



Escuelita in the Trees Parent Handbook 2022-23

Welcome to LEAP! We are very glad to have you join our family! LEAP focuses on teaching children prekindergarten skills and language (Spanish and English) through hands-on experiences. Our program fosters children's intellectual, emotional and social development in a gentle and nurturing environment. Our students are guided in a morning circle, small group activities, independent and cooperative play, as well as individual work with their teachers, using the forest as our classroom. Through adult modeling, children gain an understanding of classroom expectations; learning follows a continuum stretching from observation to independence. We hope that children can apply/practice at home what they learn at school. Most of our day will be spent outdoors and we will use the natural world to ignite and feed children's curiosity and support their development.

A wonderful year is in store for your child, filled with opportunities for learning, friendships and joyful play experiences!

The first day of school for all the children will be Thursday, September 8th.

SCHOOL HOURS/CALENDAR

Arrival to school is between 9:00-9:15

It is very important that children arrive at school everyday with enough time so they don't feel rushed as they begin their day. Coming to school late is not only disruptive for your own child, but for the whole classroom already engaged in activities. Please help your child arrive on time so they can successfully follow their daily routine: hanging up his/her backpack, greeting their teachers, and washing hands. The teacher will be ready to greet your child each day, as this morning connection and one-on-one time is very important to both child and teacher. PLEASE, if you have any questions or comments, leave a note for the teacher or speak to the director. If the parent needs to schedule more time to talk with a parent, this can be arranged for either after, or before school hours.

LEAP generally follows the Durham Public Schools' calendar; you will get a school calendar.

PICK UP PROCEDURES

Pick up time is 12:15

If an emergency prevents a parent from being at school to pick a child up by 12:15 pm, please call the Executive Director and/or your child's teachers immediately and indicate when you will arrive or who will pick up your child. Only adults listed on the emergency contact form will be allowed to pick up children, even in cases of emergency. Please be sure they bring a picture ID.

If parents are more than 10 minutes late, they will be charged \$5. If parents are late multiple times, the director will have a conversation with the parents and possibly withdraw the child's spot at LEAP. It is very important that children be picked up on time.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENCES

If it is necessary for your child to be absent from school, please call/text your child's teachers prior to 8:00 a.m. on the school day to be missed. It is very helpful for the teachers to know in advance when a child will be absent.

HEALTH

When your child is sick, he/she can't learn; healthy children learn better.

Please do not send your child to school sick.

If your child becomes sick at school, you will be called and asked to come and pick up your child immediately. Please make sure that your child is free from illness or fever for 24 hours before returning to school.

Please keep your child at home he/she has:

1. Heavy nasal discharge
 2. A constant cough
 3. Symptoms related to a highly communicable illness (COVID-19, flu, chicken pox, monkey pox, stomach virus) – reddened eyes, throwing up, sore throat, stomach pains, etc.
- Please inform the school if your child has any of these symptoms so that we may alert other families.

If your child gets head **lice**, he/she must be thoroughly treated, following LEAP procedures, before returning to school. PLEASE notify the school immediately if you suspect your child has lice. Lice are not dangerous but highly contagious among children and are much easier to treat if caught quickly.

Medication: any student who requires medication at school must have a medication authorization form completed by a physician. This form must be completed for prescriptions as well as over-the-counter medications.

INJURIES AT SCHOOL

We know that children learn best through active play and accidents occur on a regular basis. If your child scrapes his or her knee or has a bump or scratch, the teacher will attend to the child with ice and/or a Band-Aid, if necessary. No medication will be administered at school without a doctor's note.

If there is a serious medical emergency, the teacher or a staff member will contact the parent and, if necessary, other individuals listed on the emergency form. If needed, the child will be taken to a hospital via an ambulance.

Staff will complete an "Incident Report Form" describing any accidents that happen at school and parents will be given a copy.

ORAL HEALTH

It is very important that your child visits the dentist regularly. If your child hasn't seen a dentist, or you'd like us to help you find one, please let us know.

SNACKS AND NUTRITION

It is very important that your child eats nutritious food on a regular basis.

We know that children who eat well, exercise, and get at least 9 hours of sleep on a regular schedule do better in school than children who do not. Eating breakfast is the most important meal of the day, so please help your child establish this habit. We will offer milk, crackers and/or fruit each morning from 9:00 until 9:20 and a healthy snack at around 10:30-11:00. Nuestra Escuelita aims to include a fruit/vegetable and cracker accompanied by water/milk. **We will not**

serve juice or any other sugary drinks. Water always will be available for the children while indoors and outdoors. It is our goal to provide healthy snacks on a regular basis as well as inspire our families to adopt healthy nutrition habits.

DRESS & Physical Activity

Our students participate in lots of activities at school—the children WILL get dirty. Daily physical activity and exercise is very important for health and overall development of children, so we will play outside everyday (unless there is lightning). Please help them feel comfortable by having them wear comfortable clothes, that can get dirty and close toed shoes. It is helpful if you can send your child to school in clothing that will allow him or her to use the bathroom independently and easily (no belts, complicated buttons or difficult ties). Please send a complete change of clothes at school (including undergarments and TWO pairs of socks) that we can use if there are accidents.

Please remember that we will go outside everyday—please send your child with clothes and closed-toed shoes to comfortably move in the forest. The best is to dress them in layers (short sleeves, long sleeves, and a jacket if necessary. Long or short pants according to the weather. Socks and comfortable walking shoes).

ENROLLMENT/CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with special needs will be admitted to and educated at LEAP unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

EVALUATION

LEAP was created to help support children, laying a strong foundation for future school success. In order to ensure our services are meeting the needs of the children and families, we use an assessment tool called Teaching Strategies/Creative Curriculum. The information that we collect includes skills and concepts related to all areas of development: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language and literature.

The information we collect helps us make sure that we are providing challenging and supporting experiences for each child, as well as to evaluate our program in general.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT/VISITORS

The Home-School relationship is very important. At LEAP we encourage finding opportunities for families to participate in school life. Please contact us to discuss ways in which you can get involved in your child's classroom. We hope that families participate in yearly organized activities as well as plan special visits, such as birthdays.

Coming to school and participating in activities shows your child that his/her school is important to you. While visiting your child's classroom we ask you that keep your child in the classroom, and follow our classroom rules and routines just as the other children do.

Please, abstain from drawing the teachers' attention while you visit—we want all of the adults at LEAP to be focused on teaching all of our children!

Families are welcomed to observe while school is in session. Please let the teachers know in advance if you would like to join our class to watch, share a book or an activity, or join us at snack time. If you or someone in your family has covid-19 symptoms or you've had close contact with someone diagnosed with covid-19, please avoid coming in contact with the children or teachers at school.

CONFERENCES/FAMILY COMMUNICATION

All parents with a child enrolled in LEAP will be asked to attend two conferences a year. Parents

may also request a conference at any time throughout the year. Conferences and less formal conversations are a wonderful way to share what has been going on in the classroom, with friends, with work and with teacher/student interaction. We strongly encourage parents to maintain open communication with the teachers throughout the year. This open communication will help insure the emotional and academic success of the child and provide the teacher with the information needed to help the child in all situations during the school day.

We ask that parents not engage the teachers in long conversations about their child at drop-off and pick-up time when the teacher needs to attend to the class. Please ask the teacher when they can have a conversation with you if there is something you'd like to discuss.

TOYS FROM HOME

Toys from home are not permitted at school and should be left at home or in the car at drop-off. Toys from home create distraction and can be lost or damaged. Please remind your child of this as often as necessary. We do, however, welcome items that are found in nature that are not alive, and will joyfully display these on our "Nature Table". These items might include: special stones, rocks or gems, pine-cones, leaves, beautiful twigs, sea shells, berries or flowers. Any nature item brought in by a child will be shared and appreciated by all members of our class!

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are an exciting and special time for children and we will celebrate the day accordingly. For your child's celebration parents are invited to provide a special snack (cupcakes or cake with water or milk - **no soft drinks please**), read a book, or sing a song with the class. Please talk to your child's teacher at least a few days before you'd like to celebrate your child's birthday at school.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of bad weather, LEAP will follow the Durham Public Schools' schedule, which will be posted at (www.dpsnc.net). Local radio and TV stations will also notify the public when DPS schools are closed because of weather. The teacher will NOT be able to call parents to notify them of school closure, and it will be up to the parents to inform themselves as to the Durham Public Schools' closure situation.

If Durham Public Schools are closed or delayed for one hour, LEAP will remain closed on that day.

READING AT HOME

LEAP is fortunate to have many books and we want families to use them! We have a library of books that we encourage families to borrow. If you are interested in getting more books, please let Dalia know and we will arrange that.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Our school uses photographs to document the children's engagement in activities to help them remember. Teachers also use these documentations to follow children's development. We will be displaying these photos on our bulletin boards in the classroom, and sometimes will send photos home via text messages. Once in a while we will use these photos on our Facebook page.

TUITION

Tuition is \$40 per month (with a valid Medicaid card or proof of reduced lunch), due during the first week of each month. If you need a subsidy to help you with the cost, please speak with the Executive Director. **We do our best to keep tuition affordable—parents are**

required and expected to volunteer riding the bus once a month (morning and noon) in order to maintain this tuition price.

TRANSPORTATION & VOLUNTEERING

LEAP owns a small bus, which we use to bring children whose families cannot provide transportation to school. The monthly cost for families using the bus is \$10 dollars in addition to the monthly tuition. Sometimes we use our bus for class field trips. Before hiring a bus driver we check their driver's record, criminal record and references.

ALL parents are expected to volunteer as bus chaperones and help the bus driver during pick up or drop off as part of their obligations with the Nuestra Escuelita community.

DISCIPLINE

As children learn the routines of the day, they will learn to make good choices and transition from activity to activity. The regular pattern of the day helps children know what to expect and how to interact with each other. At LEAP we believe that children inherently want to be helpers, follow rules, and participate in a positive manner with their peers. We use songs and quiet voices to redirect children who need extra help in any particular moment, and also help children find special jobs or alternative play situations if necessary. Throughout the year, the teachers will help the children learn to talk about his or her feelings, and create situations where children can dialogue with each other about problems and solutions. Children who repeatedly have behavior challenges during the morning, may be asked to sit with an adult volunteer in a quiet area of the classroom for a brief amount of time, but will not be alone during this time. Under no circumstances will any corporal punishment ever be administered to any child in attendance at LEAP. Parents will be informed if a child is having difficulty with any classroom routine with which we are not able to assist the child with as the year progresses.

Positive reinforcement is an effective method for behavior management of children. When children receive positive and understanding interactions from adults, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, LEAP staff:

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| DO encourage the children. | DO NOT spank, shake, bite, pinch, push or otherwise physically punish the children. |
| DO set limits for the children. | DO NOT make fun of, yell at, threaten or otherwise verbally abuse the children |
| DO model appropriate behavior. | DO NOT shame or punish the children. |
| DO modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur. | DO NOT relate discipline to eating or sleeping |
| DO listen to the children. | DO NOT leave the children unsupervised as punishment |
| DO provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior. | |
| DO provide the children with natural and logical consequences. | |
| DO treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires and feelings. | |
| DO stay consistent in our behavior management program. | |

QUESTIONS?

The LEAP administration, staff and teachers feel a deep commitment to each student and family involved in the program. We are dedicated to helping children succeed throughout their time with us, and beyond. We believe in and seek to foster the emotional and academic growth of the children left in our care. If at any time during the day, a parent has a question or experiences a concern, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the staff. Please be aware that the teachers will not answer the phone during the time spent with children from 9:00 to 12:15. Please do leave a message and the call will be returned as soon as possible. Thank you, and we look forward to a wonderful year!

5 LEAPS

Lenguaje y Alfabetización-- Hable con su niño/a; *hablar con su niño/a fortalece la relación especial que existe entre familiares y niños/as y además apoya sus habilidades del habla (hablar, cantar, contar cuentos...)*

Enfermedades-- Si su niño/a está enfermo/a debe mejorarse en su casita; *niños que están enfermos no pueden aprovechar las oportunidades de aprendizaje que les ofrecemos en la escuela, y además corremos el riesgo de entrar en un ciclo de enfermedades en la que se contagien los unos a los otros*

Aire Puro--“mente sana en cuerpo sano”, *los niños necesitan y deben tener muchas experiencias al aire libre en juego no estructurado, usar sus cuerpos, sus músculos y gozar de la naturaleza*

Pantallas—Deben evitar/reducir pantallas de todo tipo; *los niños aprenden cuando interaccionan con seres humanos ,tienen conversaciones con personas verdaderas que contestan y reaccionan a sus pensamientos, y no cuando están sentados frente a una pantalla cliqueando botones*

Seguridad-- Abroche a los niños a sus sillitas en el auto; *más de 2 millones de accidentes al año tienen como víctimas a niños y el mal uso de las sillitas del auto*