of year. We are opening a second location!

I found that it is difficult to find quality childcare, that is affordable and safe, especially in the Heights. I struggled to find a place that was graceful and understanding of the stage of life I was in, and that supported me during my husband's deployment. So, instead I started my own daycare! My grandmother was a preschool teacher on a base in California for most of her life, and I always loved volunteering when I'd visit, and how much she loved her job. I felt as though it would be something I'd be really good at, and would allow me to be with my kids while I was their only present parent.

Being a parent is my biggest credential when it comes to childcare. Not only have I experienced so many different illnesses, milestones, behaviors, and so forth, but I have learned so much about how children develop through my experience as a mom. I have three years of Early Childhood Development courses, and plan to continue my learning throughout the next couple years. I am CPR certified in both BLS and infant CPR, as is the rest of my staff.

I absolutely love working with children. I am blessed to get to spend more time with my own children through owning my own business out of my home. I want your children to feel at home when they come through my door. Childcare providers on average spend 30-40 hours a week with the kiddos in our care, so it is of my highest priority that your child feels safe and welcomed here, as well as all of you.

Thank you for joining my family's chaos, and for giving us grace through our construction zone!

## PLAY BASED LEARNING WITH REGGIO EMILIA INFLUENCE

The Learning Grove is a play-based daycare inspired by the Reggio Emilia system. This means we teach valuable lessons and skills in the manner that children find most natural - through play! Research has proven time and time again that young children learn best through structured and unstructured play experiences. You'll generally find two approaches to early childhood education: a play-based approach and an academics-based approach. Both have their benefits, however, children who experience a play-based learning experience continue to reap the benefits well into adolescence and adulthood as compared to their academic-focused peers who see the benefits of their early childhood learning wear off around grades 3-4. Our priority is to provide a developmentally appropriate learning experience that fosters a love of learning and a sense of curiosity from a young age.

What does play-based learning mean?

Our classrooms are set up to provide thoughtful play experiences. For us that means we are looking at what our students are interested in and offering them play experiences in different areas that can help them deepen their understanding of the subject and investigate it in new ways. Students can choose to do dramatic play, visit the class library, do art, explore in the science and technology centers or use math manipulatives, as well as play outside to explore the things that interest them most.

What is Reggio Emilia?

In Reggio Emilia inspired care, the children are the initiators of the learning process. We allow them to learn and discover by their own interests and are active collaborators in their learning experience. The most profound aspect of Reggio Emilia is the Hundred Languages of Children, written by Loris Malaguzzi. We integrate this concept by encouraging children to communicate in whatever means they can. Through words, movement, drawings, art, building structures and more. The teachers are there to guide, comfort and facilitate the individual learning and communication styles of each child.

Emotional intelligence and emotional regulation are large components of our curriculum. After discussing with several kindergarten teachers, we learned that socialization among students and emotional regulation were the most deficient areas, rather than knowledge of numbers, ABC's, and colors. While we prioritize learning those essentials, we promote that learning through hands on techniques while focusing on emotional and social skills. We encourage children to play and communicate and teach each other. Our programs are designed to focus on individual age groups, as well as integrating the age groups to allow peer observation and learning from each other.

## OUR PROGRAMS

We have several different programs available at The Learning Grove.

Grove Pre-School is a full day program for students age 2-5. We offer flexible part time options from open to close 2-5 days a week. From 8:30-12, is when we do the most learning. We aim to spend at least an hour outside every morning, weather permitting. There are multiple sensory activities ranging from sensory bins, to playdough, to slime, to making our own sensory materials. There are many options in our classroom to let creativity flow with dramatic play and building. Each of our stations promote learning of different subjects, but they usually carry over into every activity we do. We only offer preschool programs for children over 2, which is included in the pricing.

Sapling School is a smaller program that is being piloted primarily for tots (ages 2-3). The program is ONLY from 8:30-12. It includes the curriculum from Grove Pre-K, and has 2-5 day options as well. The shorter hours and 2-5 day options caters to 2-3 year olds who would benefit from socialization and learning on a smaller scale. This program may be the best option for a child who is newly 2, or may have been home with a parent or grandparent without a sibling during the first 2 years of his/her life. However, it is also beneficial for a child over the age of 3 for socialization and a morning preschool. This program offers a snack and lunch for your child, but they will leave before naptime.

Seedling Infant Program is for children ages 3 months to 2 years old. This program is mostly traditional childcare, as children in this age group are typically on ever changing schedules, depending on the age of the child. With each month comes a new milestone or transition or development, and the Seedling program adapts with your child. The goal of the Seedling program is to integrate into the Sapling Program after age two. The Seedling program has slightly increased tuition rates due to the higher need for hands on care. Bottle feeding and preparation, feeding, and nap times are all more time consuming and require more hands and one on one care. We do story time, sign language, taste safe sensory activities, and developmental teachings, such as aiding in tummy time and crawling/walking, with the Seedlings, and once they graduate to the Saplings, they will be immersed in the preschool setting.

Grove After School Care is designed for kids age 6-9. We offer transport from Sandstone Elementary School, and offer some activities for after school kids. We are looking to offer pick up from one more school in September 2023. This program is very small. We only have 3 spots for after school children, as the main focus is preschool. We only offer after school care for kids up to age 9 because we do not currently have the space to offer an immersive program for older children. We do not offer summer care for children older than 6 unless they are a staff member's child or the owner's child.

The Learning Grove is required by the state to have 2 staff members when there are more than 8 children present, but we value quality and have a minimum of 3 teachers every morning and most afternoons to provide higher quality care to each child.

## TUITION, POLICIES, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...

Please read every page and initial every page to agree to the policies. Some pages may have more than one policy to initial. Failure to read and acknowledge all policies may result in misinformation, misunderstanding, or you may unknowingly disrespect the policies in place. Thank you!

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## TUITION

The Parent(s) shall pay childcare fees based on their approved schedule at the rates specified below. Tuition is NOT attendance based and is the same amount regardless of attendance, holidays, vacations or illness. All paid tuition is nonrefundable. Seedling tuition will be adapted accordingly when a child graduates to Grove Pre-K. Please fill in your desired schedule below. We will factor the days & hours for each program to provide the tuition rate.

Monday: \_\_\_\_\_ AM - \_\_\_\_\_ PM

Tuesday: \_\_\_\_\_ AM - \_\_\_\_\_ PM

Wednesday: \_\_\_\_\_ AM - \_\_\_\_\_ PM

Thursday: \_\_\_\_\_ AM - \_\_\_\_\_ PM

Friday: \_\_\_\_\_ AM - \_\_\_\_\_ PM

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Hours per Week \_\_\_\_\_

### Grove Tuition Rates

14-20 hrs/2 full days: \$425

20.5-27 hrs/3 full days: \$625

27.5-35 hrs/4 full days: \$750

35.5-42 hrs/5 full days: \$875

42-50 hrs Open to Close: \$925

### Seedling Tuition Rates

12-18 hrs/2 full days: \$475

18-26 hrs/3 full days: \$675

26-34 hrs/4 full days: \$800

34-42 hrs/5 full days: \$925

42-50 hrs Open to Close: \$975

### Sapling Tuition Rates

2 Day: \$250

3 Day: \$350

4 Day: \$450

5 Day: \$550

### After School Rates

5 Days/week \$330

Less than 5 days/week \$15/day

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## TUITION CONTINUED...

Extended Hours Option: A parent may request to extend hours up to half an hour before open, and/or half an hour past close. This is a permanent change to hours. \$50 will be added to the monthly tuition for extended hours. The hours requested MAY be denied by the Provider.

We offer two different payment arrangements. You will need to initial the preferred arrangement. This can only be changed with a new signature page and when current on all payments.

\_\_\_\_\_The Parent(s) shall pay all childcare fees on or before the 1st for the upcoming month.

\_\_\_\_\_The Parent(s) elects to split their tuition into two installments and shall pay childcare fees on or before the 1st and 15th day of each month.

Tuition will need to be paid with cash, money orders, or check. Invoices will be available via iCare 5 days prior to due date. Payment can be made through iCare, however, iCare does charge a fee.

DEPOSIT EQUIVELANT OF 2 WEEKS OF CARE (HALF OF MONTHLY TUITION RATE) IS DUE WITH INTIAL PAYMENT. THIS IS A NONRENFUDABLE DEPOSIT APPLIED TOWARDS THE LAST 2 WEEKS OF CARE WHEN PROPER 30 DAY NOTICE IS GIVEN. WITHOUT NOTICE THIS DEPOSIT IS FORFEITED.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## FEES

If fees are not paid in full and on time, the Parent(s) agrees to pay a \$25 per day late fee. If fees are not paid within 3 days, the child(ren) will not be allowed to attend the facility until payment is received in full.

If your child is dropped off before we open or 5 minutes or more before scheduled drop off time, it is a \$35 fee per occurrence.

If ANY type of late fee is accrued more than 3 times, The Learning Grove may choose to terminate immediately, forfeiting deposit to cover any unpaid fees and inadequate notice.

Late pick up fees:

- If your child is picked up between 1-15 minutes late - \$15 late fee
- If your child is picked up between 16-30 minutes late - \$30 late fee
- If your child is picked up between 31-45 minutes late - \$45 late fee
- If your child is picked up between 46-60 minutes late - \$60 late fee
- If your child is NOT picked up by 5:00 pm - \$100 after hours fee

If any payment obligation under this Contract is not paid when due, the Parent(s) agrees to pay all costs of collection, including reasonable attorney fees, whether or not a lawsuit is commenced as part of the collection process.

The Parent(s) agrees to pay a \$35 fee for all returned checks. If a check is returned unpaid, checks will no longer be accepted.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

Drop In Rates: Infant: \$50/day over 5 hours \$30/day less than 5 hours

2+: \$45/day over 5 hours \$25/day less than 5 hours

Drop In Rates are only applicable for one time uses if a parent needs to add a day on for a single occurrence. Drop In space may not always be available, and needs to be prearranged with Shelby. The Learning Grove is a licensed facility that follows specific ratios that need to be maintained at all times.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## BEST BEGINNINGS POLICIES

Best Beginnings is a scholarship program to aid in childcare costs. The Learning Grove is happy to help in the application process, or to find resources available to help pay tuition. Best Beginnings will cover a portion, if not all of the tuition costs. If you utilize the scholarship, the payment from them will be deducted from the cost of the program your child is in. This payment is due at the beginning of each month, and cannot be split into two payments. Failure to pay your copay could result in disqualification from the scholarship program, and termination from The Learning Grove.

Additionally, there is an attendance policy with the scholarship. Best Beginnings will pay the full amount they have approved if your child attends 85% of the month. Please note that if your child is home due to illness more than the 85% of the month, you will be responsible for the unpaid amount. The Learning Grove will add any additional fees the scholarship did not cover between the 1st and 15th of the following month and fees will be due within five days of the invoice date.

If Best Beginnings is utilized by a family, The Learning Grove needs to be authorized as the primary provider with HRDC effective on the first day of care, before the child is able to attend the facility.

Please initial that you understand these policies even if you do not currently utilize the scholarship.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## COMMUNICATION

The Learning Grove uses a parent communication portal called iCare to connect staff and parents to communicate about your child's day. It is the preferred method of communication. It allows all staff members to respond and be informed of any attendance changes, meal requests/restrictions, medications or illnesses, questions regarding your child's day, etc. There is an admin only option for messages regarding any billing, policy questions, complaints, or concerns that need to go directly to Shelby. Direct messaging via The Learning Grove Facebook page, phone call, or text message directly to Shelby is also welcomed if need be. We do ask that all families sign up on iCare and download the free app. Adding in contact information directly to iCare is the best way for all staff to be able to communicate during an emergency, or anything of importance. iCare has a desktop version where all documents, required paperwork, and setting options are available.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_



## Required Hard Copy Documents

All enrolled children are required to have certain documents on file with The Learning Grove in compliance with state regulations.

All children must have a COPY OF CURRENT IMMUNIZATIONS. This facility chooses not to accept any exemptions at this time. This is not discriminatory because it is not based off of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or age; this is a choice based on what is best for the current families we provide care for as well as my own.

All children must have an emergency contact form provided by The Learning Grove. It must be filled in its entirety for EACH child.

All children must have an OTC form provided by The Learning Grove. Any OTC medications parents authorize The Learning Grove to administer, must be named and provided, such as sunscreen, bug spray, and diaper rash cream.

Children under the age of 18 months must also have:

A pediatric health statement signed by a pediatrician

An infant feeding schedule updated every 3 months, or any time feeding schedules change, i.e. formula change or addition of whole milk to diet.

If the required documents are not submitted before care is provided, The Learning Grove will not allow the child to attend until the forms are submitted. If the forms are not submitted within three days of the due date, the child's spot and any deposits paid will be forfeited.

Failure to update these forms as requested, will result in suspension until forms are turned in, and potential termination. This is not a policy it is a REQUIREMENT.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## ITEMS SUPPLIED BY PARENTS

The Parent(s) shall provide the following items to The Learning Grove for the benefit of the child(ren). Diapers, Wipes, Formula/Breast Milk, preferred bottle, OTC and prescription meds, 2 full changes of clothing, a blanket/comfort item and any additional supplies from the school supplies list located on iCare. The Learning Grove will request school supplies at the beginning of each school year, and a small supply list at the beginning of the summer program. We ask that you label your child's belongings to the best of your ability so help us get the correct items back home to you!

In addition, The Learning Grove may request that the Parent(s) supply a specific item for the benefit of the child(ren) from time to time. If the Parent(s) have failed to supply the item within a reasonable period of time, then The Learning Grove may purchase the item and the Parent(s) agrees to reimburse the Provider for the reasonable cost of the item.

Donations to the preschool of any kind are always welcomed and appreciated!

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

PARENTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME AT THE LEARNING GROVE AND WE WANT YOU TO BE INFORMED ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S DAY, UPCOMING EVENTS, YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING, AND MORE.

WE WILL SEND HOME MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS TO UPDATE YOU ABOUT ANY UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS, OR ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS A RECAP ON THE PREVIOUS MONTH. OCCASIONALLY WE HAVE FAMILY EVENTS WHERE WE GET TOGETHER AT THE SCHOOL OR AT A NEARBY PARK.

YOU CAN FEEL FREE TO TEXT YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER THROUGHOUT THE DAY TO NOTIFY THEM OF ANY ABSENCES, ASK ANY QUESTIONS, AND MORE. WE VALUE YOUR FAMILY TIME, AS WELL AS OURS AND RESPONSES MAY BE DELAYED DURING NON BUSINESS HOURS.

NOT ONLY DO WE LOVE IT WHEN PARENTS GET INVOLVED, BUT THE CHILDREN LOVE IT TOO! CHILDREN LOVE IT WHEN THEIR SCHOOL LIFE AND THEIR HOME LIFE OVERLAP. WE ARE STRONGEST WHEN WE COME TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CHILDREN

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## ATTENDANCE POLICIES

If your child is in the Grove Preschool or the Sapling School Program, your child must be dropped off before 8:45 am. We stop serving breakfast at 8:30, and begin to transition into preschool between 8:30-8:45. Drop off after this time is not permitted UNLESS prearranged for a one time purpose, such as an early appointment. Children transitioning into preschool after class has started, is very disruptive and disorienting for both the child being dropped off and the kids who are trying to learn. Additionally, late drop off due to a child sleeping in too late, will likely disrupt the nap schedule in the afternoon. This may result in disruptive behavior from that child and prevent other kids from resting or napping.

Additionally, if your child is picked up for any reason, please make other arrangements for care for the rest of the day. For the same reasons late drop off is difficult, getting dropped off, picked back up, and dropped off again is very confusing for most children. Please consider this when making appointments, and try to schedule them early in the day, or afternoon to give your child easier transitions.

The Learning Grove is not a nanny or babysitting service, but we do our best to accommodate changing schedules and things that pop up. Please discuss any changes to your child's schedule with Shelby ahead of time.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## HOLIDAYS & VACATIONS

The Learning Grove follows a similar schedule to School District 2. We will be closed the following days in 2023:

Monday Jan 2nd (Holiday)

Friday Feb 17th-Monday Feb 20th (1 vacation day + holiday)

Friday March 17th- Early Closure @ 12pm (Training Event)

Friday May 5th (1 vacation day)

Monday May 29th (Holiday)

Monday June 19th-Friday June 23rd (Possible cancellation or reschedule-residing the house, unpaid)

Monday July 3rd-Wednesday July 5th (Holiday)

Friday September 1st- Monday September 4th (1 vacation day + holiday)

Tuesday October 31st- Early Closure @ 3:30pm

Friday November 10th (holiday)

Wednesday November 22nd- Early Closure @ 12 pm

Thursday November 23rd- Friday November 24th (holiday)

Monday December 25th-Monday January 1st (2024) (2 vacation days + holidays)

The Learning Grove facility will be closed for 5 days each year for vacation. Dates for vacation to be given the first week of the new year. The Parent(s) is responsible for arranging alternate childcare during the Provider's vacation. If we close for the week in June, you will receive a credit of 5 days of care on your July invoice.

The Parent(s) is responsible for arranging alternate childcare for closings when the Provider is attending training classes, closures due to unforeseen illnesses in the Provider's home, and for emergency closures due to severe weather, childcare fees will not be reduced. Other times The Learning Grove may close due to unforeseen circumstances may include but are not limited to lack of running water (ex: frozen pipes), natural disasters, or lack of heating or cooling.

NEW POLICY: Each family will accrue 5 vacation days after being with The Learning Grove for 6 months! There will be 5 days to be used as you please to discount your next invoice. Please use all 5 days in the calendar year following the accrual, as they will not roll over. Each day is a \$40 credit.

EX: Your family will be gone for 5 days that month, we will deduct \$200 from the following month's invoice. Just give Shelby a heads up before the next billing cycle.

Please note the vacation days may only be used for days your child would normally attend. You will receive a notice in the check in your child's check in folder when you become eligible for this benefit!

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## TRIAL PERIOD AND TERMINATION OF CHILDCARE

The first 2 weeks (10 weekdays) of enrollment at this institution are considered a "trial period." Childcare may be terminated by either the Provider or the Parent(s) during this trial period without advance notice. After the trial period has passed, childcare may be terminated by the Parent(s) only by providing the institution with 30 days advance written notice. All tuition will be due during notice regardless of attendance.

If the Parent(s) or guardian(s) fails to provide a 30 day written notice after the trial period has passed, the Parent(s)/guardian(s) understands the deposit will be forfeited, and any remaining tuition for the 30 days will still be due. Daycare retains the right to terminate this Contract without notice for the following reasons:

A) The child(ren)'s behavior is DESTRUCTIVE, UNCONTROLLABLE, VIOLENT, or THREATENING to the other CHILDREN or PROVIDERS at the care facility. This determination is made in the sole discretion of the Provider.

B) A PARENT'S behavior is THREATENING or ABUSIVE to the other children or providers at the care facility

C) Childcare fees are 14 days or more delinquent.

D) The child(ren) is absent for 10 days or more without reasonable explanation or payment from the Parent(s).

All terminations of this type can be made effective immediately. Termination for any of the above reasons forfeits all paid tuition as well as paid deposit.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## UPSTAIRS & GATE POLICIES

PLEASE RESPECT THAT THE UPSTAIRS PORTION OF THE HOUSE IS SOLEY MY HOME. CHILDCARE DOES NOT TAKE PLACE THERE AND IT IS NOT LICENSED. PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILDREN WITH YOU IN THE ENTRYWAY DOWNSTAIRS DURING DROP OFF AND PICK UP.

PLEASE DO NOT PASS THE GATE DOWNSTAIRS. THIS IS TO ENSURE SAFETY OF ALL CHILDREN. WE TRUST OUR PARENTS, BUT WANT TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## SAFETY

THE LEARNING GROVE HAS SEVERAL SECURITY FEATURES IN PLACE. SOME OF THESE RELY ON THE HELP OF ALL OUR ENROLLED FAMILIES TO ENFORCE TO MAINTAIN THE BEST SECURITY POSSIBLE FOR OUR STUDENTS.

WHILE IT MAY BE OUR INSTINCT TO HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR OTHERS, PLEASE DO NOT HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR ANYONE YOU DO NOT KNOW. IT IS BETTER TO APPEAR IMPOLITE THAN TO COMPROMISE THE SAFETY OF THE STUDENTS.

THE FRONT DOOR IS UNLOCKED FROM 7:30AM-9AM AND 3PM-5PM DURING HIGH TRAFFIC DROP OFF AND PICK UP TIMES. OTHERWISE THE DOOR WILL AUTOLOCK, AND THE CODE ADMINISTED BY THE LEARNING GROVE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR FAMILIES TO ACCESS DAYCARE DURING BUSINESS HOURS. PLEASE DO NOT SHARE THIS CODE WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN THE PRIMARY CAREGIVERS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD. IF YOUR CHILD IS TO BE PICKED UP BY SOMEONE ON YOUR APPROVED PICK UP LIST, WE ASK THAT THEY RING THE DOORBELL AND WE WILL LET THEM IN. THIS IS TO ENSURE THE DOOR CODE DOES NOT FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS, AND IT IS CHANGED ON A REGULAR BASIS. WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO GET THERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, BUT ALL CHILDREN IN OUR CARE ARE OUR PRIORITY, SO PLEASE BE PATIENT AND RESPECTFUL. WE ALSO MAY NOT HEAR THE DOORBELL DEPENDING ON THE TIME OF DAY. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO NOTIFY THE STAFF AHEAD OF TIME THAT YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY, IT WILL HELP US BE READY FOR YOU. UNNECESSARY AGGRESSION WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

ALL STAFF MEMBERS ARE CPR CERTIFIED, AND HAVE DONE EXTENSIVE TRAINING REGARDING HEALTH AND SAFETY, SAFE SLEEP, MANDATORY REPORTING, AND HAVE ALL PASSED A BACKGROUND CHECK. YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY IS OUR BIGGEST PRIORITY.

ESCAPE PLANS ARE POSTED NEAR THE EMERGENCY EXIT AND FIRE EXTINGUISHERS ARE MOUNTED AND SERVICED. WE KEEP A FIRST AID KIT AND AN EMERGENCY BAG ON SITE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## INJURIES

WE TAKE THE SAFETY OF THE CHILDREN IN OUR CARE VERY SERIOUSLY. WE DO WHAT WE CAN TO PREVENT INJURIES WHENEVER POSSIBLE, BUT OCCASIONALLY THEY DO OCCUR. IF A MINOR INJURY OCCURS, WE WILL DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT AND NOTIFY THE PARENT WHEN THEY PICK UP THEIR CHILD. THERE WILL BE A REPORT FOR THE PARENT TO SIGN DETAILING THE INCIDENT.

IF WE NOTICE ANY INJURY THAT DID NOT OCCUR AT THE SCHOOL AND THAT WE WEREN'T NOTIFIED OF BY THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN, WE WILL MAKE A NOTE OF IT AND SHARE WITH THE PARENT AT PICK UP THAT DAY.

IN THE EVENT OF A MORE SERIOUS, NON-LIFE THREATENING INJURY, A PARENT OR GUARDIAN WILL BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY. AGAIN, A REPORT WILL BE FILLED OUT TO DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT AND THE PARENT MAY KEEP A COPY.

IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR INJURY, WE WILL FIRST CALL 911 AND THEN NOTIFY THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN. A REPORT WILL BE FILLED OUT FOR THE PARENT AT OUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE, BUT OUR MAIN PRIORITY WILL BE ENSURING THE CARE AND SAFETY OF THE CHILD UNTIL THE PARAMEDICS ARRIVE.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## DISCIPLINE

OUR GOAL AT THE LEARNING GROVE IS TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS IN A SAFE, PRODUCTIVE, AND APPROPRIATE MANNER. WE USE A POSITIVE APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE AND PRACTICE THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.

WE DO:

- COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN IN A CALM VOICE
- EXPLAIN UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR TO CHILDREN
- ENCOURAGE AND HELP CHILDREN
- SET LIMITS FOR CHILDREN
- APPLY RULES CONSISTENTLY
- MODEL APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND TEACH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS
- SET UP THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT TO PREVENT PROBLEMS
- PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES FOR STUDENTS NEEDING THEM
- REDIRECT CHILDREN TO ACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES
- GIVE CHILDREN OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE CHOICES AND SOLVE PROBLEMS
- LISTEN TO CHILDREN AND RESPECT THE CHILDREN'S NEEDS, DESIRES, AND FEELINGS
- PROVIDE APPROPRIATE WORDS AND MODELING TO HELP CHILDREN SOLVE CONFLICTS
- USE STORYBOOKS, MODELING AND DISCUSSION TO WORK THROUGH COMMON CONFLICTS

WE DO NOT:

- INFLICT CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN ANY MANNER UPON A CHILD (CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IS DEFINED AS THE USE OF PHYSICAL FORCE TO THE BODY AS A DISCIPLINE MEASURE. PHYSICAL FORCE TO THE BODY INCLUDES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO: SPANKING, HITTING, SHAKING, BITING, PINCHING, PUSHING, PULLING, OR SLAPPING)
- USE ANY STRATEGY THAT HURTS, SHAMES, OR BELITTLES CHILDREN
- USE ANY STRATEGY THAT THREATENS, INTIMIDATES, OR FORCES CHILDREN
- USE FOOD AS A FORM OF REWARD OR PUNISHMENT
- USE OR WITHHOLD PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS PUNISHMENT
- SHAME A CHILD FOR ANY REASON, INCLUDING IN THE CASE OF A BATHROOM ACCIDENT
- EMBARRASS A CHILD IN FRONT OF OTHERS
- COMPARE CHILDREN TO ONE ANOTHER
- PLACE CHILDREN IN A LOCKED AND/OR DARK ROOM
- LEAVE ANY CHILD ALONE, UNATTENDED, OR WITHOUT SUPERVISION
- ALLOW CHILDREN TO DISCIPLINE OTHER CHILDREN
- BELITTLE OR CRITICIZE A CHILD'S PARENTS, FAMILIES, ETHNIC GROUP, OR RELIGION

CONFERENCES WILL BE SCHEDULED WITH PARENTS IF PARTICULAR DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS OCCUR WHICH REQUIRE THE ASSISTANCE OF PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

IF A CHILD'S (OR PARENT'S) BEHAVIOR ENDANGERS THE SAFETY OF THE CHILDREN AROUND HIM/HER, THEN THE DIRECTOR HAS THE RIGHT TO TERMINATE EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD CARE SERVICES FOR THAT PARTICULAR CHILD.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## BITING POLICY

At The Learning Grove, we recognize that biting is a normal stage of development. Some children go through a biting phase and outgrow it while others do not go through a biting phase. Some common reasons why children bite include: teething, limited vocabulary, imitating behavior, personal space invaded, exploring, frustration, and more!

When a student is bitten, we always notify the parents of both children with an Incident Report. If the skin is broken, we will notify both parents immediately and advise them to contact their pediatrician, as there may be cross contamination of body fluids.

First, we comfort the child who was bitten and take care of the bite. The child who did the biting is then told that biting hurts. We work closely with the child who bit to make sure they are prevented from biting again, through redirection or teacher intervention. The child may be sent home at the providers discretion, based on their observation of the behavior, frequency, or severity of the biting, i.e. consistently breaking skin or causing bruising, to keep the other children safe.

If we have a child who has bitten more than once, we will observe to determine if there is a pattern and shadow the child to help prevent bites whenever possible. We will keep lines of communication open with the parents or guardians of all children involved.

The Learning Grove reserves the right to terminate care if the pattern of biting persists and all preventative measures and procedures have been exhausted. This is a last resort, but may be necessary to ensure the safety of all children in care, even if the child's intent is not malicious, or the age of the child is aiding in the inability to solve the problem. When age is the problem, the child may be welcomed back as they get older and are able to be redirected.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

Children are expected to treat all property located at the facility with respect, including but not limited to toys and furniture. The Parent(s) agrees to pay for the accidental or willful destruction of any property located at the facility, whether owned by The Learning Grove or any other person, if such destruction was caused by the child.

Parents are held responsible for any damage to property as well. We have zero tolerance for vandalism of any kind, and reports will be filed if necessary.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## NAP/REST TIME

THERE WILL BE A REST PERIOD IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY AFTER LUNCH. THIS ALLOWS STUDENTS TO RELAX THEIR BODIES AND MINDS AFTER A MORNING FULL OF LEARNING AND PLAYING! CHILDREN WILL BE PROVIDED WITH A MAT, PACK AND PLAY, OR CRIB DEPENDING ON AGE TO COMPLY WITH SAFE SLEEP REGULATIONS. ANY APPROVED COMFORT ITEMS WILL BE WASHED AND SANITIZED DAILY AND NEVER REUSED BY ANOTHER STUDENT WITHOUT FIRST BEING WASHED. SOME ITEMS MAY BE SENT HOME WITH THE CHILD AND REQUIRED TO BE LAUNDERED BEFORE BRINGING BACK. TLG WILL NOT TOLERATE THE USE OF ANY DIRTY COMFORT ITEMS THAT MAY SPREAD GERMS. THIS IS TO ENSURE THAT WE ARE TAKING ALL MEASURES POSSIBLE TO KEEP OUR FACILITY CLEAN AND AS GERM FREE AS POSSIBLE.

SOME CHILDREN NAP REGULARLY AND HAVE NO ISSUE GOING RIGHT TO SLEEP. OTHERS MAY WANT A NAP BUT MAY FIGHT SLEEP. OTHERS HAVE NO INTEREST OR NEED TO SLEEP. ALL OF THESE ARE FINE AND NORMAL! ALL CHILDREN WILL BE GIVEN APPROPRIATE TIME, SPACE, AND ITEMS NEEDED FOR A REST PERIOD. TEACHERS MAY RUB STUDENTS BACKS TO HELP THEM FALL ASLEEP. IF A CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO SLEEP, THEY WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO THE MAIN ROOM AND GIVEN A QUIET ACTIVITY. IF YOUR CHILD IS UNWILLING TO RESPECT THEIR PEERS DURING NAP TIME, AND ENGAGES IN DISRUPTIVE, DESTRUCTIVE, OR DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR, YOUR CHILD WILL BE SENT HOME. WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH YOUR CHILD AND ENCOURAGE QUIET TIME ACTIVITIES IF THEY DO NOT NAP, HOWEVER, THE LEARNING GROVE MAY CHOOSE TO TERMINATE CARE IF THE PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED BEHAVIORS PERSIST WITHOUT CHANGE.

PLEASE NOTE, THAT UNLESS THERE IS A SPECIAL ONE-TIME CIRCUMSTANCE (SUCH AS GETTING PICKED UP FOR AN APPOINTMENT 30 MINUTES AFTER REST TIME STARTS), WE WILL NOT PREVENT A CHILD FROM SLEEPING IF THEY WANT TO SLEEP. THE PARENT MAY REQUEST THE CHILD CONTINUES PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES IN LIEU OF A REST PERIOD, IN EFFORTS TO PREPARE THE CHILD FOR KINDERGARTEN, IF THE CHILD WILL BE GRADUATING FROM OUR PROGRAM AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. SLEEP IS BENEFICIAL TO THE BRAIN AND BODY AT THIS AGE, AND MAY BE ESSENTIAL TO A CHILD'S ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN DAILY ACTIVITIES. CHILDREN AGE 4 AND UNDER, LIKELY ARE NOT ABLE TO CUT OUT A REST PERIOD, HOWEVER IT IS POSSIBLE AND WILL BE CONSIDERED ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS.

CHANGING THE HOURS OF CARE MAY BE DISCUSSED IF NAPS ARE NEEDED, BUT THE CHILD OR PARENT IS RESISTING. IF THE STAFF AT THE LEARNING GROVE OBSERVES BEHAVIOR THAT DOES NOT ALLOW A CHILD TO LEARN, OR PREVENTS OTHERS FROM LEARNING, BECAUSE THE CHILD IS TOO TIRED TO PARTICIPATE, AND/OR THE PARENT INSISTS THE CHILD DOESN'T NEED TO NAP, THE LEARNING GROVE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO TERMINATE. SUCH BEHAVIOR WILL BE DOCUMENTED, AS WELL AS ANY ATTEMPTS MADE TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE, EITHER WITH THE CHILD OR THE PARENT.

REST TIMES ARE ONLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHILDREN IN CARE, AND THAT IS OUR TOP PRIORITY. BEDTIMES AND HOME ROUTINES MAY NEED TO BE ADJUSTED ACCORDINGLY IF YOUR CHILD CHOOSES TO NAP AT SCHOOL.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_



## SICK CHILD POLICY

If the child(ren) exhibit any of the symptoms listed below, the child(ren) shall not attend the childcare facility until the symptoms are no longer exhibited or unless the Parent(s) has obtained a statement from the child's doctor stating that the child is not contagious. The final decision as to whether a child will be allowed to attend the childcare facility will be made in the sole discretion of the Provider. If the child(ren) exhibit any of these symptoms while present at the childcare facility, the Parent(s) will be notified and shall immediately remove the child(ren). There is a 30 minute grace period after parents are notified, and communication has been exchanged, and then lates fees will apply to sick children. The child(ren) will isolate from the other children at the childcare facility until the Parent(s) arrives.

If the Parent(s) fails to respond within the first 30 minutes, and staff have exhausted every method of contact available, emergency contacts will be called. Late fees will be applied.

Symptoms Include but are not limited to:

- Temperature over 100 within last 24 hours
- Vomiting within last 24 hours
- Mouth Sores along with drooling
- Earache, headache, sore throat or recent injury that makes it hard to play or sleep normally
- White or Yellow Eye Discharge
- Lethargic
- Shortness of breath

The Learning Grove agrees to notify the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of any contagious diseases in which the Provider has knowledge that the child(ren) may have been exposed to while at this childcare facility. The Parent(s) agrees to inform The Learning Grove of any illness or problem of the child(ren) that might affect other children at the childcare facility.

The Parent(s) agrees to provide a medical report describing any and all of the child(ren)'s personal medical history to The Learning Grove prior to the child(ren)'s first day of care.

The Parent(s) shall be responsible to arrange for alternate care if the child(ren) is unable to attend as provided in this Contract. Childcare fees will not be adjusted for the days a sick child does not attend the childcare facility, unless using permitted vacation days.

**DIARRHEA:** Diarrhea is a difficult symptom to treat. We understand that it can be a result of a variety of factors. It's not always the contagious aspect, but a sanitation issue. Often times, children need baths post diarrhea, to avoid the spread of germs. As stated by licensing: "Children must be without vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours before they return to the day care facility. Vomiting includes two or more episodes in the previous 24 hours. Diarrhea is defined as an increased number of stools, increased water in the stool, and/or decreased form to the stool that cannot be contained by a diaper or clothing". We ask that you use the best judgement and seek treatment if the diarrhea persists, and understand that it is unsanitary and treat it as contagious, as bacteria such as E. Coli can be spread through stool.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## SICK CHILD POLICY CONTINUED...

**VACCINATIONS:** We ask that your child stays home for a minimum of 24 hours after receiving routine vaccinations. This is to allow your child to be monitored for adverse reactions to the vaccinations, that may include fevers or rashes or irritability that may make it difficult for your child to function during their day.

**TEETHING:** All teething symptoms will be treated as an illness, unless gums are visibly irritated and a tooth is present, or a doctor's note has been obtained stating the child is in fact teething.

**COVID:** In the case of a positive COVID test from either a daycare staff member, daycare child, or daycare child's immediate family member, The Learning Grove will close for at least 1 day to allow testing for all staff and their children and any additional days to receive results from testing. We will require a PCR test to confirm or rule out COVID. In the event that a staff member or their immediate family tests positive, we will be closed for a minimum of 10 business days or until 24 hours has passed since symptoms subsided. Anyone who has tested positive will be held to the same standard before returning to the daycare. If you choose not to test yourself or your children, your child will not be allowed to return for a minimum of 10 business days or will not be able to attend until symptoms have not been present for at least 72 hours without medication.

For children with non COVID related illnesses, the child must be symptom free for at least 24 hours without medication. Your child will be sent home if symptoms appear again at any point during the day. The child will not be able to return until symptom free for 24 hours.

Children will be temp checked at the door if multiple cases of any illness begin popping up, either within the facility, or the community. If your child is over 100.8, we will kindly ask that you take your child home. We will take into account teething, ear infections, recent vaccinations, or other symptoms, however, that may not change the decision. It is at the discretion of the teacher greeting your child, if your child stays. Please be available if the temperature increases or symptoms begin to show. Your child must be fever free for 24 hours, without medication, before returning to daycare.

We take illness seriously here. We want to avoid illness related closures and keep all of our children safe and healthy. Your child wants YOU when they're sick. Please do your part in decreasing the spread of illness. We are very aware when a child is sick and the illness has been masked by medication. It is not worth the risk for your child or any other child.

Parent Initials\_\_\_\_\_

## SHAKEN BABY & ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA

At The Learning Grove we believe that preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT) is an important function of keeping children safe, protecting their healthy development, providing quality child care, and educating families.

SBS/AHT is the name given to a form of physical child abuse that occurs when an infant or small child is violently shaken and/or there is trauma to the head. Shaking may last only a few seconds but can result in severe injury or even death.

All staff members at The Learning Grove are trained to recognize signs of SBS/AHT such as including irritability and/or high pitched crying, difficulty staying awake/lethargy or loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, inability to lift the head, seizures, lack of appetite, vomiting, bruises, poor feeding/sucking, no smiling or vocalization, inability of the eyes to track and/or decreased muscle tone. Bruises may be found on the upper arms, rib cage, or head resulting from gripping or from hitting the head. If SBS/AHT is suspected, staff will call 911 immediately & inform Shelby if she is not there. We will call the parents/guardians, and perform CPR if necessary. We will then report to the department child abuse hotline at 1 (866) 820-5437 within 24 hours.

To prevent SBS/AHT at The Learning Grove, staff first determine if the child has any physical needs such as being hungry, tired, sick, or in need of a diaper change. If no physical need is identified, we allow staff members to "tap out" when they are feeling overwhelmed, and allow another provider to step in. All providers understand and exhibit practices such as rocking, gently bouncing with the child, speaking or singing in a soothing voice, relaxing movements or rubbing backs, distracting with toys or white noise, all are all ways to prevent SBS/AHT. We encourage families to follow the same practices.

We DO NOT: Shake or jerk a child, toss a child into the air or into a crib, chair, or car seat, push a child into walls, doors, or furniture, speak aggressively or in a demeaning way to any child.

All staff have read and agreed to uphold this policy at any time, and all have CPR training and have taken required classes to ensure prevention of SBS/AHT at The Learning Grove.

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEALS

All meals provided by The Learning Grove are intended to comply with the United States Department of Agriculture's nutritional guidelines. The Learning Grove serves breakfast, lunch, and AM/PM snacks daily and participates in the CACFP program. A weekly menu will be posted on the parent communication board for you to view. We serve nutritious food and encourage children to try new foods. Children are allowed seconds (sometimes thirds) if they eat all their food and are still hungry. Students will never be required to finish all of their food if they don't want to. They are encouraged to eat until they feel they are done with their meal.

We are not a peanut free facility, and we require discussion of any food allergies before enrolling at The Learning Grove

We treat meal time as a time to socialize with friends and try new things by keeping the atmosphere fun, friendly, and engaging around meal times. We never take food away as punishment or give food as a reward.

For birthday or holiday celebrations we encourage families to bring in treats, and The Learning Grove will notify parents of their child's class size and any allergies.

We are able to accommodate most students with special diets. We may be able to offer gluten and/or dairy free substitute when necessary. If your child has a special diet, please let us know. We will make every attempt to work with special diets.

OUTSIDE FOOD AND DRINK ARE NOT ALLOWED UNLESS IT IS A SUBSTITUTE FOR AN ALLERGY OR SENSITIVITY TO AN ITEM ON OUR MENU, OR A CELEBRATORY TREAT BROUGHT FOR THE CHILD'S CLASS.

Parent Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## ALLERGIES

At The Learning Grove we are aware that children can have allergies which may cause allergic reactions. Parents are asked to disclose any allergies or intolerances at the time of registration. The Learning Grove makes every effort to avoid contact with allergens. Staff are made aware of the possible signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction which may include, rash or hives, nausea, stomach pain, diarrhea, itchy skin, shortness of breath, chest pain, swelling of the mouth, tongue, or airways, wheezing, and anaphylaxis. All allergic incidents must be recorded and shared with the child's parent. If the allergic reaction is severe, staff will immediately contact 911 and notify the child's parent.

Parent Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## FINAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I HAVE READ THROUGH THE POLICIES AND AGREE TO THEM. I UNDERSTAND THAT VIOLATION OF ONE OR MORE POLICIES CAN RESULT IN TERMINATION AND/OR FEES.

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# TLG Daily Schedule

7-8:30 am	●	Breakfast & Free Play
8:30-8:45 am	●	Clean Up
8:45-9 am	●	Circle Time/Feeling Check In
9-9:55 am	●	Morning Center Rotation #1
9:55-10 am	●	Wash Hands/Clean Up/Potty
10-10:15 am	●	Snack
10:15-11 am	●	Morning Center Rotation #2
11-11:20 am	●	Mindfulness Activity/Outside
11:20-11:30 am	●	Clean Up/Wash Hands
11:30-12 pm	●	Lunch
12-2:30 pm	●	Nap/Rest Period
2:30-3 pm	●	Potty & Afternoon Snack
3-4 pm	●	Afternoon Center Rotation
4-5 pm	●	Mindfulness/Outside/Pick Up



## Resources

- Best Beginnings Application: <https://app.mt.gov/ccubs/>
- The Learning Grove is proud to accept scholarship funding through Childcare Aware of America, as one of the few eligible providers in the state. Check out this website for information regarding Military, DoD, and Respite care: <https://www.childcareaware.org/>
- Check out our favorite labels for your children's clothing and water bottles! <https://www.namebubbles.com/>
- iCare: <https://myiCare.com/>
- HRDC for additional childcare and family resources: <https://hrdc7.org/>
- Childcare Tax Credit Information: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/child-and-dependent-care-credit-faqs>
- For information about required vaccinations: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/assets/publichealth/Immunization/MTChildCareImmunizationRequirements.pdf>