



EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Parent Handbook

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www.mustardseedelc.com**

“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.’”

- Matthew 13:31,32

The parable of the mustard seed provides one of the most visual and powerful images of the Bible. A mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds used by farmers. Almost invisible at first, it will begin to grow, first under the ground and then visibly. Although each change will be gradual and almost imperceptible, soon this seed will produce a flourishing shrub.

Children are similar to a mustard seed...they begin very small. Then, very slowly and gradually they grow and gain the skills they need to become young adults.

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center wishes to partner with parents in providing a firm foundation for children.

Purpose

The purpose of The Mustard Seed Learning Center is to provide a learning community in which each child is developing and growing in all areas of development – social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language.

Licensing

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center is a licensed Day Care Center through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and meets or exceeds the Minimum Standards Rules for Licensed Child-Care Centers. Licensing staff conducts inspections at least once every 12 months, and at a minimum, one inspection per year must be unannounced. The most recent compliance letter or compliance evaluation form is posted in the center. You may contact the local licensing office, at (210) 337-3399 and view/download the minimum standards at the DFPS website:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/about_child_care_licensing/

Our Classrooms

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center serves children ages 6 weeks through children who have completed the 5th grade. Our students to staff ratios are below the state requirements. From time to time, we may follow state ratios, but we will never be non-compliant unless under emergency situations.

Classroom assignments are based upon the child's chronological age. All children will transition to new classrooms the middle of August.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, or national or ethnic origin in admittance, education, or other administrative policies and extends to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the school.

Open Door Policy

We welcome parents at any time. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center is a privately owned and operated facility. We have the right to refuse service at any time to anyone.

Curriculum

The Mustard Seed utilizes a curriculum that meets each child's individual needs. The lesson plans are created around the continuum of objectives for Infants/Toddlers and for PreK.

Admission Policy

The Mustard Seed does not discriminate on the basis of age, religion, race, or sex.

Preferences for admission will be given as follows:

1. children presently enrolled or children of staff.
2. siblings of children presently enrolled.
3. children pre-registered.
4. children on the waiting list.

Families may pre-register by filling out the registration forms and paying the non-refundable registration/supply fee. Pre-registered children will be admitted as openings become available in the class.

A waiting list is maintained to fill any openings if there are no pre-registered students. In order to add your name to the waiting list, you need to provide the center with your name, your child's name, the child's date of birth, and a phone number.

Families on the waiting list will be removed after 12 months unless the family notifies the office that they would like to remain active on the list.

Enrollment Procedures

Enrollment application acceptance is contingent upon completion of the following forms including a signature by a parent or legal guardian:

- Enrollment Application
- Health Statement signed by a physician
- Vision/Hearing Screening (Children 4 years of age and older)
- Current Copy of Child's Immunizations
- Discipline and Guidance Policy
- Permission to Publish Form
- Parent Handbook Signature Page
- Tuition Agreement Form
- Tuition Express Payment Form

If there are any policy changes, written notice will be given. Parents will be required to sign and date a copy of the updated operational policies.

Prior to, or upon acceptance of enrollment at The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center, parents are encouraged to set an appointment to tour/meet with the director or assistant director and discuss the philosophy, policies and the programs.

Questions and/or Concerns

Parents may review and discuss any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures of the program with your child's teacher and/or the director. This can be done by contacting the director and asking for a conference. Many times, but not always, a conference can occur immediately. Through open communication, we can ensure that all parties are well informed and working as partners in the child's education.

Registration and Supply Fee

A \$125 Registration fee is collected during initial registration. Thereafter, it is again collected annually in late spring for the next school year. Open registration for the general public will occur after the spring registration period. Registration fees of \$125, with a maximum of \$180 per family, are due at the time of registration and are non-refundable. Children currently enrolled will not be guaranteed enrollment for the next school year if s/he is not preregistered by the deadline. The registration and supply fee is non-refundable.

Part Time Enrollment

Part time enrollment will be available as there are openings in the classrooms. There is the option of 2 or 3 days per week. The days must be consistent from week to week. For example if you choose Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – then it must be Monday, Wednesday, and Friday every week.

Withdrawal Procedures

Parent Initiated Withdrawal

A two week notice must be given in writing to the director prior to withdrawal of the program. Tuition will be charged for the two weeks after notification is given even if the child does not attend.

Center Initiated Withdrawal

The director may terminate a child's enrollment after informing the parents of the area/areas of concern through conferences and working with the family to resolve the issue in various ways.

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center has the right to refuse service to any family for any reason.

Court Orders Affecting Your Child

If there is a court order affecting your child, you must provide a Certified Copy of the court order to The Mustard Seed. Without the court order, Mustard Seed staff have no authority to withhold the release of your child to the other parent. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center will follow the court order exactly as written. In the event that a custody dispute takes place on our property, the local police will be called and asked to handle the situation. If a custody issue creates a risk for other children, staff or others at the school, The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center has the right to terminate care. Please note: Per Texas state law, in the absence of a court order, both parents have equal rights. The director may request a copy of the child's birth certificate.

Change of Information

Please notify the school immediately in writing of any changes in address, phone numbers, emergency numbers, child's diet, changes in home setting, allergies, persons authorized to pick up your child, etc.

Parent Code of Conduct

Please understand that young children are present in our building. Some adult language is not appropriate for young children. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center prohibits swearing or cursing on our property.

Threatening staff, children, or other parents will not be tolerated per Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center has the right to terminate care in the event of disruptive behavior from a parent or guardian.

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center must follow particular rules on discipline and guidance as outlined in the Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers. All adults, including parents, must follow these rules while on our property.

Parent Responsibilities

Children must be signed in and out by the parent daily.

In order not to confuse school toys with a child’s personal property, we ask that children not bring playthings from home. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center staff cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys. Two exceptions to this are a small stuffed animal for use during naptime and for Show and Tell purposes. You will be notified by your child’s teacher if and when the class has Show and Tell.

Confidentiality

While your child is enrolled in our program, parents may come across confidential information about our program, our staff, and sometimes other children. All information received from The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center must remain confidential at all times. Breaching confidentiality may lead to disenrollment.

Parent Referrals

We greatly appreciate your business and know that you will be so pleased with our service that you will tell all your friends and acquaintances about us! If one of those families decided to enroll their child(ren), we will credit your account \$75 after that family has been enrolled for 90 days. The referred family must fill out a referral form at the time of enrollment into The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center. Our greatest advertising is you!

Tuition and Fees

	Full Time	3 Days	2 Days
Infant	\$214	\$158	\$115
Toddlers & Early Preschool	\$197	\$146	\$106
Pre-K	\$189	\$143	\$101
After School	\$86	\$63	\$52
School Age Enrichment Camps	\$189	\$143	\$101

All tuition is paid by automatic draft operated by Tuition Express or by making payments online at tuitionexpress.com.

There will be no prorating of fees for missed days.

All tuition will be due in advance by noon on Tuesday of each week. If tuition is paid after that time a \$15 late fee will be charged. The account will need to be current by Friday of that week for the child(ren) to attend the center the next week.

If a payment is returned due to insufficient funds to cover the tuition, the account will be charged a \$25 fee. The account will need to be current by Friday of that week for the child(ren) to attend the center on Monday of the next week. If the family’s account does not have sufficient funds to cover the tuition two times in a six month period, the director may terminate enrollment.

A \$125 non-refundable fee will be collected at the time of initial enrollment in the center and during registration in late spring to cover the registration fees and supplies. A maximum of \$180 will be collected from a family with more than one child enrolled.

A family will receive a 10% discount on each additional child’s tuition that is enrolled in the center. This discount is taken from the lowest child’s tuition rate.

If a parent arrives after 6:30pm a late fee will be charged. The time will be determined electronically by the time clock which the children are signed in and out at. \$15 will be charged for any amount of time within the first 15 minutes after 6:30, then each additional minute will be charged at \$1 per minute that the family is late. If a parent is persistently late in picking up their child, the director may terminate enrollment in the center. This late payment will need to be paid within two school days.

Hours of Operation and Holidays

The center will be open from 6:30am until 6:30pm Monday – Friday, except on scheduled holidays.

The center will be closed for the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Independence Day	Day after Thanksgiving
Good Friday	Labor Day	Christmas Eve
Fiesta Parade	Columbus Day	Christmas Day
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving Day	New Year's Eve

The center will observe the holiday on the day that the government designates. If the holiday falls on the weekend, the center will close the Friday before or the Monday after the actual date of the holiday. Notices will be provided to parents prior to the observance of the holiday. On rare occasions, we may switch an above listed holiday with one that we currently do not have on the above list to accommodate as many family's schedules as possible. A current school year calendar with all the holidays will be posted on our website and in the center.

The center will also close for one day in August as a teacher workday to prepare for the new school year.

There will be no refunds or prorated tuition given for the holidays/school closures or weather related cancelations.

Weather Related and Emergency Cancellations

The Mustard Seed will follow the Northside Independent School District's schedule for cancellations or late openings due to inclement weather. Announcements will be made by text messages, email, on local television and radio stations if possible. There will be no refunds or prorated tuition given for weather related closings or emergency cancellations due to circumstances beyond our control.

Full tuition is due during inclement weather and emergency closings.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of an emergency evacuation, all children and staff will be transported to
 Our Lady Of Guadalupe Church
 13715 Riggs Road
 Helotes, TX 78023
 210 695-8791

If a neighborhood evacuation is ordered by the fire or police department, the center reserves the right to follow the evacuation orders and emergency location determined by the authorities.

School Safety Policies

Parents need to personally escort their child(ren) inside the building, sign them in or out, and walk them to their designated room. Parents are welcome to visit the center any time during the day to observe their child without prior approval. However, if you would like to stay and spend time with your child during activities, please see the office so we can do a proper criminal history check, as required by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Our facility practices fire drill at least once per month and bad weather drills are practiced quarterly.

You will receive an Incident/Accident report for all accident and incidents that occur here at the center when you come to pick up your child. You will receive a phone call for major accidents and incidents along with the written report at the end of the day. First aid will be applied to minor incidents. In the event that medical attention is required, we will notify you immediately. Parents are responsible for all medical fees.

Ready to Respond: Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan is available for parents to review in the office. The plan covers topics such as: Overall Roles and Responsibilities of staff, Center Evacuation Procedures, Medical Emergencies, Inclement Weather Emergencies, Fire Emergencies, Hazardous Materials, Threats, Suspicious Articles, Potentially Violent and Violent Situations, Disgruntled Person, Hostage Situations, and Missing Child.

Arrival and Release of Children

The Mustard Seed opens at 6:30 am. When a family arrives at the center, the parent will use their fingerprint or individual code to enter the classroom areas. Prior to 7:30am, children may meet in designated classrooms. Breakfast will be served from 7:30-8:15.

The release of children will be strictly monitored by all staff. Children will only be released to a parent or adult specified on the Release Authorization section of the Enrollment Form.

When an individual that is listed on the Release Authorization Form arrives to pick up a child, the staff will ask for the individual's driver's license or other official picture identification. Children will NOT be released without an official picture identification issued from the state. Children will not be released to a minor.

If the parent calls to authorize someone other than the individuals listed, staff may call one or both of the parents back using the phone numbers provided on the enrollment forms to verify the authorization.

Attendance

We request that parents notify the office by 8:30a.m. if their child will be absent. There is not prorated tuition or refunds for absences.

Children and Adjustment

Many children go through an adjustment period in the mornings and experience varying levels of separation anxiety. There are many children who are afraid to leave their parent or guardian, or to

have the parent or guardian leave them. There are many signs of anxiety and all are treated with respect and love.

The caregivers and Director have experience helping children adjust to their new environment and schedule. Please respect the caregiver when she asks you to say goodbye and leave. You are more than welcome to call the school to check on your child any time of the day.

Vacation Credit/Absence Credit

After a child has been enrolled in the center for 6 months, each child will receive a week of vacation credit each year. (If a child attends full time, this would be 5 days. If a child attends only two days a week, this would be 2 days.) A one week prior written notice must be given to the director to use the vacation credit.

When a family uses their vacation credit, no tuition is due. Vacation credit must be used by mid-August prior to the children moving up to the next classroom or it will be forfeited. Vacation credit does not carry over into the next 12 month period. If there is a balance on the account, available vacation credit will be used to apply towards the balance on the account.

Vacation credit may be used in place of paying tuition for one week while the child attends with at least one week prior written notification to the director. Vacation credit may not be split up for more than one calendar week.

School Age Enrichment students will not receive a vacation week due to the fact that children pre-register for the weeks that they will attend over summer enrichment, spring break camp and holiday camps.

If your child is absent for five consecutive days, you will receive an absence credit equal to one half your weekly tuition. Parents must request an absent credit in writing or by email.

Illness and Exclusion

A child with the following symptoms will not be admitted into the center or allowed to stay at the center following the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services codes:

- An illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in the center, **including outdoor play.**
- An illness results in a greater need for care other than staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of other children at the center.
- Oral temperature of 101 or armpit temperature of 100.
- Symptoms and signs of possible illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea (more than two in a two hour period and/or is not able to be contained in underwear or diaper),vomiting (2 or more vomiting episodes in 24-hours)
- A health care professional had diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

If a child exhibits any of the above symptoms while at the center, the parent or emergency contact will be notified to pick up the child. Upon parent contact, the child will need to be picked up within one hour. In the event of severe illness injury, or if a parent fails to pick up their child within a reasonable

amount of time, The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center may call for an ambulance at the parent's expense.

If a child is sent home sick from our program, they may not return until the child is symptom-free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.

If a child exhibits chronic symptoms of colds or allergies, including significant mucous, the parents may be asked to provide a note signed by a physician stating that the child is not contagious.

Well Checks

The Mustard Seed staff will conduct a visual check of all children upon arrival. If a staff member notices anything unusual they are required to point this out to the parent at that time. If your child has an accident overnight, please notify staff members when you dropping off so that we can assist in watching the child for side effects.

Medication

Please inform your physician that your child is in preschool and that you prefer to give medications at home, morning and evening. Knowing this, many doctors will order longer acting medications. Please remember, The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center is designed for well children.

If medications need to be administered at school, the following conditions must be met:

- **Medication will only be given at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.**
- Prescription medication will be accepted only if it is in the original container and hasn't reached its expiration date.
- Nonprescription medication may only be administered by following the manufacturer's recommendation on the label. Medication must be in the original container. (If the medication states to consult a physician, then we will need a doctor's note prior to being able to administer the medication. This includes Infant Tylenol.)
- Before any prescription or nonprescription medication can be administered, including sunscreen and bug spray, we must have permission in writing by the child's parent or guardian.
- Medication needs to go home after the last date that the medication is administered.
- All medications will be stored in a secure location in the office.
- All medication that can be given at home, should be given at home. For example, if a medication is only given once per day, it should be given at home prior to coming to school or in the evening unless a physician has given written orders to administer the medication during the day.

Medications will only be given at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. The center will administer non-prescription/over-the-counter medications according to the medication guidelines and instructions on the label with a signed medication authorization form completed. The medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's first and last name and the date that it was received.

A new medication authorization form will need to be filled every 6 months for each medication. The Medication Authorization Form can be downloaded from the center's website at www.mustardseedelc.com on the News and Events page.

All medication will be stored in a secure location in the office and administered by a designated office staff member or designee. Medication must not be stored in your child's cubby area, backpack, or diaper bag.

Staff will document when the medication is administered on the medication authorization form and the child's daily activity sheet. Medication will be sent home when it is no longer being used.

Accidents/Injuries/Medical Emergencies

All staff members are Basic First Aid and CPR trained.

In case of minor injury or accident, the staff will administer basic first aid. All injuries or illnesses not requiring immediate parental notification will be documented and reported to parents when the child is picked up at the end of the day.

In case of medical injury or illness requiring immediate professional care (emergency), the staff will call 911, giving location and nature of emergency. As appropriate, the staff will administer CPR or first aid measures. Parents will then be immediately notified. If parents are unavailable, those individuals designated as emergency phone contacts will be notified. **All children must have a signed authorization for emergency medical care on file.**

If a child ingest or comes in contact with a poisonous substance, the staff will contact the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The Mustard Seed staff are **REQUIRED** by Texas State law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services any instance when there is reason to **suspect** the occurrence of physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect or exploitation. The identity of the person making the report to Child Protective Services will be kept confidential. Our staff receive annual training on recognizing and preventing abuse, neglect, and exploitation. DFPS Child Abuse Hotline can be contacted by calling 1-800-252-5400 or online at www.txabusehotline.org.

If parents feel they need assistance with possible child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, we encourage you to get help. Please call the National Parent Hotline at 1-855-427-2736 or visit www.helpandhope.org/find-help.html.

Meals and Snacks

The center will serve a nutritious hot breakfast, hot lunch, and afternoon snack. All of the meals are prepared in the center and are planned to meet children's nutritional needs.

The meals are served family style. Children will be encouraged to eat, but not forced to. If a child has reoccurring eating concerns, the staff will contact the parent.

In consideration and safety of all children, we are a peanut free facility.

Breakfast is served from 7:30-8:15am, Lunch is served at 11:00am, Snack is served at 2:30pm or as soon as the school aged children arrive after school. Menus are available at the beginning of the month.

Children in a classroom with children under 2 will be served whole milk and children in classrooms over 2 years old will be provided a low fat milk. Water will always be available for the children to drink.

If a child has special dietary needs, the parents must meet with the director and have written approval from a physician or a registered or licensed dietician stating the child's needs, otherwise children will be served meals from the menu.

If a child drinks an alternate milk product (lactaid, soy milk, almond milk), there will be an addition \$15 per month fee charged at the beginning of each month.

No outside food or drinks should be brought into the school.

Infant Feedings/Breastfeeding/Supplies

An Infant/Toddler feeding plan shall be completed at least monthly for all children not on a complete table food diet. This helps ensure each child's individual nutritional needs are met during this critical time of growth and development.

Parents are responsible for supplying all bottles, formula/breastmilk, infant snacks, baby food, diapers, wipes, and diaper rash cream. Please label all items with the child's first name and last initial.

There is a designated family room in our infant/toddler building in which a parent may breast feed their child during the day. Parents may provide breastmilk for their child to be served while in our care.

Special Celebrations

Throughout the year there may be times in which a child's family will want to celebrate a special occasion or holiday. Parents will need to communicate with the child's teacher and/or the director if they would like to bring in a special treat. Some suggestions for a snack include: ingredients for a cooking project, fruits and yogurt, cheese and crackers, and muffins.

The center can only accept unopened pre-packaged items from a grocery store, deli, or restaurant. We are unable to accept any homemade foods.

Another idea for a special celebration such as a birthday would be to donate an item such as a book, tape or other special item to the center. The center would record the child's name on it so that s/he could receive recognition every time it was used. Other ideas can be shared with the director.

The center observes and celebrates Christian holidays throughout the year. Parents are encouraged to share any other family traditions or religious celebrations with their child's class.

Health Statement

Each child enrolled in the program must have a written statement from a health care professional who has examined the child within the past year, indicating the child is physically able to take part in the child care program. The center must have this form within one week of admission into the center.

Immunizations

Each child enrolled or admitted into the center must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health Immunization Requirements in Texas Elementary and

Secondary Schools and Institutions of Higher Education. This requirement applies to all children except for the students in our School Age Enrichment Program children unless they are enrolled in a PreKindergarten or school away from The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center. Their records will be on file at their school.

Child's Age	0-2 months	3-4 months	5-6 months	7-15 months	16-18 months	19-24 months	25-42 months	43 months but prior to kinder
Hepatitis B	None	1 dose	2 doses	2 doses	2 doses	3 doses	3 doses	3 doses
DTP/DTaP/DT	None	1 dose	2 doses	3 doses	3 doses	4 doses	4 doses	4 doses
Hib	None	1 dose	2 doses	2 doses **	3 doses **	3 doses **	3 doses **	3 doses **
PCV	None	1 dose	2 doses	3 doses ***	4 doses ***	4 doses ***	4 doses ***	4 doses ***
Polio IPV or OPV	None	1 dose	2 doses	2 doses	2 doses	3 doses	3 doses	3 doses
MMR	None	None	None	None	1 dose *	1 dose *	1 dose *	1 dose *
Varicella	None	None	None	None	1 dose *	1 dose *	1 dose *	1 dose *
Hepatitis A	None	None	None	None	None	None	1 dose *	2 dose *

*MMR, Varicella, and Hepatitis A vaccines, the first dose must be given on or after 1st birthday.

** A complete Hib series is two doses plus a booster dose on or after 12 months of age (3 doses total).

***If the PCV series is started when a child is seven months of age or older, then all 4 doses are not required.

Each child's immunization record will be reviewed throughout the year to verify that all immunizations are current. To assist in our record keeping, please bring in a new copy of updated immunizations immediately. This will keep our records accurate and we will meet the guidelines that we are required to follow. Failure to keep children current on immunizations may lead to disenrollment.

From time to time The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center may have children enrolled that have not received immunizations due to personal or religious belief. A notarized affidavit requested from the state must be on file for these children.

Tuberculin Testing Requirements

Based on local health department guidelines, proof of TB testing is not required in order to be enrolled in our program.

Hearing and Vision Screening

All children that are enrolled at the center and are 4 years old as of September 1 of the current year are required to have a hearing and vision screening completed according to The Special Senses and Communication Disorders Act. This screening must be conducted by a licensed or certified screener or a health-care professional and is the responsibility of the parent.

Biting

One of our primary goals is to provide a safe and loving learning environment for children. When a biting incident occurs, there are many upset feelings. When it does occur we take it very seriously and try to determine the reason why the child bit and try to extinguish the behavior as quickly as possible as well as assist in developing positive social skills.

Biting is not uncommon in early child development. It causes more upset feelings than any other behavior in group settings for young children. Parents of the child who was bitten, parents of the child biting, and their teachers all want the behavior to end as quickly as possible. As we know, young children up to two years of age learn through mouthing objects and people. Typically this does not continue after the age of three.

While using several techniques, most children resolve the biting behavior. However, should this continue without improvement, we must take further steps to ensure the safety of the children in our care. Therefore, we may require that the child that is biting find another learning environment that will meet his/her individual needs.

You may view our Biting Policy form on our website, www.mustardseedlc.com, on the FAQ page.

Nap Time

We provide a supervised quiet rest/nap time for all children except for the children in the School Age Enrichment class. Some children may need sleep; while others may only rest. Children are encouraged to rest quietly on their cots/mats and not disturb others. Children in the School Age Enrichment are given the opportunity to rest, which includes reading books, listening to soft music or books on tape, etc.

The Mustard Seed will provide all children sleeping on a cot/mat a Mustard Seed blanket. The school will wash all blankets weekly. You may bring in one special “lovey” or pillow for nap time if desired as long as it fits into your child’s cubby.

Clothing

We recommend that you send your child to school in washable play clothes that can get dirty. Young children should not be concerned with keeping their clothing clean. Children learn best through play and their play is often messy.

For safety reasons, we recommend that only tennis shoes be worn. Other types of shoes can often become a safety concern while outside on the playground.

The children go outside daily (even in the summer and the winter), usually once in the morning and again in the afternoon. As the seasons change, please dress your child appropriately (sweater, jacket, etc). Also as the season’s change, please bring in a different change of clothes that matches the weather outdoors.

Personal Belongings

All of the toys and classroom materials have been carefully selected to provide a high quality learning experience for the children in the classrooms. Therefore, we ask that you refrain from sending toys from home along with your child. If your child does bring a toy from home for show and tell or it is a special object that is needed for comfort during the day, it will be kept in their cubby when not used. We are not responsible for any toys or objects brought from home. Please label all items from home with your child’s first name and last initial.

Parent Involvement

Parents are welcome to visit the center any time during the day to observe their child without prior approval. Parents are also invited to volunteer in the classrooms, or share any special talent they may have. However, if you would like to stay and spend time with your child during activities or volunteer, please see the office so we can do a proper criminal history check, as required by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Parents may request a conference with their child's teacher or the director of the center at any time. To arrange a conference, contact the center's director.

Parent Communication and Notifications

Email updates will be sent to inform parents of upcoming events, and announcements. This email and/or newsletter will be posted outside of classroom and on the front doors.

Lesson plans are posted weekly outside of each classroom.

Daily communication sheets are completed by the teacher for each child daily. Please review the sheet daily. Checking the form will help demonstrate your participation in your child's learning and prepare him/her adequately for upcoming events and activities.

Water Activities/Swimming

As the weather and temperature permits, all children will have the opportunity to participate in water activities such as playing in the sprinkler and water table play. Throughout the summer, we will have an organized water activity each Wednesday along with sprinkler play. Each child will need to have parent's permission granted at the time of enrollment to participate in these activities. Our School Age Enrichment Summer Camp will swim at a public pool two times each week with lifeguards on duty.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is a regular part of the daily routine. Children should be prepared to play outside some part of every day. Please do not request that your child stay indoors. Per the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 746.3601, you must not admit an ill child if the illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child care center activities including outdoor play.

We recommend children to wear tennis shoes to school. Flip flops, other sandals, and shoes are not as safe while playing.

Discipline and Guidance

The staff will use only positive methods of discipline guidance that encourage self esteem, self-control, and self-direction. Giving children understandable guidelines and redirecting their inappropriate behavior helps them to develop internal control of their actions and encourages acceptable behavior. A supervised time out may be used for brief periods of time. There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child.

Follow the link or go to our webpage for a full copy of our Discipline and Guidance Policy. With your child's enrollment package, you are required to sign a copy of our Discipline and Guidance Policy.

Positive cooperation is required from the family when dealing with disruptive behavior. We feel that consistency from all parties involved is the best way to handle these issues. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center reserves the right to terminate care for the child discipline problems at any time.

Field Trips

School Age Enrichment camps will have a field trip scheduled daily. A notice will be posted at least 48 hours in advance of a field trip. The notice will include when and where the children will be going and the expected time of departure and return to the center. The Mustard Seed must have permission granted on the transportation section on the enrollment form. Individual field trip permission slips will not be sent home for each field trip. Children will be transported in The Mustard Seed's vehicles. ALL children and staff must use seatbelts and car safety seats as required by law. The director may find it necessary to cancel a trip at any time due to situations including, but not limited, to last minute changes or cancellation and/or weather conditions.

Animals

Many classrooms may have small classroom pets to give children the opportunity to care for animals and be responsible for them. Good hygiene practices and hand washing will follow contact with the animal/pet or items used by the pet such as water and food bowls or cages.

Transportation

Children will only be transported if consent is given on the Enrollment Application or a permission slip. Children will only be transported by facility or private vehicle with parent consent indicated on the Enrollment form or permission slip.

School-age children will be transported after school from designated public schools and on field trips during enrichment camps. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center does not transport children under the age of 5, except in emergency situations.

Gang Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty. The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center is a gang free zone.

Questions or concerns

If you have questions or concerns about our program, we encourage you to have open communication with your child's teacher and the center director. Through open communication, we can ensure that all parties are well informed and working as partners in the child's education.

The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center partnering with parents in providing a firm foundation for young children.



HANDBOOK FORM

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and read The Mustard Seed Early Learning Center's Parent Handbook which outlines the policies, expectations and practices of the center.

Child's Name _____

Parent's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____

Staff Member's Name _____

Staff Member's Signature _____

Date _____