

The Learning Garden

Parent Handbook

PHILOSOPHY

The Learning Garden, Inc. is located at 63 Hopkins Lane, Orleans and is licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care. The preschool accepts children ages 2.9 to 7 years old and operates daily from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Our school calendar of holidays and vacations follows closely that of the Nauset Regional School District.

The programs at The Learning Garden, Inc. are designed to enhance the development of young children according to their individual needs. We recognize that each child is a special person and we shall work to maximize his/her social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

Social development goals include helping children get along with others, sharing materials, developing a sensitivity to others' rights, ideas and belongings and helping children function as part of a group. Emotional development is fostered by helping children gain independence in making their own decisions, by helping children gain confidence in themselves and their abilities, and by helping them to learn expression of their feelings in a way that is in control and not hurtful to others.

Programs for physical development are an important part of our nursery school curriculum. Our programs are planned to include activities to increase muscle growth, both large muscles such as those used for balance, strength, and flexibility and small muscles such as those used for cutting, drawing, painting, pencil control and manipulation of small objects.

Goals for intellectual development include planned activities designed to increase the child's visual and auditory perception skills as well as his/her attention span, memory and thinking skills. We will make every effort to meet your child's individual needs. It is important to note that we do not emphasize the teaching of letters, numbers, writing or reading in a structured manner. We feel very strongly that the social, emotional and physical needs of a child must be met before he/she is ready for such structured academic activities.

The Learning Garden, Inc. offers a developmentally appropriate, hands-on curriculum centered around monthly and/or weekly child-centered themes.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

TUITION & PAYMENT PROCEDURES

The Learning Garden, Inc. is a non-profit, non-discriminatory preschool. The costs of operating the school are totally dependent upon tuition payments. Tuition at The Learning Garden, Inc. is charged according to the number of possible days your child can attend school. **Holidays and vacation days are not figured into this count.** This tuition is charged on a ten-month basis from August to May. Absences from any of the morning nursery school programs are non-refundable whether due to illness, family vacations or inclement weather. Days missed are not swapped but if space allows, extra days are available on a per diem basis and are charged accordingly.

For the convenience of parents, payments may be made in full or divided into ten equal payments. Each payment is due on the first day of the month. Checks may be made payable to The Learning Garden. If you choose to pay in cash, please bring the exact amount. You will be billed at the end of each month for any Childcare hours your child may have used during the month. If payment is not made by the next billing date, a \$10 service charge may be added. If full payment has not been made within 60 days of billing, you may be asked to withdraw your child from the program. Please see a Director or the Office Manager if there will be any delay in your payment.

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE

If it is necessary for you to withdraw your child, you must notify the school in writing as soon as possible. All withdrawals are the financial responsibility of the enrolled family until that space can be filled. There are no refunds for absences, vacations, snow days or withdrawals.

LATE POLICY

Preschool programs begin at 9:00 am. Any child arriving more than 10 minutes early will be placed in the early morning Childcare Program and charged accordingly.

The morning programs end at 12:00 noon. Any child remaining after 12:10 will be placed in the afternoon Childcare Program and a fee charged accordingly.

Preschool closes at 5:00 pm. If for any reason you are delayed in picking up your child you must call the school and you will be charged a late fee of \$10.00 if you arrive after 5:10 pm. If you are going to be much later than that, you are asked to have someone else pick up and you will be charged an additional late fee. Anyone who abuses this policy may lose the services of our afternoon Childcare Program.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE AT THE LEARNING GARDEN

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (Monday-Friday, 9am-12 noon)

This program's main goal is to provide a safe and nurturing environment where the children feel comfortable and can develop trusting relationships with their peers and teachers as well as developing important group social skills. Care is taken to insure that each child meets success each day, thereby promoting a positive self-image. Every day, children are provided a wide variety of hands-on, developmentally appropriate, child centered activities which all help to promote their intellectual, physical, cognitive, language and self-help skills.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM (Monday-Friday, 9am-12 noon)

This program places emphasis on all the skills necessary for Kindergarten readiness. Daily activities focus on the development of language, cognitive, emotional, social, motor, and self help skills. Emphasis is also placed on developing a positive self image and the ability to participate in large group activities.

A TYPICAL MORNING ROUTINE

9:00-9:30	Arrival/Free Choices
9:30-9:50	Morning circle
9:50-10:40	Teacher directed activities
10:40-10:45	Clean up time
10:45-11:15	Story, wash hands, snack
11:15-11:45	Outdoor play time
11:45-12:00	Music
12:00	Dismissal

TRANSITION TIME

Transition from one program to another program at The Learning Garden may occur at the following times:

From: Childcare (8-9am) to Preschool & Pre-K Programs (9am-12noon)

The children attending the morning childcare program will be greeted by a teacher from their respective program and walked to their classroom. In some cases, the Childcare teacher may walk the Pre-K students downstairs to their classroom.

From: Preschool and Pre-K Programs (9am-12noon) to Childcare (12 noon-5pm)

The Childcare teacher and assistants will go to assigned program and assist the children in joining the Childcare program. In this case, the program starts by getting ready for lunch. Any 1:00 or 2:00 Pre-K dismissals from Childcare will be walked downstairs by a Childcare teacher and remain until all children are picked up by their grownups. All later Pre-K and Preschool dismissals are picked up from the actual Childcare room.

From: Preschool Program to Pre-K Program

Throughout the year many opportunities are arranged for Preschool students to see and participate in activities in the Pre-K program. Sometimes the programs change classrooms in order to see the other classrooms and be with other teachers, some children eat lunch on different floors with different staff members and we have a Stepping Down Day for the children who will be moving from the Preschool Program (upstairs) to the Pre-K program (downstairs) to formally meet their Pre-K teachers for their next year.

From: Pre-K Program to Kindergarten

All Kindergarten teachers are welcome to visit the Pre-K class to see their respective students. Pre-K teachers talk to students about their visits to the Kindergarten classrooms and their bus rides. Teachers are very sensitive remembering that all children in this program may not be ready or eligible to go to Kindergarten the following year when these discussions occur.

CHILDCARE PROGRAM (Monday-Friday, 8-9am and 12 noon - 5pm)

The Childcare program is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of both children and parents. This program is supervised by a Lead Teacher with additional staffing as necessary. The hours for the Childcare program are 8-9am for anyone attending a morning program at The Learning Garden. Hours for the afternoon Childcare program are 12 noon to 5pm or any part thereof by pre-arrangement. This program is available to children 2 years 9 months to 6 years who have attended a morning program any day of the week provided space and staffing are available.

A TYPICAL AFTERNOON ROUTINE

12:00-12:30	Games, inside or outside
12:30- 1:00	Lunch
1:00- 1:45	Supervised free play, inside or outside
1:45- 2:00	Story time; Dismissal for some & bathroom for resters
2:00- 2:45	Quiet Time/ Resting
2:45-5:00	Arts & crafts, cooking, stories, snack, games, outdoor play
5:00	Dismissal

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REST TIME (2:00-2:45 pm)

The Department of Early Education & Care requires a 45 minute rest period be provided daily. Mats are provided for each child and parents are asked to provide a small, child-size sleeping bag. If children fall asleep they will be allowed to sleep until they wake on their own unless otherwise requested by parents.

TRANSPORTATION

The Learning Garden, Inc. does not transport children to or from school. In an emergency, if Rescue cannot come here, a teacher may transport a child to a physician's office. Any staff transporting a child in an emergency will have the proper liability insurance required by law. The child will be placed in a seat belt or car seat if available, and a second staff member will go along if necessary.

The Learning Garden is no longer able to provide field trips on a regular basis due to the number of car seats that are required for the age and weight of its students. If a field trip can be arranged, parents will be informed ahead of time and all children will be in car seats.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

One of our goals at The Learning Garden is to help children accept and understand limits. To achieve this goal, we reinforce positive behavior. When negative behavior occurs, the problem is first discussed with the child. If the child continues to have difficulty with limits which have been set, the child is separated from the group for a "thinking time" while still under the supervision of a teacher. These "thinking times" are of short duration and help the child re-focus on more acceptable behaviors. Once they are back in control, they are quickly invited to rejoin the group. The Learning Garden staff does not use any form of physical punishment in its behavior management, nor does it deprive nor force food as a means of punishment. No cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation or verbal abuse is used toward any child. A child is not punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.

TOILETING POLICY

Children are reminded to use the bathroom frequently throughout the day as they often become so engrossed in play that they forget. We understand that accidents may occur, especially in a new environment and no child is punished for having an accident. Children must wash their hands after toileting is completed. In the normal course of helping young children, teacher assistance may be needed to help button, zip, wipe and change clothes. The Learning Garden has an "open door" policy when a teacher is assisting any child in the bathroom.

ATTENDANCE

It is important for your child to attend school regularly. Children attending morning nursery school programs should be dropped off at 9am unless you wish to participate in our early morning childcare program for which there is an additional charge. If your child will be absent from any of our programs for any reason **please telephone the school**. Absences from the Preschool or Pre-K programs are non-refundable whether due to illness, vacation time or inclement weather.

An adult should always accompany a child in to or out of the building. Please be sure a teacher knows when you and your child are leaving the school, especially if leaving from the playground area. If anyone other than your child's regular caregiver is to pick your child up, The Learning Garden must be notified in advance either by telephone or in writing. The school also needs notification in writing of any change in home or business telephone and/or address for either parent or person to be called in case of emergencies.

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SNOW DAY POLICY

If The Learning Garden is going to be closed due to inclement weather, it will be announced on WKPE 104.7 FM, WQRC 99.9 FM and WCOD 106.1 FM. All nursery school and childcare programs are closed unless otherwise noted on the radio announcement.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF YOUR CHILD

HEALTH CARE PROCEDURES

Your child's health and safety are very important to all of us. Upon enrollment at The Learning Garden, you must file with us a medical form signed by your child's physician. Your child must have a physical every year, as well. We also require that your child have certain standard immunizations along with a lead screening

To help us from spreading childhood diseases, please keep your child home if:

- 1. he has a fever or has had one during the previous 24 hours;**
- 2. he has heavy, yellow-green nasal discharge;**
- 3. he has a constant cough;**
- 4. he has vomited within the previous 24 hours;**
- 5. he is fussy, over-tired and generally not himself.**

Your child may be sent home if he appears to have symptoms of illness during school hours.

Should your child become sick during the day, we will make every attempt to contact you. If we are unable to reach you or the person indicated for emergencies on your form, we will place your child in the office with the director until you arrive. Illnesses that the school would contact parents for are fever, diarrhea, eye infections, nausea and vomiting.

Any child having an infectious disease such as chicken pox, impetigo, conjunctivitis (pink eye), lice, etc. is asked not to return to school until the disease is no longer contagious. Notices will be posted on program bulletin boards when and if the school discovers a student has contracted any communicable childhood diseases.

Children who have been ill may return to school when they are able to participate **fully** in the programs.

*********Since we are a preschool program and not a day care center, and only half day for the majority, **we do not accept mildly ill children into our care.**

PLEASE NOTE: State regulations **PROHIBIT** any of our staff from administering any medications except by **WRITTEN** order from your physician (your prescription and/or original medicine bottle). Please fill out our Authorization for Medication form provided if this is necessary in order for any of our staff to administer any medications to your child. A log will be kept by the staff on all medication administered in your child's folder. Over the counter medications need written permission from a physician also. All medication must be in the original bottles and given directly to a staff member. Please do not put any medicines or vitamins in your child's lunch box.

EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE PROCEDURES

AT SCHOOL: The severity of the emergency will be diagnosed by the attending staff member and/or director. If immediate attention is required, Orleans Rescue will be called. The parent will be immediately contacted and if the parent is not available, your emergency contact person will be called.

If Rescue is not able to respond, a staff member will transport the child by car to a physician, fire station/Rescue, or hospital depending upon the severity of the situation.

By signing the permission sheets, parents have given The Learning Garden staff permission to take their child to the child's doctor, to the Fire Station/Rescue or to the Cape Cod Hospital if there is an emergency with their child. Staff will always attempt to reach the parent in any emergency situation, and preferably before any action needs to be taken. However, if parents or designated adults cannot be

reached, permission grants the staff to handle the situation to the best of their ability and to contact the parents as soon as possible. A staff member will stay with the child until the parent arrives.

ON A FIELD TRIP: The severity of the emergency will be diagnosed by the attending staff member. If immediate attention is required, the closest Town Rescue Squad will be called. The parent will be contacted immediately. If the parent is not available, the child will be taken by car to the doctor, rescue/fire station or hospital. If the parent or emergency contact person cannot be reached, permission grants the staff to handle the situation and contact them as soon as possible. A staff member will stay with the child until the parent arrives.

FIRE

The Learning Garden is equipped with horn/strobe lights and smoke detectors. Practice fire drills are scheduled periodically throughout the year. Children are shown how to exit the building in case of a fire and how to move in an orderly manner away from the building to their safe meeting places. This procedure is posted in both program areas. No smoking is allowed inside the building or anywhere on the property.

CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

In the case of a fire, natural disaster or situation necessitating evacuation of the building (chemical spills, bomb threats), the following measures will be taken:

1. Parents/guardians of all children will be contacted by telephone to arrange pick-up;
2. Announcement of evacuation will be made on the following radio stations: 99.9, 104.7 & 106.1 FM
3. If no contact can be made with parent/guardian, staff and students will walk to the Community Building at Tonset Woods and if necessary, will be transported from there by bus to the Town's designated evacuation center. A more detailed copy of our Evacuation Plan is kept in the office. This plan is available to all parents upon request.

In the case of a power outage, the school will remain open for the remainder of the day providing there is access to a water supply. The Learning Garden has emergency lighting and a portable telephone and staff cell phones.

In the case of loss of heat, the school will remain open as long as the temperature remains at 65 degrees Fahrenheit. If it does not, parents will then be contacted for early pick-up.

In the case of loss of water, the school will close as soon as all parents or guardians of all students have been contacted and arrangements for pick-up have been made.

In the event of a crisis to the building, the children will be evacuated from the building to the Community Center at Tonset Woods. The Office Manager will call Rescue 911 to inform them of the situation while the Directors and Teachers remain with the children. The health and safety of all children will be kept foremost in mind when dealing with any of these crises.

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SNACK AND FOOD

The Learning Garden offers snack time during the morning and afternoon programs. Children enjoy sharing their favorite snack foods with their classmates and teachers, so to provide them this opportunity, a monthly snack calendar is posted on each program's bulletin board. This enables parents to sign up for a turn to bring in a snack to share with the entire class (18 upstairs, 24 downstairs). Sharing snack is a wonderful opportunity to bridge the gap from home to school, especially if children are resisting

the idea of school in the beginning of the year. Birthday snack dates are blocked off on the snack calendars to insure each child has an opportunity to celebrate their birthday at school. (more info below)

Parents are responsible for sending lunch with children staying for afternoon Childcare. See the attached list for some nutritious lunch suggestions. It is important for children to eat well, so remember to pack the foods your child likes to eat and drink. Food not eaten will be returned home to help you gauge what they have eaten each day. Due to allergies, we cannot permit sharing food at lunch time. **NO CANDY, GUM OR SODA PLEASE!!!** Children are required to wash their hands before eating or cooking.

ORAL HEALTH POLICY

Teachers must assist children in brushing their teeth whenever they are in care for more than four hours or whenever they consume a meal while at school. Parents can choose whether or not to participate in this program by filling out the necessary forms. Those children participating in this policy will provide their own toothbrush and toothpaste in their lunch boxes every day they stay for lunch.

BIRTHDAYS AT SCHOOL

All children are given the opportunity to share a birthday snack with their classmates on a day closest to their actual birthday by blocking off a day on the program snack calendar posted on the program's bulleting board. **CHOCOLATE CAKE** and **CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES** are not acceptable. Please consult the snack list for an appropriate birthday snack choice. See a teacher if you have any questions on how to help celebrate your child's special birthday at school.

CHILDREN'S PERSONAL ITEMS

CLOTHING: Please bring an extra set of clothes for your child to keep at school all year for use when they are needed. Each item should be clearly marked with your child's name.

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothing. This clothing should allow freedom of movement and be appropriate for a variety of activities including arts and crafts, painting and outdoor water and sand play. Sweatpants and pants without belts are much easier for young children. Shoes with rubber soles are recommended for safe climbing. For safety reasons, children are asked to wear shoes at all times at school.

We try to be outside when the weather permits even in the winter months. Please dress your child appropriately for outdoor play including hats and mittens in the cold weather. When there is snow on the ground, please include boots and snow pants as well. Most boots are not appropriate for wearing inside, so please provide slippers, slipper socks or shoes for indoor play on rainy and snowy days. If your daughter likes to wear dresses and party shoes to school, please send in leggings or pants and sneakers for outdoor play times.

TOYS: We have many age appropriate activities for your child to play with at school. We understand children's attachments to favorite personal articles and their need to bring them to school, but

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we would encourage you to limit them to no more than ONE per day. These should be clearly marked with your child's name.

We especially appreciate items relating to our current themes, items for our science/nature tables or books which can be enjoyed by all at any time.

NO WEAPONS are allowed at The Learning Garden either toy or imaginary. It is inappropriate for children to bring money or other valuables to school. The school will not be responsible for any articles brought from home that become lost or broken.

SPECIAL SERVICES

If your child is on an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) and/or may require special services while attending The Learning Garden, the staff will do everything possible to meet the needs of your child while enrolled here. Parents will be involved in the development and implementation of all IEP's.

If during the course of the year, a Learning Garden staff member feels your child would benefit from outside educational services (i.e. language, motor, emotional counseling, etc.), a conference will be set up and suggestions will be made to help all children receive the best possible educational program to meet all their needs.

PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

Daily information about our activities will be posted for all parents to read to help initiate conversations with your child about his/her day. Bi-monthly newsletters will be sent home to keep parents in touch with upcoming events and other pertinent school information. During the school year, parents are invited and encouraged to come into the classroom to spend part of a day with their child, whether it be as a volunteer, assisting with a specific activity, reading books or simply sharing a hobby or special interest. All parents are welcome!! We kindly ask you to coordinate your visit with the Lead Teacher beforehand.

Twice a year parents will receive a written progress report of their child's participation in the program. Any child with a disability will receive written progress reports every three months. Any special problems that might arise or significant developments concerning any child attending The Learning Garden will be brought to the parents' attention as soon as they arise. Conferences may be scheduled at any time you feel the need to discuss your child or any issues with a teacher. This conference will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. Formal conference time is scheduled on a sign up basis in the spring of each year.

Parents are always welcome to make suggestions regarding the development of school policies and programs. This may be done verbally or in writing to a staff member or a Director. All suggestions will be discussed at Director's meetings and a response will be given in writing if requested.

In late spring, all parents will be given an opportunity to fill out a written evaluation on their child's experiences in their program to be returned by the end of the school year.

TERMINATION & SUSPENSION PROCEDURES

A child may be terminated or suspended from The Learning Garden under the following circumstances:

1. The health and safety of the child cannot be assured at the center;
2. The child's developmental needs are not being met at the school.
3. For any reason, at the request of the parents.

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4. If a child is ever terminated or suspended from the center, initiated by either the center or the parent(s), we shall help prepare the child to understand this event in the best manner possible. Written documentation of the reasons for termination or suspension will be provided to the parents along with information about other services available to the parents. Whenever possible, parents will be notified in writing, and at a face to face meeting, regarding the circumstances and the reasons for termination or suspension. A copy of this letter will be kept in the child's files.

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

In charting your child's growth and development while at The Learning Garden, records are kept. These records are confidential and privileged. They shall not be distributed or released to anyone not directly involved with your child's care without your written permission. If the child's records are subpoenaed, the parent will be notified.

You have access to your child's records and at any time may amend them by adding information. If you feel there is some inaccuracy in your child's records, you may request they be changed. A decision will be made, in writing, pending a conference between parent and staff member and, if necessary, the proper adjustments will be made.

Upon written request, your child's records or parts thereof will be transferred or released in a timely fashion at no cost to the parent. A log will be kept in the child's folder stating all the information required by the Department of Early Education and Care for the State of Massachusetts. Records are kept on attendance, health and individual development.

SOCIAL SERVICE REFERRALS

If this center or a parent feels their child needs a referral to a social, mental health, or medical agency, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Records will be kept noting the child's behavior or problem in log form;
2. These notes will be presented in a conference with the parents;
3. The parent(s) will be encouraged to make an appointment with the appropriate social service agency. A name and phone number will be provided.
4. A staff member will be available to help the parents if necessary.

Records will be kept on any child who is referred to any social, mental health, or medical agency in their own personal files.

POLICY ON CHILD ABUSE

According to the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, teachers are included in the group of professionals required by law to report any known or suspected instances of child abuse.

POLICY ON STAFF MEMBER ACCUSED OF CHILD ABUSE

If an allegation of abuse or neglect is reported by anyone to the center regarding a staff member, The Learning Garden will file a 51A on that staff member immediately.

The Learning Garden upon notification of the filing of a 51A report alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of this center would follow these procedures:

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1. The staff member would be dismissed immediately to insure no contact between child and accused staff member occurs. Staff member will be dismissed without pay pending the verdict of the case. If not guilty, the staff member will be reinstated with retroactive pay to the best of our financial ability. If guilty, the staff member will be terminated.
2. Department of Early Education and Care would be notified that a 51A had been filed.
3. The Learning Garden will cooperate fully in any investigation including notifying all parents of all children who had worked with that staff member, past and present.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING A 51A REPORT

Any suspected instances of child abuse or neglect will be reported immediately. If any staff member suspects that a situation of abuse and/or neglect is occurring to any child in our care, the following procedures will take place:

1. The staff member will document suspected incidences immediately and will meet with both Directors to discuss the findings.
2. The Directors and the staff member will meet with the parent(s) to gain pertinent information and to discuss the school's concerns.
3. The Department of Social Services will be notified immediately by the Directors by calling the DSS Hotline directly.
4. All information is to remain strictly confidential.

POLICY ON SUSPECTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Teachers must inform Directors immediately of any suspected substance abuse in a parent, a driver or another teacher.

Observations and documentation must be made by teachers of any suspected substance abuse. Directors shall determine whether

1. the situation requires further observation and/or documentation; or
2. the situation requires immediately intervention.

If intervention is necessary, The Director(s) or Lead Teacher will discuss the suspected abuse with the abuser and inform him/her of the consequences, which are:

1. The suspected abuser is involved in a carpool situation, parents of the other children will be advised by the school that the school specifically advises against this particular carpool and that the parents may discuss this matter with the suspected abuser if they want further information. This procedure will be documented and kept on file.
2. If the abuser seems incapable of driving his/her own child home, the school will
 - a. offer to call spouse or a friend to drive;
 - b. offer to call a taxi;
 - c. offer to drive the child and offending parent home.
3. If abuser is not agreeable to these suggestions, the Police will then be alerted.

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POLICY ON ADVERTISING IN SCHOOL

"Family to Family" bulletin boards can be used for advertisements of a personal nature as well as points of community interest. Any literature that parents wish circulated through children's cubbies must first be presented to the directors and approved.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

The Learning Garden, Inc. admits students and hires staff of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, cultural heritage, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, toilet training, or disabilities in administration of its policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

All enrolled students are at least 2 years 9 months and under the age of 6 years old.

THE LEARNING GARDEN PARENTS GROUP

All parents whose children attend The Learning Garden are automatically members of The Learning Garden Parent Group. It was formed for the following purposes:

1. the opportunity to meet other parents and make new friends;
2. the sharing and passing on of pertinent information;
3. to further the communication between teachers and parents.

This group sponsors social events for parents and children, fun family events, fundraising events to benefit the programs and a financial assistance fund, discussion nights on topics of interest and meets as often as is needed. Everyone's participation is encouraged!!