



AUGUST 2021

Parent Handbook

MISSION STATEMENT

Learning Ladder embraces the imagination, curiosity and developmental experiences for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. Our supportive teachers and curriculum are intended to cultivate each child's natural desire to learn, nurture their curiosity and desire for knowledge by using creative lessons, learning centers and natural outdoor playgrounds.

Program Goals

- To celebrate together with parents, we are the foundation of a child's journey to becoming who they are.
- To provide meaningful and worthwhile learning opportunities.
- To provide children with an environment that promotes a sense of belonging, wellbeing, and trust.
- To promote caring and respectful relationships between team members, children, and families.
- To regularly assess the program for effectiveness.

Philosophy

A child's work is play,

Play Leads to Learning & Learning Leads to Play

Learning Ladder

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WELCOME

Welcome to the Learning Ladder Family.

We realize you are facing an important decision and appreciate your interest in our Early Learning Center.

HISTORY

1990-Our building on Cottage Grove Road was constructed as one of the original Gingerbread Preschools. It had 3 classrooms, a kitchen and small office space.

1994-The building was purchased by current owner Linda Kudrna and renamed Learning Ladder. At that time, another building located a few blocks away on Main Street was also being occupied by young Learning Ladder students. After-school programs were operated for many years in Cottage Grove School and Taylor Prairie space.

1998-An addition to the Cottage Grove Road location doubled the size of the building to over 11,000 square feet. This allowed us to add 4 more classrooms along with office and storage space. The Main Street location was sold, and those children were moved to our current building.

2005-Due to growing demand for infant and toddler care, we remodeled one of our preschool classrooms and divided it into 2 rooms for our youngest students, giving us a total of 8 classrooms.

2008-After several years of planning, LL partnered with the Monona Grove School District to offer 4K in our building along with wrap-around care for families. In addition, we operate an inhouse 3K & 4K preschool program for students who choose not to participate in the district's program or live outside the Monona Grove School District.

2014-LL became nationally accredited through the National Accreditation Commission (NAC) and received a 5-Star rating from Wisconsin's YoungStar program.

2020 -The year of COVID! We were proud to stay open for our families for all but 2 weeks in the month of April. Additional cleaning, child health checks, masks and other procedures allowed us to remain open and COVID free for the entire year! We provided a thriving in person 3K & 4K program and supported virtual learning for children in Kindergarten-5th grade.

2021-The pandemic highlighted the importance of Early Care and Education at the state and national level. Not only is high-quality care important for brain development, and the social and emotional health of our children but it is essential to the economy. Linda Kudrna is a board member of Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association and is active in advocacy efforts for policy initiatives to support and sustain financial investment in Early Care and Education and funding the Early Childcare work force.

Most of our policies are uniform throughout the program. However, our programming varies slightly due to the developmental stages of children. Please refer to the Summer Camp brochure for additional information about the school-age program.

When you have any questions or suggestions feel free to contact us personally, by phone or email. For our families that do not speak or read English we will assist in contacting an interpreter.

GOVERNING AGENCIES, ACCREDITATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Department of Children and Families

The childcare licensing program is a component of the services provided by Department of Children and Families (DCF). The program is accountable for the statewide licensure of Wisconsin's childcare facilities, including family childcare, group childcare, and day camps. The purpose of the program is to promote the health, safety, and welfare of children in licensed childcare. The Department ensures that licensing requirements are met through ongoing inspections of childcare facilities.

YoungStar

YoungStar is Wisconsin's childcare quality rating and improvement system. The 1 through 5-star rating system for childcare providers based on education, learning environment, business methods, and practices around child health and well-being. Learning Ladder is 5-star rated.

Association of Early Learning Leaders

The Association of Early Learning Leaders is committed to excellence in the field of early childhood care and education by promoting leadership development and enhancing program quality.

The National Accreditation Commission

The National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs offers programs the opportunity to demonstrate and document quality performance using research-based standards and evidence-based practices.

The National Accreditation Commission provides a comprehensive ongoing quality improvement system that recognizes the diversity of programs through the self-study and award process.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Enrollment

- Enrollment at Learning Ladder is open to children ages 6 weeks -12 years.
- Learning Ladder is licensed for 120 children.
- Initial Enrollment is contingent upon receipt of ALL completed Enrollment forms, paid fees, parent tour and parent orientation.
- The Enrollment Application and Fee Agreement are not meant to serve as contracts guaranteeing services for any duration.
- Learning Ladder reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.
- Continued enrollment at Learning Ladder is contingent upon the parent's ability to maintain up to date enrollment information, including emergency contact information, and adhere to the policies and procedures of Learning Ladder as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to timely payment of all fees and tuition.
- Parents are required to notify Learning Ladder immediately, should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or any time thereafter change. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being dis-enrolled from the program and forfeiture of any deposit.

Non-Discrimination

We accept and cherish all children regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, ancestry, or religion, and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability.

Inclusion/Expulsion Policy

Learning Ladder is proud of our history of working with the individual needs of our children and will work with the parents whose children may need additional support. When applicable, we will make referrals to outside support services including but not limited to, early intervention, speech, occupational and physical therapy, and other types of services, and participate in IEP (Individual Educational Plan) meetings where appropriate to best meet the needs of students.

Learning Ladder will make reasonable accommodations to their policies, practices, and procedures as appropriate in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Learning Ladder is not required by law to fundamentally alter or change the services provided for a child displaying dangerous/inappropriate behavior, developmental delays and/or disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Learning Ladder will review requests for an outsourced resource therapist to work with a child. Those services are evaluated in advance and certain criteria must be agreed upon. The therapist is required to work cooperatively with Learning Ladder staff. Presence of the therapist must alleviate all safety risks the child presents to themselves and to others and must be collaborative and complimentary to the program. Should the therapist be disruptive to the program or not have the authority or ability to mitigate, through appropriate therapeutic methods or the child's dangerous behaviors, the child may be excluded from the program.

Any child who is a safety threat to themselves or to others will be subject to suspension/exclusion and/or disenrollment from the program if the dangerous behavior cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodations provided for under applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Temporary suspension from the program may be necessary for the safety of the child or others while any appropriate evaluations are completed and/or while securing the appropriate support services from the appropriate agency.

Wait List Policy

An [Application for Services](#) form is available on the website and a fee is required.

Openings will be filled in the following order:

- Families with other children currently enrolled.
- Children of Learning Ladder employees.
- Chronological order of the date the application was received.

Once an enrollment opportunity becomes available, families will have 5 business days to accept the position at which time payment for the first week's tuition is due to hold the spot.

If you are unable to accept the first position, you may keep your status on the wait list for the next available opening. If you are unable to accept the second position offered, you will be removed from the list unless you elect to maintain your current position on the waitlist with an additional application fee.

Registration/Tuition/Additional Fees/Child Contract &Scheduling

- Parents must return all paperwork prior to the first day of enrollment.
- There is an annual supply fee.
- All tuition is due in advance.
- Automatic payments (Tuition Express) are processed weekly.
- All other payments are due by Friday for the upcoming week.
- Past due payment fees are applied when tuition is delinquent.
- There will be a fee for all returned checks or electronic payments.

- Children will not be admitted to the program if fees are delinquent.
- Refunds are not given for severe weather closings, holiday's, absenteeism, or any other unforeseen closures.
- Parents arriving after closing time will be assessed a late fee on a per minute basis.
- A fee will be charged to families who run out of diapers or wipes.
- Enrichment programs and field trip costs will be posted individually, and payments should be placed in the tuition mailbox or will be added to the following automatic payment.
- When a permanent change of payment is needed, a new contract is required.

Multiple Child Discount

A discount is available to families with two or more enrolled children. The discount will be applied to the oldest child(ren)'s tuition.

PARENT COMMUNICATION & PARTICIPATION

Orientation

To provide a great beginning for your child Learning Ladder requires parents to schedule an orientation prior to their child's first day.

- Tour of the campus that includes classrooms and playgrounds.
- Introduction to teaching staff.
- Plan time to visit with classroom.
- Overview of parent handbook.
- Review required forms and standard operating procedures.

Making Your Child's First Few Days Comfortable

All children are unique and will react differently to a new program or classroom. Some children are outgoing and seem not to need any adjusting time. Others are very shy and may need more time. Most children fall somewhere in between. Parents are welcome to call during nap time to ask how their child is adjusting.

- Parents will schedule a time to bring their child in before their first day of enrollment to tour the campus and meet their teacher and some of their new classmates.
- We suggest that you join in with your child during an activity and familiarize yourself with the daily schedule.
- At home talk about your child's teacher using her name and an activity that your child took an interest in during their visit.
- Remind your child of any friends they may already know or that they met on their first visit.
- Reassure your child that you will always return for them at the end of the day.
- If possible, a shortened first few days is suggested. Picking up after lunch but prior to nap/rest time works well.
- Drop your child off at the same time every day. This helps them become accustomed to the classroom daily schedule.
- This can be difficult for parents too! Talk to your child about the transition into the classroom and how you will say goodbye during the car ride. Say goodbye and give a big hug. It is best to leave quickly. Our teachers are ready to help your child adjust.

Family Communication

The success of our school is based on establishing a partnership between our parents and our staff. Open and frequent communication between parents, teachers and administrators will help each child to experience a positive early learning experience. We want family members to feel at ease communicating to their child's teacher and the administrative team. Special considerations for privacy will be made for matters that are considered confidential.

Our most often used communication tools are listed below:

- **Verbal Communication**—Parents are encouraged to take a few minutes at drop-off time and pick-up time to check in with your child's teacher. A scheduled phone call at naptime is the best time for longer conversations.
- **HiMama App**—This app will keep families updated on daily meals, naps, developmental milestones, lesson plans & daily activities. It is also used for email and photos.
- **Pro Care Messaging**—Personal messages about the program or reminders may appear when you sign your child into the computer attendance program.
- **Bulletin Boards**—Parent information boards are in or outside each classroom. These boards provide valuable information regarding lesson plans, menus, curriculum news, office news, and the daily classroom photos. There is also a central parent information bulletin board located outside the offices. Here you will find our licensing information, contagious disease notification, sunscreen and insect repellent information and community news.
- **Staffing Information**—Photos and Registry Certificates are posted in the parent area.
- **Newsletters**—Monthly newsletters may include program news, child development articles, and health & safety information.
- **E-Mail**—Newsletters, statements, and parent surveys will often be distributed by email.
- **Parent Resource Guide**—This directory is in the Parent Resource area and provides a list of public health organizations and family support programs.
- **Learning Ladder Website**—Our website has general information about the school.
- **Facebook**—We are on Facebook. Please join us and be our friend.
- **Parent Conferences and Assessments**—Scheduled conferences will be held in November and May. The conferences will focus on past individual achievements and future goals. For children under the age of 24 months there will be 2 additional progress reports each year.
- **Portfolios**—Teachers provide individual portfolios for each child to keep track their developmental milestones. This keepsake is in the HiMama app.
- **Parent Surveys**—Surveys are periodically distributed to families. We truly value your insight and use the information in our goal planning sessions.

Parent Participation

Parents are welcome to observe or visit their child's classroom. "Surprise" visits are honored, but to ensure that you will get the most out of your visit it is recommended that parents give the child's teacher prior notice. This will allow the children to stay on their predictable daily routine and give the teacher time to prepare the children and adapt the daily schedule for your visit.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to visit a classroom on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangements) as per the court order. Parents with visitation only (sole/excusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted to visit with the express written permission of the custodial parent.

Parents may participate by reading a book to the children, attend field trips, assist with planning a special event, or donate items.

Breastfeeding Mothers

Learning Ladder supports the health of infants by providing space for nursing mothers. Mothers are welcome to nurse their little one as often as they are able. Rocking chairs are available for use in the infant room.

Volunteers

Regular volunteers are prohibited due to licensing regulations.

Parent Responsibility Checklist

To help us provide the best care possible and maintain high standards we ask for the following support from our families.

- **Turn in all necessary paperwork on time.** Even before your child attends their first day of school, you must submit documents such as immunization records, medical health release forms, and enrollment forms. These records are mandated by the state of Wisconsin. Some forms need to be updated periodically after your child is enrolled.
- **Read all parent notices and e-mails.** Missing this information may affect your child being prepared for the day. You are your child's most important advocate. Keep yourself informed.
- **Bring your security card/tag to get in the security locked door, make contact verbal and eye contact with our child's teacher each day at drop off and pick-up.** This is for the safety of your child and the best way to stay connected with the teachers.
- **Follow the Arrival & Departure Protocol each day.**
- **Keep your child on a consistent schedule.** Children need a predictable daily schedule and routine to function well. It is important to keep a consistent bedtime schedule. Children that arrive at varying times will be "out of sync" with the group and the daily routine.
- **Start your child's day by allowing them to be prepared for the day.** Wake your child early enough to allow him/her time to get dressed. Do not allow children to bring in food/drinks or toys from home. (See *Toy from Home* policies for more clarification).
- **Let your child's teacher know if your child needs extra care.** If your little one did not sleep well last night, or your partner is away on business and your little one misses him/her, let the teacher know so that we can give them extra TLC.
- **Let us know if your child's arrival or departure times will change on any given day.** Children instinctively know their school daily routine. Our teachers will talk to them about daily schedule changes to help them understand.
- **Contact the office when someone else is going to pick up your child.** When grandma wants to pick up your child contact the office early in the day. Remind the person that they will need to provide a photo ID.
- **Contact Learning Ladder when your child is going to be absent.** This will alleviate taking up precious classroom time from teachers who will attempt to contact you if your child does not arrive on their scheduled day.
- **Accurately inform teachers regarding the health of your child and respect and follow our health policy.** It is common for children new to the program become ill as their immune systems adjust to a new environment. This is both normal and beneficial to the long-term development of your child's immune system.
- **Make sure your child has all the supplies he/she needs.** Provide all the necessary supplies and clothing required for your child's care.
- **Be respectful and adhere to the Parent Code of Conduct and all other policies.**
- **And pay your fees on time.**

YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Infant & Toddler Program

The earliest years are all about relationships. Infants develop attachments to the special people in their lives. Young infants need security and mobile infants need opportunities to explore in a safe environment. Toddlers are working to learn their identity and how to navigate their world. Partnerships and good communication between teachers and parents are essential for optimal care.

3K & 4K Programs

Our 3K & 4K schedule provides ample time for both academic teacher-lead activities, small group activities, and play-based learning centers. Our curriculum is designed around the latest brain research. Lessons includes Language & Literacy, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) activities and Music & Movement. Often these activities are taught outside on our beautiful playground.

To a child, learning and playing are the same things. They spend hours building, creating, pretending, exploring their surroundings, and solving problems. Every minute playing helps a child's brain grow stronger. Play builds useful skills and creates healthy social and emotional bonds. Play is a priority at Learning Ladder.

After-School & Summer Camp Program

After school, no-school days, summer break, winter break, spring break—when school is out, you can count on Learning Ladder to provide a safe and supportive learning environment that is focused on friendship and fun. We welcome children ages 5–12 and make sure they have a sensational experience.

From the time your child arrives in our program they will be provided an opportunity to build lasting friendships through the many activities we have to offer. Daily recess, healthy snacks & meals, and bussing. Our program provides a stable, friendly way for kids to unwind after school.

Our summer camp is a theme-based day camp that takes full advantage of our beautiful outdoor campus and fieldtrips to local amenities. Check out our Summer Camp Calendar for more information. Daily communication for parents and LL staff is a priority. We use the HiMama app, and our monthly newsletters and calendars help parents stay informed and prepared for events.

Authentic Experiences—Young children must have real, direct hands-on opportunities that are meaningful and worthwhile to them. At Learning Ladder, we focus on what matters to the children—what their “big ideas” are and what they want to know. We focus on the ideas and theory making (how do things work). We do this by engaging the children in taking things apart, taking a closer look, building with a variety of materials, interacting with friends, and taking our learning outdoors.

Belonging and Caring—At the heart of our center is a deep sense of belonging. We have a strong focus on well-being, being together and being able to trust and rely on others. All children in our center have a voice and we empower that voice to be heard.

Heighten Curiosity and Interests—At the heart of our curriculum is the belief that we should trust the child's own need and drive to learn. Young children's bodies and minds have their own developmental agenda which they should be enabled to follow. We want to highlight and trust their natural play drives and aim to instill a self-motivating love for learning.

Self-Paced Learning-We believe that everything the children do not partake in or things that they do partake in, has value and is valuable to them. Young children need time to think, repeat, to come back later to things that have sparked their interest. We value extended periods of time investigating interests.

Imagination, Creativity, Science-We know that at the heart of play, children naturally engage in the pleasure of finding things out and imagining what might be. We see our children as scientists, investigators, and creators at the same time, with a deep-seated fascination, curiosity, and wonder for the world around them. Our environment seeks to feed the children's curiosity, fascination, wonder and awe to provide a deep satisfaction in learning and meaning making.

Risk is a Form of Learning-Children need to develop a keen sense of competence within themselves. We want to afford the children the opportunity to have freedom, flexibility, and rich experience, within a safe environment, allowing them to try new things. We are building children's growth mindset which enables them to have a go for anything they set their minds to and if they fail the first time, they are able to try again with an "I can do it" attitude which supports them emotionally, physically, cognitively and socially.

Creative Art-Art provides many opportunities for your child to expand learning in literacy, math, science, social studies, technology, music, and of course creativity. It is a hands-on sensory experience that most children love to participate in. Our weekly lessons will include process art, product art, and three-dimensional art activities.

Physical Fitness-Physical Activity is a vital component to a child's overall development and health. Weather permitting; children will go outside in the morning and in the afternoon. Children will also be provided with physical activity during transition times such as hopping from one activity to another or follow the leader to another area in the classroom. When the weather prohibits outdoor play, equivalent time indoors will be provided for a moderate level physical fitness. Physical Fitness Activities will be a combination of teacher-led and free play each day. Often, when the activities are indoors, they will include music in the form of dance, yoga, marching, rhythm, or chanting.

Outdoor Classrooms-Outdoor playtime, physical education, nature appreciation and exploring are important components to the development of young children. Our unique park-like playgrounds and campus provide seasonal learning experiences. Sidewalks surround our neighborhood and strollers are available for the infants and toddlers. Several community parks are located within walking distance. Water play is included in our summer physical fitness program as is our sledding hill in the winter. Outside playtime is scheduled daily, weather permitting. ***Please supply appropriate clothing for the weather fluctuations common in Wisconsin. Snow pants and boots will be worn when it is wet, muddy or the temperature is 32 degrees or lower.***

Enrichment Programs-Enrichment Programs are offered periodically. Gymnastics, ballet, swimming lessons, karate, and Spanish have been offered in the past. Programs will be offered based on interest and availability.

Typical Infant and Toddler Daily Schedule

Arrival and Pick-up Time – A time for parents and teachers to discuss any concerns, special needs, and current care routine, such as eating and sleeping habits.

Sleeping-Infants rest according to their natural sleeping schedule, while toddlers rest according to the center's routine, unless they prefer to sleep at a different time. Each infant is assigned their own crib and toddlers lie down on comfortable cots with their favorite blanket. Sleeping times will be recorded in our daily information form for parents.

Eating—Infants and toddlers develop individual eating habits guided by their parents. Your guidance along with your child’s physical and oral signs will help our staff support their eating patterns. All meals and bottles will be recorded in our daily information form for parents.

Diapering—Diapers are checked frequently throughout the day and changed when necessary. Diapering gives us the opportunity to form a connection with your child through one-on-one time.

Play & Discovery Time—From “Peek-a-Boo” and fingerplay’s to stacking rings and shape sorters, discovery time provides learning experiences that will fuel your child’s natural curiosity about the world around them.

Outside Nature—Strollers are used for neighborhood excursions and a separate nature inspired playground for the little ones offers space to ride scooters, practice running and watch butterflies.

Typical Daily Schedule for Preschool

Consistent routines and schedules help children to feel secure and gain an understanding of their day while building their confidence in managing their personal behaviors and actions. They also introduce young children to the concept of time and planning.

6:30—Opening routines begin, and children have quiet learning center choices available.

7 AM—Classrooms come alive, allowing time for signing in, conversations, and the start of routines.

7:30 AM—The Good Morning Group begins the day by establishing a pathway for meaningful discussion and the daily learning activities. Children learn new vocabulary and how to speak in front of and listen to others.

8:00 AM—Outside for a bit of fresh air and exercise (weather permitting) or free time in Learning Centers.

8:45 AM—A healthy, delicious breakfast is served.

9:15 AM—Children begin daily activities (literacy, math, investigative studies, library, music, outdoor play & more).

11:45 AM—A family-style lunch is served. Lunch offers a well-balanced diet and exceeds the USDA Food Program requirements.

12:30 PM—Quiet rest time begins. Children can sleep for two hours. If a child has not fallen asleep within 30 minutes, they can play quietly.

2:15 PM—Preschool swings back into action. Our staff assists children with putting their belongings away.

2:45 PM—Snack is served family style.

3:00 PM—Learning activities, interest areas, and outdoor play resumes.

5:00 PM—Closing routines begin for each classroom. Many parents begin to arrive to pick up their child.

5:00–5:30 PM—Children still at the center are given several choices in interest areas.

Toilet Learning

Reminders, praise, and patience are the most effective tools in helping children through this process. When children show readiness, ample practice time is made available to them.

Readiness indicators include the desire to perform self-care, ability to remain dry for at least 2 hours at a time, develop communication skills to understand and express concepts related to toileting, the ability to get on to and sit with minimal assistance on a toilet adapted for the child’s size and awareness of the sensations associated with releasing urine and stool. Positive reinforcements and consistency must be continued at home.

When both you and your child's teachers agree that your child is ready to begin the process you will receive a Potty-Training Policy and Contract.

In general toilet learning begins after 24 months. Soiled clothing will be changed and placed into a plastic bag to take home for laundering.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences will be conducted in person or over the phone in the spring and fall. Two additional progress reports will be completed for children under the age of two. Progress reports for school-age children will be completed in the spring and fall.

- **Infant /Toddlers 6-weeks to 24-months:** August, November, February, & May
- **Preschool-ages 24-months to 10-years-old:** November & May
- **School-Age- 5-year-old to10-year-old:** Fall-Spring Progress Reports

Keepsake Portfolio

The Digital Keepsake Portfolio is a record of your child's educational and physical development. It includes learning projects and photographs of your child.

Confidentiality

Learning Ladder regards all information either received or observed regarding enrolled children and families to be confidential.

- Only Learning Ladder Staff and the parents or legal guardian of the child have access to all individual child records including but not limited to all required enrollment information as well as assessments and results.
- If a child is referred to an outside agency, a signed parent authorization form will be required before any information regarding the child will be shared.
- Employees are prohibited from discussing information pertaining children or families that are enrolled or formerly enrolled with anyone other than fellow staff members who are inclusive in the care of the child and family.
- Any person requesting observation of the program will adhere to our confidentiality policy.

Touch and Nurturing

Physical touching has a vital role in the care and nurturing of young children. Children feel loved, accepted, and supported through the sensation of touch by nurturing adults and peers. Physical touch will be respectful of individual child body cues and only occur with their permission. Employees are sensitive to each child's response and request for physical interactions, and model appropriate nurturing touches.

Except for safety or cleansing, children will always have the right to refuse touch. Children are also taught to respect adults and peer touch preferences. It is our policy to inform parents of the nature and type of routine physical contacts that are discussed in this document.

Nurturing touch includes hugging, holding on lap, rocking, carrying, patting backs, cuddling, and hand holding. Children always have the right to refuse these touches. While tickling may be an appropriate form of playful touch, it is kept to a minimum because of its potential for getting out of control.

Personal care touch includes cleaning, dressing, and nap time routines; and is done in a gentle and respectful manner. It will also include face and hand washing, assisting with toileting, examining rashes and unusual marks, nose blowing, and assisting with necessary clothing changes.

Holidays

Holidays are an opportunity for learning the traditions and values of our families and community. We provide a learning environment that is non-sexist and reflective of our community's ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity. Exposing the children to the valued traditions of others will encourage the respect and understanding of individuality and uniqueness, as well as discovering the commonalities that unite our families and communities collectively. We encourage family participation in teaching the children the important values and traditions of individual family culture, by entering the classroom and participating in an interactive celebration and observance in relation to your family's ethnic and cultural history.

Diversity

We embrace and encourage cultural diversity in our teaching techniques and recognize that our efforts now will instill values that will carry forward as our children grow into young adults faced with the challenges that our society presents. Thus, we have made the commitment to create a program that reflects the varied lifestyles of the children, their families, our staff, and our community.

Field Trips/Transportation

Field trips are an exciting and educational component of our programming. Parents are notified in advance of the destination, date, time, cost, and mode of transportation for an upcoming field trip on the Hi Mama app. Parental permission for your child to attend is authorized on the child's enrollment form.

Learning Ladder provides supervision for all field trips but extends an open invite and welcomes parents to attend.

Part-time families wishing to attend field trips that occur on their off days may do so when space is available and may be required to accompany their child as a chaperon. If a child attends a field trip on a non-scheduled day (and the parent does not chaperon) the daily tuition charges will apply. Families may not switch days of the week for upcoming field trips or special events.

If a parent does not want their child to attend a field trip, they must find alternative care as there will not be extra staffing or space available for the child at the center during that time.

Learning Ladder buses or a local bussing company provides transportation for field trips.

Walking Field Trips

Learning Ladder is centrally located in a lovely area where there are wide sidewalks, nice parks, and friendly businesses. We take advantage of this, and the children participate in planned and unplanned walking trips.

Classroom Assignments

Children are most often scheduled to move to the next classroom in the fall when the academic school year begins. There may be occasions for individual or small groups of children to transition to the next room prior to the next academic year. Moving children to a new classroom is based on the child's birth date, teacher/parent recommendations, schedule, and current program enrollment obligations. Families will be consulted prior to finalizing a change in classrooms. Staff members collaborate to provide visits and prepare children and parents for a smooth transition.

Guidance Policy

Our goal is to provide children with opportunities throughout the day to be successful, make good choices, self-regulate, learn to interact socially with confidence, and gain a respect themselves and for others. A variety of techniques and strategies will be used to help gently guide child behaviors. Positive social skills are modeled and supported by teachers. Predictable schedules, picture boards, clear rules, preplanned organized transitions and a balance of teacher-lead and free play activities will be used. Natural consequences may be used in situations where it is safe to do so. Some children respond well to charts where they can visually see their progress. For infants and toddlers, redirection is often used. The classroom learning areas are arranged and stocked to support positive play and learning.

A child is never forced to eat food or have food withheld; or punished for lapses in toileting; physically restrained; or be treated cruel, aversive, frightened, or humiliated.

Reflection/Time-Out

When a child's behaviors are persistently inconsistent with the rules, they may need to move a safe distance away from the other children or removed from a play area. ***This reflection time will not be use as a punitive time-out.*** The supervised time away will be used as time for the child to compose themselves and reflect on the situation. Teachers provide support and guidance to ease the child back into the group. The child will be located within the site and sound of the teacher. If a child needs more assistance to self-regulate, he/she may be taken into the office where they will be supervised by a director until they are ready to re-join their group.

The staff will explore all other aspects of guidance including redirection and reminders before utilizing "reflection time". Reflection time will only be used when all other appropriate guidance techniques have been tried and have failed.

Biting

Biting is perhaps one of the most distressing behaviors that parents and caregivers confront. At the same time, it is a normal behavior for older infants and young toddlers. Reasons for biting are much different for infants and toddlers than for older children.

Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bit or will bite another child. The staff understands that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember this is a developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the staff is working to identify situations which, provoke, or elicit this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The staff will not punish, or harshly discipline children in the younger classrooms for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior.

Children older than 3 years of age, may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. For children in this age group who bite, the staff will use the guidance procedures outlined in the guidance section of this handbook, as well as observe the child to determine what provokes or elicits this inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to cooperate with staff to help their child control this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's service terminated. Children, in the older age groups, who continue to bite will have their services terminated since, the safety of all the children in the program is of the utmost concern.

Parents will be notified by incident/accident report. LL staff may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is confidential and cannot be disclosed. The staff of Learning

Ladder cannot discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other party. It is recommended that any child involved in a biting incident be seen by their family physician if the parents are concerned about communicable diseases possibly resulting from the biting incident.

Individual Behavior Plan

An Individual Behavior Plan is another tool used when there is a child with a behavior that requires additional support and/or close supervision. The child's parents, teachers, director, and administrator will be included in the process. Strategies for conducting a problem-solving session will include the following.

- **Identifying the problem or behavior.**
- **Identify probable causes.**
- **Discuss goals for the child.**
- **Discuss strategies for achieving goals.**
- **Assess need for support from outside agencies.**
- **Agree on strategies and follow up plan.**

If the child demonstrates behavior deemed unsafe or inappropriate, Learning Ladder reserves the right to bypass this process and proceed to the suspension/termination policy.

ANNUAL SPECIAL EVENTS

Traditions build memories and bonds us to our friends and family. This is a sample list of some of our established traditions:

Birthdays

We will recognize your child's birthday by singing "Happy Birthday" and providing a birthday crown. Children may bring in a favorite book to read or share a birthday snack. If you chose to provide a snack, please contact your child's teacher in advance so that we can assure the treat meets our healthy guidelines and refer to our ***Approved Healthy Snack List and keep in mind our strict Nut Free Policy.*** Foods that do not meet our guidelines will be sent home or discarded.

Water Days

During the warm, sunny days of summer the children will have many opportunities to run through the sprinkler, slide down the "slip and slide" and get wet and wild with water fun.

Sledding Hill

Our sledding hill is the perfect way for children to release energy during the winter season. It is located on the southwest side of the building and is a popular and memorable activity.

Summer Garden

Over the course of the summer the children will plant, water, observe and taste vegetables that they will grow in their own classroom gardens.

Scholastic Book Club

Each month during the academic year, inexpensive books are offered for sale through the Scholastic Book Club. Our program will earn bonus points from your purchases to use for free books and materials to enrich the classrooms.

Gingerbread Boy

In December, the children will bake a gingerbread boy cake that will mysteriously run away. We never know where he will hide so the children may need to search to find him.

Portraits

Individual and class photographs are scheduled at least once each year and families may purchase photos directly through the vendor.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Learning Ladder requires the parents of enrolled children, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, safety, and respect. One of the goals of Learning Ladder is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of but, is the responsibility of every parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on Learning Ladder property thereafter.

Swearing or Cursing

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on the property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

Threatening of Employees, Children of Other Parents or Adults Associated with Learning Ladder

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. Learning Ladder cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities of law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, Learning Ladder will not assume the risk of a second chance. PARENTS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.

Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Child or Other Child at Learning Ladder

Such acts are not permitted in the childcare program or anywhere on the campus. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures. Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or director. Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or director will address the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center.

Alcohol /Drugs/Smoking/Vaping/Chewing Tobacco

Learning Ladder prohibits alcohol, drugs, smoking, vaping, and chewing tobacco in the parking lot, grounds, and building.

Conflict Resolution with Employees, Other Parents, or Associates of Learning Ladder

Occasionally, it is understood that parents will at times need to resolve a misunderstanding, procedure, or incident by requesting more information with an employee of Learning Ladder or the parents of the other children. It is

expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited. Working in a spirit of cooperation and compromise is the key for resolution.

Parents are to raise any concerns they may have regarding their child's care with their child's lead teacher. This should be followed up by speaking to the Director if the concern is not satisfactorily resolved.

Violations of the Confidentiality Policy

Learning Ladder takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the agency. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. The Confidentiality Policy not only applies to your child or family, but to all children, families and employees associated with Learning Ladder. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential, pressures employees or other parents for information, which is not necessary for them to know, will be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

Violations of Safety Policies

Parents are required to follow all safety procedures. These procedures are designed not as mere inconveniences, but to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees, children, and associates of Learning Ladder. Please be particularly mindful of Learning Ladders child attendance procedures and entrance procedures. Be careful to not allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you may, in fact, be polite, however that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in our organizational chain. Be alert and mindful. Immediately report any breaches to an Administrator.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Parents are required to escort each of their child/ren to their designated classroom, make verbal and eye contact with the child's teacher to confirm the child's arrival before leaving. Teachers will document the child's arrival time on their attendance tablet. Parents are expected to help their child put away their belongings, remove outerwear and settle into the classroom.

Parents can inform the child's teacher during arrival or by HiMama of any special instructions or needs for the child's day.

Notification of Absence

Parents are required to inform the center by 9:00 AM if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to maintain appropriate ratios and allows the classroom teacher to plan their day effectively. A staff member will attempt to contact parents of children who do not show up on their scheduled day.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the center director not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you contact the director or administrator so that the information can be posted for other families. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Learning Ladder will take all measures to protect your child's confidentiality.

Programs Right to Refuse Admission

Learning Ladder reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause. The possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. Staff deem the child to be ill upon arrival.

2. Sick child exclusion time has not been met.
3. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children enrolled.
4. Parent failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
5. Parent's failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely manner.
6. Parents in violation of Parent Code of Ethics.
7. Delinquent tuition payments.
8. Lack of staff to maintain required teacher/child ratio due to pandemic, weather or other any other unforeseen event.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Parents are required to make verbal and eye contact with their child's teacher before taking their child from the group. Once a parent arrives in the classroom, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on the premises. Parents should finalize all business issues prior to picking up their child.

Parent notes, artwork and soiled clothing will be sent home daily. Bedding will be sent home for laundering on their last day of attendance each week. Check your child's extra clothing on regularly.

Parents or persons designated to act "in loco parentis" are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time. The Latin term *in loco parentis*, which means "in place of a parent," or "instead of a parent," refers to situations in which someone other than a biological parent takes on the role of parent to a minor child without formally adopting the child. This situation applies to legal guardians, stepparents, grandparents, and other situations in which an individual has taken on parental duties. All "in loco parentis" must follow the same procedures as a parent.

Persons Appearing to be Impaired by Drugs/Alcohol at Pick-up

The staff of Learning Ladder will contact local police, and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit the agency from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, staff will delay the impaired parent, if possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police and/or Child Protective Services.

Any other authorized person who attempts to pick-up a child and appears to the staff of to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. The staff will contact the child's parents, local police, and Child Protective Services to notify them of the situation.

Alternate Pick-Up Person

Parents are required to email or provide written permission each time that someone else picks up their child. The alternative person picking up, must provide a government issued photo identification each time they pick up.

Emergency/Alternate Contact Pick-Up Forms

Parents must provide an emergency contact of person/s (who lives nearby) authorized to pick up their child. Emergency contact persons will be called when attempts to contact the parents to pick-up their child is unsuccessful. Possible reasons for an emergency pick-up are when a child is sick or when a family fails to pick-up

their child after the center has closed. In an emergency, the child's parents will be called first. If they cannot be reached staff will call the persons listed on this form until someone can be reached.

Should the staff contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone. Failure of the parent to make such arrangements will result in dismissal from the program.

All changes and/or additions to the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form must be made by submitting a new Child Enrollment Form. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

Learning Ladder reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the Emergency/Alternate Contact Form for any reason, including but not limited to violations of the policies/procedures contained herein. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s) to inform each person on the Emergency/Alternate Form of the policies/procedures contained herein.

Late Pick-Up

Learning Ladder has a specific closing time. Parents arriving after closing time will be assessed a late fee.

If an emergency arises which may cause you to be late in picking up your child, please call the program before the closing time. (Calling does not waive the late fee)

If your child is still at the program after closing and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps:

- Attempt to reach you by phone.
- Call the emergency contacts listed on your child's enrollment form.
- Contact Dane County Child Protective Service or local police for assistance.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Delegation of Authority

Learning Ladder Child Care follows a chain of command for the delegation of authority. The Administration Team is responsible for carrying out the day-to-day operations of the program. In the absence of the Administration, a teacher will be appointed to make leadership decisions.

Hours of Operation

The hours of operation are 6:30 AM to 5:30 P.M.

Calendar and Holidays

Learning Ladder is open and year-around with the exception of 9 holidays and one full-week in late August.

Emergency Closing/Weather Closing

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing by text messaging, email, or the HiMama App.

Weather related closings decisions are generally made by following the lead of the Monona Grove School District. When the Monona Grove schools are closed or delayed, we will also be closed or delayed.

When Monona Grove School District is not in session Learning Ladder will make an independent decision to close based on local forecast information, and health and safety factors.

Learning Ladder reserves the right to close and/or refuse services with or without reason.

Court Orders Effecting Enrolled Children

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (ex... Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Learning Ladder must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with Learning Ladder administration, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Learning Ladder will not, without a court order, limit the access of a one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, we suggest that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, Learning Ladder is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of Learning Ladder cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. We will report any violations of these orders to the court.

Parent's Right to Immediate Access

Parents of children in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at Learning Ladder, as provided by law.

Learning Ladder will dismiss any child whose parent is prohibited from entering upon agency property. Due to the parents' right to immediate access policy, as well as state and federal regulations, we cannot have a child at the agency when the child's parent is prohibited access. Learning Ladder will not agree to any request to maintain a child's enrollment even if the parent agrees to stay out of the center. Such an agreement is a violation of the law and will not be entertained.

Child Records

Copies of your child's records are available to parents/guardians upon request while the child is actively enrolled at Learning Ladder. Requests should be made in writing and allow up to two weeks to process. There is a small processing fee of \$5.00 or \$0.10 per page, whichever is higher.

Late Fee

Children that are not picked up or families remaining in the center after 5:30 PM will be assessed a late fee. All measurements of time are to be according to Learning Ladder's Attendance Computer. Current late fees are posted on Learning Ladder's Fee sheet located on the website and available in the Parent Resource area. A child's services will be terminated for habitual late parent pick-up regardless of the reason. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or Emergency/Alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time.

Infants Supplies

Parents of infants are required to supply the following items for their child. Soiled clothing will be sent home in a plastic bag. Additional items may be added or changed on the list provided below. Please label items with your child's name.

- Bottles
- Diapers
- Wipes
- Diaper cream (must provide authorization form)
- Formula/breast milk and infant food labeled with your child's name and date.
- Pacifier with clip
- Crib sheet for cot after your child turns 1-year (required to be sent home weekly for laundering)
- Lightweight sleep sack
- Two sets of extra seasonal clothing; socks, pants, shirts and 2 sleepers
- Winter gear; coat, snow pants, hat, boots, mittens
- Summer gear; sun hat, swimsuit, towel, warm weather clothes, sweater or sweatshirt for cool days and air conditioning

Toddlers Supplies

Parents of toddlers are required to supply the following items for their child. Soiled clothing and bedding will be sent home in a plastic bag. Additional items may be added or changed on the list provided below. Please label items with your child's name.

- Diapers or pull-ups
- Wipes
- Formula/breast milk and infant food labeled with your child's name and date.
- Pacifier with clip
- Crib sheet for cot after your child turns 1-year (required to be sent home weekly for laundering)
- Lightweight blanket (required to be sent home weekly for laundering)
- Small soft snuggly for naptime
- Two sets of extra seasonal clothing; socks, undergarments, pants, shirts stored in a gallon sized ziplock bag labeled with your child's name.
- Winter gear; coat, snow pants, hat, boots, mittens
- Summer gear; sun hat, swimsuit, towel, warm weather clothes, sweater or sweatshirt for cool days and air conditioning

Preschool Supplies

Parents of preschool children are required to supply the following items for their child. Additional items may be added or changed on the list provided below. Please label items with your child's name.

- Pull-ups (if needed)
- Wipes (if needed)
- Cot sheet (a fitted crib sheet works best and will be sent home weekly for laundering)
- Lightweight blanket and small pillow (required to be sent home weekly for laundering)
- Small soft snuggly for naptime (optional)
- Two sets of extra seasonal clothing; socks, undergarments, pants, shirt (replenish as needed) stored in a gallon sized ziplock bag labeled with your child's name.
- Winter gear: coat, snow pants, boots, hat, 2 pairs of mittens labeled with their name.
- Summer gear: sun hat, sunglasses, swimsuit, towel, warm weather clothes, sweater or sweatshirt for cool days and air conditioning

School-Age Supplies

Parents of school-age children are required to supply the following items for their child. Additional items may be added or changed on the list provided below. Please label items with your child's name.

- Two sets of extra seasonal clothing-socks, undergarments, pants, shirt
- Winter gear: coat, snow pants, boots, hat, 2 pairs of mittens
- Summer gear: sun hat, swimsuit, towel, warm weather clothes, sweater or sweatshirt for cool days and air conditioning
- Sunglasses (optional)

Dressing Children in Appropriate Clothing

Children are engaged in various activities during the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable, clothing.

It is important to remember that while teachers take precautions to protect children's clothing from dirt, paint, etc., but accidents do happen, and children need to feel safe to explore and interact with the environment without worrying about getting clothing dirty, so please send children in 'play' clothes.

Infants and toddlers should have clothing that is easily taken off and put back on for frequent diaper changes. Pants that are easy to pull down, t-shirts or jumpers that are easy to pull off and on. Layers allow staff to remove or add clothing during the day to keep children a bit warmer or cool them off.

Children wearing dresses are required to wear shorts, tights, or leggings under them. This may seem like an odd request for young children but has proven to allow girls more freedom and reduces curiosities about body parts. Wearing shorts is also more comfortable and sanitary for children playing in the sand and rocks.

Shorts for children should be long enough to cover their private areas (areas covered by a swimsuit) when they are playing. Play involves many positions such as spreading their legs apart, hanging upside down and bending over.

Tank tops should stay in place to cover private areas (areas covered by a swimsuit) during active play.

One-piece swimsuits are recommended for children. They are much easier to take off and put on and they tend to cover their bodies in a more appropriate manner. It is also easier to keep track of during use.

Children should be dressed in clothing that will not restrict movement and that they are able to take on and off themselves without getting tangled. This will help them gain independence and aid in preventing toileting accidents.

Winter mittens for toddlers and preschool children work better than gloves. Remember, we are teaching independence and self-help skills.

Shoes and winter boots that fit well give children the freedom to run, jump and climb to prevent unpleasant mishaps. **Velcro rather than laces is favored for safety reasons, and it allows children to be independent.**

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. Learning Ladder is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

Jewelry is discouraged.

Toys from Home

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless it has been specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child.

Children are permitted to include with their bedding supplies one small plush/non-musical toy with which to nap/rest with.

All toys brought in for use as part of the curriculum, and/or for rest time will be inspected by Learning Ladder staff for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of Learning Ladder.

Pets, Houseplants & Gardening

Pets that take up residence in a classroom will reside in a secure environment. A current list of pets is posted on the parent board.

- Pets from home should not be brought into the building without authorization. Concerns of allergies, safety, state regulations and insurance liability will be reviewed prior to visits.
- Classroom plants are a natural teaching tool for young children. We choose non-toxic plants that offer oxygen purifying elements to the inside air.
- Summer gardens are planted each year on our playgrounds. The children will care for and learn about vegetables and flowers throughout the summer.

Photographs

Photos are taken of the children playing and interacting with each other. The images are displayed in the classroom and used for your child's portfolio on HiMama.

Babysitting/Outside Employment

Learning Ladder does not accept responsibility for any staff member's character, work ethic or behavior outside of their scheduled working hours.

Such employment includes but are not limited to baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny services and carpooling regardless of whether those services are voluntary or paid.

Withdrawal

A two-week written notice is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. Parents are responsible for the contracted rate for those two weeks whether our services are used or not. These policies are in no way intended to be punitive. However, to meet expenses and offer adequate staff to child ratios, we must ask your cooperation in these matters.

Dismissal

Learning Ladder reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time with or without cause.

Parents will be refunded any unused tuition within two weeks of the dismissal. A check will be mailed to the address indicated in the child's file. Any past due balances must be paid within 30 days of the dismissal. An invoice detailing the past due balance will be forwarded to the address indicated in the child's file within one week of the dismissal. Any balances remaining after the 30-day period will be referred to legal counsel for collection.

The Director or designee will assist the parent in gathering their child's belongings at the time of dismissal and parents are required to leave agency property in a calm and respectful manner, immediately. Learning Ladder will

request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative while gathering their child's belongings upon dismissal.

A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the Center Director if they wish to return to claim property following a dismissal. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent. Property that is not claimed within 2 weeks of dismissal will be considered abandoned and will be discarded or donated to a local charity.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Learning Ladder are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of Learning Ladder are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Learning Ladder cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- ◆ Severe verbal reprimands
- ◆ Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season.
- ◆ Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g., car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- ◆ Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- ◆ Not providing appropriate meals including a drink for your child
- ◆ Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- ◆ Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child.
- ◆ Sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- ◆ Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

If it is alleged that a staff member was abusive or neglectful, that person will be removed from working with children until the investigation outcome has been determined.

TRANSPORTATION

School-Aged Transportation to and from Monona Grove Schools

School-age children are transported to and from Monona Grove Schools by the Monona Grove School District or a Learning Ladder bus. Occasionally an administrator's vehicle may be used for transportation. Busing assignments are determined by the Monona Grove School District. Parents must notify Learning Ladder of all busing assignment changes.

Field Trip Transportation

A local busing company or Learning Ladder bus provides transportation for field trips. Parental permission is documented on the enrollment form. Field trip information is posted.

Walking or biking to/from Learning Ladder or to/from Home or Other Activity

Children that are at least 8 years old will be permitted to walk or ride their bikes unsupervised to or from Learning Ladder if a parent submits a School-Aged Daily Transportation Release and Waiver of Liability form

Emergency Transportation

Parents must provide written permission for emergency transportation along with their child's health information, child's physician, and hospital choice. If transportation for an emergency is needed, Learning Ladder will contact 911 to request an ambulance. Parents will be notified as soon as possible.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Wellness Policy

Learning Ladder promotes child well-being and academic learning by supporting quality nutrition and physical activity as part of the curriculum.

Healthy eating patterns and physical activity are essential for young children to develop strong bodies, healthy bodies, and mental capacity.

We recognize that collaborating with parents, students, health professionals, and community members is the most effective method of creating a healthy environment where children can learn sensible choices towards healthy lifestyle habits.

Meals

Nutritional needs for children must be met for them to reach their highest potential of growth and brain development. Meals and snacks provided by the program will meet or exceed the healthy requirements established by The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. Breakfast and lunch are served family style, thus creating additional opportunities for the child's social and language development.

Menus are posted monthly and reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the children in our program. Adhering to the menu is a priority but families should expect last minute changes. These changes are most often due to the availability and ripeness of fresh fruits and vegetables, food deliveries, birthday treats, and enrollment fluctuations.

Breakfast, lunch, and snack are served daily.

Parents of infants and toddlers provide formula or breast milk, and baby food until the child is ready to eat what is on Learning Ladder's menu. This is a gradual process as *some* of the foods from the menu are introduced.

Children under the age of 2 years are served whole milk. Children over the age of 2 years are served 1% milk.

Water is readily available to children throughout the day.

Home Lunch

School-aged children (ages Kindergarten-4th grade) attending Learning Ladder Summer Camp and no-school days have a choice of bringing their own Home Lunch or eating a Learning Ladder lunch. Home Lunches must meet our same healthy nutritional standards and be packed in a thermal lunch bag. Refrigeration is not available for Home Lunches. For children that are finicky eaters it is recommended that they bring a Home Lunch daily to unsure they are not disappointed when there are last minute menu changes.

Brown Bag Lunch

Brown bag lunches are required for families to provide for some field trips. Learning Ladder will provide ice packs and a cooler for lunch storage. Brown bag lunches must be disposable, and food will not be saved for later. When it has been established that there are not any air-borne peanut allergies in the group, the children may pack a peanut butter sandwich or other nut foods. Your child's teacher will provide families with current allergy information.

Food Allergies & Restrictive Diets

Parents are required to schedule a meeting with the cook before any food allergies or restrictions will be implemented. Not all dietary requests can be honored.

Parents must supply detailed dietary information on our Food Allergy/Dietary Restriction form.

When a child has an acute food allergy the family is required to supply the proper medication (epi-pen, Benadryl) and/or an alternative food substitute.

Water is served to children whose families who prefers to limit milk. A note from the doctor is required for families that want to provide an alternative milk for their child. Storage is limited and this option is discouraged.

Requests for special diets such as vegetarian or kosher must be supplied by the parents. Meals brought from home must be labeled with their child's first and last name, dated, ready to serve and meet nutritional guidelines.

There is no reduction in enrollment fees.

Children who require additional cross contamination safety measures will be seated separately but near other children during mealtimes.

The following guidelines must be met for families choosing to supplement or replace meals.

- All food substitutions must be labeled with the child's first and last name, date and what the food is if it is not in its original container.
- All food must be prepared and ready to serve. Infants' food is required to be cut into small pieces, no larger than ¼-inch square.
- Toddlers and preschool children are required to have their food cut into ½ -inch square sized pieces.
- Foods containing peanut butter or tree nuts are not allowed. See **Nut Restrictive Policy**.

Nut Restrictive Policy

- Foods that say: **“Processed in a facility that also processed nuts”** or **“Processed on a machine that also processes nuts”** (or similar wording) **are OK to bring in and may be included on our menu and may be brought to school with your child as a snack, brown bag lunch or shared with the classroom.**
- Foods that say, **“May contain peanuts or tree nuts”** (or similar wording) **will not be served on our menu and may not be brought to school with your child as a snack, brown bag lunch, or to be shared with others.**
- If labels have no allergy information, those food items, in most circumstances, are considered OK for children without nut allergies to consume in school. However, these food items that are not labeled should not be given to children with allergies.

- If the child brings in a nut product to school, we simply use a ziplock bag to immediately bag the item with a reminder label that says, “Learning Ladder is a Nut Restricted School, please enjoy this food item at home.” Then we send the item home with the family at the end of the day. If the item is a large part of their snack or brown bag lunch, we will substitute the food with a food item from our kitchen.
- Nut foods are allowed when families are required to pack a lunch for a field trip and when there is no nut allergy in the group of children and teachers.
- **Item purchased from store bakeries DO NOT meet the Nut Restricted School Requirements.**

Birthday Snacks

Instilling nutritional concepts at an early age can influence a lifetime of healthy food choices. Providing birthday snacks that are healthy gives parents the perfect opportunity to get their child thinking about making good choices for themselves and others.

Families are always welcome to bring a healthy snack for birthdays to share family traditions. Please refer to the following snack guidelines.

- Although children can be allergic to any kind of food, most food allergies are caused by tree nuts, peanuts, cow’s milk, eggs, soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish.
- Additional safety considerations for infants and toddlers will be considered.
- ***All food must be prepackaged, unopened and have a complete ingredient list.***
- ***Vegetables or fresh fruit snacks will be opened and washed and prepared at school to reduce cross-contamination.***
- Additional healthy, prepackaged and labeled toppings or dips may be added to the snack to make them more festive.
- Please refer to the ***Approved Healthy Snack List*** for a list of approved snacks.
- If you have a nutritional snack item that you would like to share that is not listed or would like to prepare a traditional family recipe in our kitchen, contact the director for assistance.

Nap & Rest Time

All children under the age of five are required by licensing regulations to rest for at least 30 minutes.

Infants will sleep according to their own schedules, while toddlers will be encouraged to rest according to a daily schedule but can sleep and wake as needed. Infants sleep in cribs with tight fitting sheets and toddlers rest on cots.

Toddlers and preschool children can sleep from 1-2 hours; however, if a child has not fallen asleep after 30 minutes of restful lying down, that child will be allowed to pursue quiet activities.

Parents are required to supply toddlers and preschool children a small blanket, small crib sized sheet and (optional small pillow 12x12). Bedding will be sent home on Fridays for laundering.

SIDS Policy

Infants/toddlers are placed on their “Back to Sleep”.

Although scientists still do not know what causes SIDS, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, research has revealed some ideas that can help reduce the risk of SIDS. Staff will follow the research suggestions.

- Healthy babies should sleep on their backs. A few babies with special health conditions might need to sleep on their tummies or sleep in an upright angled position. Detailed written instructions from a child's physician are required from parents that request alternate sleep positioning.
- Infants are provided a firm mattress for sleep. They will not be put on fluffy blankets, comforters, sheepskins, pillows, or other soft materials for sleeping purposes. Stuffed toys or pillows will not be placed in the crib with infants.
- The temperature will be kept moderate. Air conditioning is provided during the warm summer months.

Hand Washing

Adults and children must wash their hands following the 7-step standard procedure; upon arrival at the program, before and after handling food, after changing diapers or toileting, after playing in the sensory materials, and after handling bodily fluids (even when gloves are used).

Healthy Child Policy

Please note that some children will have frequent illnesses when they first enter a childcare or school environment. Once the child's immune system becomes more resistant, those illnesses usually decrease in frequency.

Proper nutrition, adequate sleep and keeping children on predictable routines will help children through this process.

Children need to be in good health to get the most out of their school day. It is Learning Ladder's Health policy that if children are well enough to attend, they must be well enough to participate in all the daily programming, including outdoor activities.

Learning Ladder follows the recommended guidelines established by the Dane County Public Health Department. The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk or spread of disease.

Communicable Diseases

Certain symptoms in children may suggest the presence of a communicable disease. Some diseases will require a statement from a physician before a child may return to the program. Parents are required to report any communicable disease to office. Learning Ladder is required to report some diseases to the Dane County Health Department.

When a child shows symptoms of an illness, parent(s) will be notified by telephone or, as necessary will phone other individuals listed on the child's enrollment form for pick up. Parents are required to pick up their child within 1 hour of notification. Learning Ladder does not have the mandated resources to provide isolated space and individual attention for children who are ill or unable to participate in classroom activities.

When Learning Ladder is notified that a child is diagnosed with a communicable disease by a medical professional, a notice will be posted on the central parent board. These notices will not contain personally identifying information but will indicate the name of the condition and the number of program participants known to have contacted the illness. Learning Ladder reserves the rights to amend health policy as recommended by governing agencies.

Exclusion Period

Children will be excluded until they have been free of symptoms for 24 hours without medication or return to the center with a note from the doctor stating that the child is not contagious.

NOTE: In forming of this exclusion policy, the focus of concern is on the needs and behavior of the ill child and the ability of the staff to meet those needs without compromising the care of all other children in the group and to prevent the spread of illness.

Auxiliary Temperature

Learning Ladder staff will use the auxiliary (armpit) method to check a child's temperature when a fever or illness is suspected. If a child's temperature reads normal or low grade, and the child is systematic, an additional check will be done.

When reporting the child's temperature to the doctor it is advised to note the temperature reading and the method (auxiliary) rather than adding or subtracting a degree.

Pandemic Closings

In the case of a Pandemic Illness, Learning Ladder will follow procedures and precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of children, families and staff as instructed by governing agencies.

- Learning Ladder adheres to of the State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Services and the Governors guidelines for closure or safety actions. Families will be notified immediately of a confirmed positive test within the center.
- If the local schools are mandated to close, Learning Ladder will reserve the right to close until it is determined by the State Health Department to be safe to return to the center.
- Learning Ladder will require that any child with symptoms associated with the Pandemic Illness be kept home until they are symptom free without medication for fever or pain for at least 72 hours or they have been tested negative for the illness.
- Tuition will be charged at 100% of contracted rate for up to 2 additional weeks. After that time, Learning Ladder would reassess the situation and develop a continuation plan for holding your child's placement.
- Learning Ladder reserves the rights to amend health policy as recommended by governing agencies.

Physical Examination

- Each child shall have a record of a health examination not more than 6 months prior to nor later than 3 months after being admitted to the center and a follow-up health examination at least once every 6 months thereafter.
- Each child 2 years of age but who is not 5 years of age or older shall have an initial examination not more than one year prior to nor later than 3 months after being admitted to a center and a follow-up health examination at least every 2 years thereafter.
- Evidence of the child's most recent physical examination shall be provided by a Child Health report signed and dated by a physician.

Immunizations

A record of immunizations for each child shall be maintained and updated to document compliance with state licensing regulations.

Sunscreen/Insect Repellent

Learning Ladder supplies sunscreen and insect repellent. The product information will be posted on our main parent board throughout the season. Sunscreen & Insect Repellent forms will be available at the time of enrollment and renewed bi-annually. Parents may provide their own products.

Prescription Medication

- Parents are required to give their child the first dose of a new medicine to ensure that the child does not have an allergic reaction to it.

- An *Authorization to Administer Medication* form (available online or from the office) must be submitted prior to staff administering prescription medication.
- Medication must be in the original container and labeled with the child's first & last name.
- Medications are stored in a locked container/cabinet. Do not store medications in your child's backpack or cubby.
- Documentation of administered medication is available for parents.

Medications Delivered by a Device

- The parent must demonstrate use of a medical device and/or special care after use to any Learning Ladders employee who will be administering the medication.
- Detailed written instructions must also be provided.

Over-the-Counter Pain Medication

Over-the-counter pain relievers such as Tylenol will only be administered to children for symptoms that do not require exclusion from the center based on the criteria and guidelines set by the Department of Public Health. Such circumstances where it is appropriate to give a pain reliever would be for teething, immunizations that were received, diagnosed ear infection, or seizure prevention.

- An *Authorization to Administer Medication* form must be submitted and signed by a parent prior to administering over-the-counter medication.

Diaper Salves and Teething Gels

Over-the-counter diaper salves and teething gels will be administered to the child as needed.

- An *Authorization to Administer Medication* form must be submitted prior to application.
- Documentation of salve and gel application is not recorded.
- It is recommended that parents offer the first dose of a new salve or gel to their child to check for allergic reaction.

We reserve the right to limit or not administer over-the-counter medication that has not been prescribed by a physician.

SAFETY & EMERGENCY STANDARDS

Emergency Preparedness

All personnel are trained annually on Emergency Preparedness. CPR & Basic First Aid training is provided bi-annually. In addition, teachers are trained on Child Abuse & Neglect, Head Trauma, & Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Fire Extinguishers, Alternate Communications and Evacuation, and Media Relations. First aid kits, evacuation routes, and emergency phone numbers are posted.

Emergency provisions are provided in designated safe areas. Drills are practiced monthly. A professional security system is wired into the building with wired smoke detectors. Fire Extinguishers are inspected annually. Access to the building is controlled. Alternate emergency lighting is included in the security system. Diving records are screened annually for staff members who transport children.

Employee Qualifications and Annual Background Checks

Each new employee is screened at the time of hire. They are required to pass fingerprints and Criminal Background Checks. Their references and educational documents are validated, and the new employee is required to submit proof of good health.

Photos of our teaching and support staff along with their Registry Certificate is displayed in the entryway. Information is reviewed periodically in accordance with Department of Children & Families (DCF) and National Accreditation Requirements (NAC) requirements.

Injuries

In the case of an emergency, staff will assess the situation to determine what kind of care is needed; *professional emergency care* or on-site *basic first aid*.

- If *professional emergency care* is needed, we contact 911 and notify parents.
- If routine, *basic first aid* is needed, staff will proceed with needed care, and notify parents by documenting what happened on a *Mishap Form* that will be provided at pick-up time.
- In the event of a bee sting or bump to the head, or questionable injury, staff will notify parents by phone as well as the written documentation.

Prohibition of Firearms, Weapons, Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping

Firearms, weapons, drugs, alcohol, smoking, and vaping are strictly prohibited within the building and grounds.

Video Surveillance System

Learning Ladder is equipped with a 24-hour video surveillance system. Cameras are located inside in classrooms, hallways and communal areas, as well as outside on the playgrounds and parking lot. Cameras have been strategically placed to help promote the safety and security of children, parents, staff, and property.

Some of the benefits and uses of this system in our program include:

- Monitoring the facility to observe classrooms schedules, routines, and interactions.
- To improve curriculum activities and as a tool for teacher training.
- Resolution of safety or security incidents.
- Surveillance is an effective crime deterrent.

The surveillance system will be used for the internal purposes. Only administration and authorized personnel will have access to video feeds.

Administrators may view video surveillance on a periodic basis or in response to a specific incident. The video surveillance system is not monitored on a continuous basis.

If a safety or security related incident occurs, the administration should be notified immediately. An administrator will review any related video recordings and determine if any relevant footage is available. The video may be used by the administration to investigate and resolve the reported incident and/or be released to the appropriate authorities.

Fire/Tornado Drills

Fire/Tornado drills are practiced monthly. The drills are a combination of scheduled and unscheduled drills.

Emergency Lock Down

Lock down procedures will be used in situations that may result in harm to persons inside the school, such as a shooting, hostage incident, intruder, environmental disturbance or at the discretion of the administration or public safety personnel. Established methods of **Emergency Relocation and Tracking Children** will be followed as well as the **Emergency Relocation and Parent Notification policy**.

Emergency Relocation and Parent Notification

In the case of an emergency requiring the children to evacuate the premises, a neighborhood relocation shelter

will be determined, at the time of the event, after all considerations for safety have been evaluated.

If children need to be relocated to a nearby building for shelter administration will coordinate the relocation process.

Emergency relocation may require moving a greater distance away. This destination will be determined by the local Emergency Government.

- If this should occur Learning Ladder vehicles or school district busing would be assigned. *All safety measures will be followed*, but if the relocation is determined by The Emergency Government Incident Command Officer to be immediate; vehicle capacity, safety belts, and car seats rules may possibly be disregarded if abiding hinders the safety and timeliness of the evacuation.
- Parents will be instructed to reunite with their child at the relocation site rather than during the evacuation process. Abiding by this will allow the Learning Ladder employees to devote their attention to safely implementing the emergency plan.
- Once the children have been moved and settled into a safe location the Administration/or designated person-in-charge will determine how to best notify families with instructions on how to safely reunite with their child
- Mass text messages, email, land line phones, Internet, radio, or television will be utilized if needed.

Missing Child

Attendance & safety procedures are used to ensure the whereabouts of children throughout the day.

- When groups of children leave the classroom or playground, one teacher will lead the children, and the other will follow the last child.
- Attendance is referenced throughout the day and taken to the playground and on field trips.
- Teachers count their group of children periodically throughout the day.
- If a child is missing, the director will be notified, and a search will be conducted. If the child is not found the police department will be notified, in addition to notifying the child's parent(s).

Run Away Child Procedure

If a school-aged child runs away or threatens to leave the group or premises, the following procedures have been established:

- Every effort, short of physically restraining the child shall be made to keep the child from leaving the group or premises.
- A teacher may follow the child if the other children are adequately supervised.
- Teachers will not pursue a run-away child if it results in the rest of the group being left inadequately supervised.
- The teacher will notify the director. Parents and/or police will be notified.
- A child that runs away, attempt to run away, or hide from adult supervision will be terminated from the program.

Parking

Parking is available in the front of the building. **Unattended vehicles should not be left running and children should not be left in unattended vehicles. Young children can be unpredictable so please hold your child's hand to and from your vehicle whenever possible.** Please use caution and drive slowly.

Thank-you for sharing your child with us!

ADENDMENTS

Covid-19 Policy

Parents should notify an administrator at Learning Ladder immediately when a child or family member exposure is suspected or confirmed.

Learning Ladder follows procedures and precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of children, families, and staff daily. In the case of a Covid-19 positive test additional measures may be required to prevent the spread of the illness. In the event a child, family member or employee contracts the virus Covid-19 and has a positive test result, we will follow the recommendations of our local health department. The recommendation could require a program closure of 1 day up to 2 weeks. The Covid-19 virus Infectious Prevention strategies have evolved as data is collected by individual counties and will most like continue to do so until it is eradicated.

Learning Ladder requires that any child with symptoms associated with Covid-19 be kept home until they are symptom free without medication for fever or pain for at least 72 hours or they have been tested negative for the illness.

Safety procedures will be modified and communicated to families and employees to meet the most current recommendations.

If the program is required to close, tuition will be charged at 100% of contracted rate for up to 2 additional weeks. After that time, if the required closure is still in effect, Learning Ladder will reevaluate the situation and develop a continuation plan for holding your child's placement.

We continue to adapt our policies and procedures as recommended or required by our State Licensing Agency, Dane County, and all other governing agencies. Learning Ladder reserves the rights to amend health policy at any time. We will do our best to communicate any changes as promptly as possible.