



Introduction

The Learning Tree (TLT) is owned and operated by Miss Marta's Inc., which was established on December 9th, 2009. We are a privately owned facility that instills Christian values; however, TLT is not affiliated with any church or religion.

Marta Jo Slater (Miss Marta) serves as the owner of the facility. She is a graduate of Marshall University with a B.A. and M.A. in Education. Since moving to the Wilmington area in 1997, Miss Marta has been quite active in the early childhood community, serving on the local, state, and national levels. In 2005, she was honored as the National Director of the Year. Miss Marta bought The Learning Tree in 2009 (formerly known as Hope Childcare and Development Center), where she served as the director. She has always taken pride in Early Childhood Education while creating a safe and loving environment for her students and staff. Her goal is to offer quality child care to the families of this area.

Chad Slater (Mr. Chad) is Miss Marta's son, who also serves as an owner and executive administrator of The Learning Tree.

JC Elrod (Mrs. JC) serves as the director of The Learning Tree. She has been working with Miss Marta since 2009. She first joined The Learning Tree as the lead teacher in the two-year-old classroom. Originally from Canada, Mrs. JC moved to North Carolina in 2004. Mrs. JC holds a B.A. in Elementary Education and French Literature. She earned her Early Childhood Credentials and Administration Credentials. Her son graduated from The Learning Tree in 2018, and her daughter is currently attending our school.

Amber Dyson (Mrs. Amber) serves as the assistant director of The Learning Tree. She has been working with Miss Marta since 2021. Mrs. Amber currently holds an Associates Degree in Early Education as well as her Admin Credentials. She has spent time as a lead teacher in the infant, one's, and two-year-old classrooms. Mrs. Amber currently has a son who also attends The Learning Tree.

Mission Statement

To ensure that each child feels loved **every day** at The Learning Tree.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to have the children and families that enter our doors of The Learning Tree sense love and Jesus as we build lasting relationships. We seek to nurture children in a happy, safe, and secure environment while teaching them scriptural morals and values through Bible stories that will allow them to develop strong Christian characters.

Spiritual Approach and Curriculum

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” -Proverbs 2:6

God has given parents/guardians and teachers the tremendous responsibility of nurturing the children He has placed in our care. We believe it is important to teach the word of God to young children. In faith, we believe that when we plant the seeds of God's word, the child develops wisdom and knowledge of God and His ways. Teachers implement a weekly Bible story into their lesson plans in addition to songs and blessings at every mealtime.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”- Jeremiah 29:11

The Learning Tree implements the creative curriculum. Our teachers also refer to the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development.

General Information

Staffing

At The Learning Tree, we strive to hire quality child care educators. All of our lead teachers hold their EDU-119 Education Credentials. All staff members participate in a continuous program of in-service education and studies for professional advancement to remain current with the ever-changing needs of today's families. We strive to create a warm, loving, happy, and secure atmosphere.

Hours of Operation

The hours of operation at The Learning Tree are 7:30 AM until 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday. We accept children between the ages of six (6) weeks and five years of age.

The Learning Tree has a strict drop-off policy. All children **must be dropped off before 10:00 AM** to prevent creating disturbance to the classroom environment and daily routines. If you plan to pick up your child prior to normal pickup hours, then please advise your child's teacher in advance. Once the child is picked up for any reason, including a doctor's appointment, the child **cannot** return to the center that same day. If your child will be picked up prior to 3:30 PM, then please advise your child's teachers.

Placement of Children

Children are placed in classrooms based on their age, according to the public school's cut-off date for kindergarten (August 31st). All classroom assignments are determined by the administrators based on Developmentally Appropriate Practices.

Pre- Enrollment

Before accepting a child for enrollment, The Learning Tree requires an on-site visit with the parents/guardians and with the child. A tour of the facility, as well as policies will be discussed at this time. If enrollment is agreed upon by both parties, then a registration fee of \$85 **and** a deposit equal to one (1) week of tuition **MUST** be paid **BEFORE** child care services begin. The registration fee is **non-refundable**. The deposit, less any owed tuition or fees, will be returned timely to the parents/guardians upon withdrawal, termination, or graduation. The registration packet must be turned in **one week prior** to the enrollment date.

Starting in a new setting is an exciting experience for a young child, but it can also be a difficult one initially. Even children who are very excited about "starting school" may suddenly realize that their parents/guardians are not going to be there throughout the day with them. The apprehension that accompanies that realization is a normal reaction.

It is important that Parents/Guardians familiarize themselves with the center's policies and procedures to ensure complete understanding. Please read the Parent Handbook and feel free to ask questions if you are uncertain about anything in order to help accompany your child in a smooth transition.

General Information

Contact Information

It is important that we have current contact information at all times. Your child will not be released to a person who is not listed on your child's enrollment information

sheet. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to notify the administration directly of any changes in your address, telephone number, email, or place of employment. All changes must be made by the administration in person. We can not make changes to your authorized pickup list over the phone.

Parent Involvement

Newsletters and emails are published throughout the year to keep parents/guardians informed of the “happenings” at The Learning Tree. Throughout the year, we will notify you of any special programs and activities. We encourage parents to help with special events and to become involved with their child’s classroom.

Extra Curricular Activities

The Learning Tree offers extracurricular activities for an additional fee. Children must be three-years-old and enrolled in the back building to attend extracurricular activities. Information regarding these programs is provided upon request. The programs are offered during center hours. The current programs available are:

- La Petite Dance
- Soccer Shots

Lunch Information

We ask that parents/guardians pack a well-balanced, healthy lunch from home along with a nutritious snack for their child. Lunch should include a cereal or grain, a protein, a dairy product, and two servings of fruits and/or vegetables. Milk or a friendly substitute should be sent for lunch. If your child has an **allergy**, then we **must have a signed statement from your child’s doctor**. Snacks should also be healthy (pretzels, crackers, cheese, fruit) with 100% juice or water. We ask parents/guardians to provide a water cup daily in addition to a drink for lunch and a drink for snack. This means that you must provide **three daily drinks** for your child at a minimum.

As an alternative to sending lunch, parents/guardians may sign up for our catered lunch service. A menu will be sent home prior to the first of each month. Each lunch costs \$4.00. If you would like for your child to order catered lunches, then please write on the monthly menu your child’s name and classroom, circle all the days that you would like to order lunch, and return to administration along with your payment before the beginning of the month or before 9 am daily.

General Information

Gardening in Early Childcare Education

The Learning Tree participated in the “Farm to Early Childhood Education Opportunity Collaborative” in 2019. We take pride in our gardens near the back building and herbs planted throughout our playgrounds. The garden helps our children learn

about how to grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs, as well as to take pride in what they grow and cultivate while encouraging healthy eating. We encourage all families to teach their children the value of developing healthy eating habits by exposing children to different foods and making fresh fruits and vegetables available at each meal.

Extra Clothing/Outdoor Requirement:

Clothing: Because play is a significant part of our day, clothing should be practical and comfortable. Clothing should not restrict participation in daily activities such as gym and playground times. **Every child MUST have TWO sets of clothes at school and a pair of extra shoes in their cubby or backpack.** Water activities, sand play, and even occasional accidents can leave your child in need of a change of clothes. All clothing should be labeled with your child's name. Please be mindful of the size of the clothes you are sending as the children are continuously growing.

Shoes: Children are not allowed to wear open-toed shoes, sandals, flip-flops, crocs, dress-up shoes, or cowboy boots. Sneakers and supportive shoes make running on the playground safer. Due to safety, if your child is not wearing appropriate clothing, they may not be able to play on certain equipment.

Weather Appropriate: Dress your child appropriately for outdoor play every day. This is an extremely important aspect of their development, and we want to make sure that children get a healthy dose of fresh air each day. Label jackets, coats, sweaters, and other items that might be removed during the day. Please be mindful that our outdoor learning environment is an extension of our indoor classroom environment. **"There is no bad weather, just inappropriate clothing."**

Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Center

We are extremely proud to be recognized as a breastfeeding-friendly child care center. The Learning Tree welcomes all breastfeeding families. We recognize that breastfeeding has many benefits for mothers and their children, such as strengthening the baby's immune system and lowering the mother's risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer. We provide a supportive environment for all breastfeeding participants, including staff members. Mothers may breastfeed their child at any time at our center. Additional information is available through the administration and infant room teacher.

Arrival and Departure

- Parents/Guardians **MUST** check the child in at arrival and check the child out at departure using the ProCare App.
- Take your child by the hand when escorting into and out of the school each day. A child can NEVER be left alone in a classroom, cubby room,

restroom, hallway, etc. Do not leave other children unattended in a vehicle while you are dropping off or picking up a child. Supervision is required at all times.

- Do not allow your child to run ahead to his classroom or the car.
- The Learning Tree cell phone free zone during drop-off and pick-up. Parents/Guardians are encouraged not to be on their cell phones during these critical times. This allows effective parent/teacher communication.
- For safety reasons, please make sure that the teacher knows your child has arrived at or is departing from the center.
- Establish a “good-bye” routine with your child at drop-off. A “goodbye” is much easier if the departure happens quickly. If your child is reluctant for you to leave, then our staff will be happy to help you through this transition. Just remember that it’s best to say “goodbye” and leave. Don’t linger because that can even be more stressful for you and your child.
- Parents/Guardians and authorized adults are asked to come inside the playground area to drop off or pick up their child when the class is outside. For the safety of the children, they will not be allowed to go outside the fenced area without adult supervision.
- If your child will be absent, then please call us by 9 AM to ensure that your child is safely enjoying their day with you.
- If someone other than the parent/guardian picks up your child, then please inform your child’s teachers or administration. All individuals who pick up children **must be listed** on the children’s pick-up list. A valid ID is required at pickup. If the person’s name is not written on the pick-up list, then your child will not be released to that individual.

Financial Information

Tuition Obligations:

Upon enrollment, the registration fee (\$85) and a deposit equal to one week’s tuition **must be paid before childcare services begin**. The deposit, less any owed tuition or fees, will be returned timely to the parents/guardians upon withdrawal, termination, or graduation.

Tuition is billed every Monday. If The Learning Tree is closed on Monday, billing will occur on the next business day. **Tuition is due by the beginning of each week before childcare services are rendered. Payments must be made using an**

automatic draft made payable to The Learning Tree by debit or credit card.
Receipts and statements will be emailed upon request.

Late Pickups

Children who are not picked up by 5:30 PM will be charged a \$10 late fee. After 5:40 PM, a fee of \$1.00 per minute will also be charged. If a child is picked up after 5:30 PM more than three times, then The Learning Tree reserves the right to terminate enrollment. **Late fees must be paid in cash to the administration within five days after receipt of the late fee notice.**

Withdrawals

Parents/guardians may withdraw a child from the program at any time. Upon withdrawing from the program, a **two-week written notice and full payment for the remainder of the term** must be turned into administration. Parents/guardians that withdraw their child **must pay the entire account balance when written notice is provided to administration.** If childcare services are terminated by The Learning Tree, then the entire balance is due **immediately.**

Returned Checks/Declined Payments

If, for any reason, your payment is declined or returned, the previous balance will be due immediately, accompanied by a **\$35** return processing fee. The Learning Tree reserves the right to temporarily or permanently discontinue care until/if these past-due balances are not corrected immediately.

Policies

Discrimination

Enrollment at The Learning Tree is open to all children regardless of race, color, sex, creed, varying abilities (unless unable to adequately accommodate), religion, national origin, or ancestry.

Confidentiality

Information about students, our staff, and the childcare center should be handled confidentially by all families. We must respect the privacy of our students, staff, and child care center. Any information or record concerning the business affairs of The Learning Tree, its staff, customers, or clients is confidential and restricted information. This includes posting information on social media. No one may disclose any such

confidential information to anyone without the expressed written permission of The Learning Tree. Violation of this provision could lead to immediate termination of care.

Photography, Publicity, and Social Media

Throughout the year, photographs of the children participating in our program may be taken and published in newspapers, magazines, websites, or other media sources. If you do not want your child's picture taken or used, then it is your responsibility to notify the administrator. If no notification is given within ten days of your child's enrollment, it will be assumed that your permission is granted.

School pictures will be taken in the fall and spring.

Animal Policy

The Learning Tree has chickens as well as an emotional support dog on site. Children do interact with the animals. All children are required to wash hands before and after interactions with the animals. If you would not like your child to interact with the animals please provide written notice within ten days of your child's enrollment.

Parking Lot Code of Conduct

Children are **never** to be left unattended in a vehicle, and we ask that you **accompany your child at all times in the parking lot**. We ask everyone who comes through our parking lot to follow the flow of traffic. Please use designated parking spots to park your vehicle. There is no parking in front of the dumpster or in front of the door to the main building.

It is very important to use the convex mirror on the post by the dumpster when driving around the front building to avoid accidents and watch for pedestrians. For safety reasons, please do not speed through the parking lot or the alley to the back building. Children are playing on the playgrounds that border the road to the back building. Dust and rocks can quickly fly up due to speeding vehicles.

Transportation

The Learning Tree does not provide transportation.

Policies

Smoke-Free Environment

The Learning Tree buildings and property are **smoke-free/tobacco-free** property. We do not allow anyone to smoke on the premises, including in vehicles, even during special events. This includes the use of e-cigarettes.

Nature Walks

The Learning Tree offers nature walk experiences for children. Parents/guardians will receive information regarding nature walk experiences prior to the scheduled trip. Children must have a signed permission slip to attend any off-premises activity. We strongly believe that spending time outside contributes to the good health of children. In addition, we believe that nature walks promote physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Inclement Weather/Circumstances

The Learning Tree makes its own independent decisions for inclement weather closings. The Learning Tree does not credit tuition for days it's closed for bad weather or unforeseen circumstances. Should The Learning Tree need to close for any reason, families will be notified via email as well as through the Procure application.

Babysitting

Please be advised that should you request babysitting services off The Learning Tree premises, The Learning Tree will not be responsible or liable for any acts or omissions in connection with such services. If a staff member or volunteer transports a child to or from The Learning Tree premises as part of babysitting services, The Learning Tree is not responsible for any injuries that may be incurred during that transportation. Please keep in mind that babysitting is a separate entity, and at school, everyone must follow our business policies and regulations.

If you choose to request these services, then you **MUST** sign a waiver form entitled "Waiver and Release for The Learning Tree Staff Babysitting" prior to commencing any such services. Your failure to ensure that you have signed the required waiver form or to otherwise comply with The Learning Tree's babysitting policy could result in the discontinuation of care for your child(ren).

Toilet Training

Children three-years-old and up must be toilet trained before entering the three-year-old class. He/she must be able to use the restroom independently unless there is a known medical or developmental condition that would affect potty training. Documentation from a medical professional is required to support this exception.

Medication

As instructed by the state of NC, The Learning Tree **does not** administer any medications except diaper cream and emergency medications such as Epipens and asthma inhalers.

Policies

Biting

Biting is a developmentally appropriate occurrence. We are proactive in providing resources for our teachers, parents, and children. Each case is handled on an individualized basis; however, continued instances of biting may lead to suspension and termination of child care services. If you have any questions or concerns regarding biting, please see your child's teacher or administration.

Emergency Information

All classroom teachers carry an emergency backpack during outdoor time and fire drills. These backpacks contain each student's emergency contact information.

In the event that Roland-Grise Middle School has either a "lockdown" or a "shelter-in-place," The Learning Tree will follow our "lockdown" or "shelter-in-place" policies respectfully due to our close proximity to Roland-Grise.

The Learning Tree practices fire drills, shelter-in-place, and lockdowns throughout the year. If you have questions regarding this policy, please see the administration for clarification.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or accident, we shall contact the parents/guardians. If no contact has been made, then we will reach out to the emergency contacts on your child's application form. If we cannot reach either and if emergency treatment may be required, then we will call for emergency medical assistance. Our emergency medical facility is Novant Health New Hanover Regional Medical Center, unless another facility is dictated by your child's application form. According to Health and American Safety guidelines, our entire staff is trained in CPR and First Aid.

Suspension

Children who exhibit unacceptable behaviors, such as endangering the safety and care of other children, as well as staff members, may be suspended or terminated (see Termination section) per TLT administration's discretion. If a child is suspended, tuition will still be required during the suspension period.

Termination

The Learning Tree reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of a child if a parent/guardian fails to reasonably support the policies and procedures of our center, including timely payment of tuition. This includes, but is not limited to, parents who do not follow all safety procedures, who display inappropriate behavior, or who are disrespectful, either physically, verbally, or sexually, toward any staff member, child, or parent.

A two-week written notice of a child's termination will be given **UNLESS** immediate termination is deemed to be in the best interest of The Learning Tree. The Learning Tree administration retains sole discretion in making a termination decision.

Policies

Illness Policy/Sick Days

The Learning Tree promotes a safe and clean environment by following the Division of Child Development and Early Childhood Education, Sanitation and Fire Marshall policies for all licensed childcare centers. We do not give reductions or credits for days your child is absent for any reason, including illness. Viral illnesses such as colds, flu, and other contagious diseases are common in childcare. To protect your child and to help contain these illnesses, we will not accept a child at the center if they show any of the following:

- Nasal discharge that is yellow or green
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- Complaints of ear pain
- Severe sore throat and/or cough
- Conjunctivitis (Pink eye)
- Temperature over 100.5*

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea - one diarrhea that cannot be contained in the diaper/underwear area, one diarrhea along with another symptom of sickness or two diarrheas contained in the diaper/ underwear area.
- Infectious disease - In the case of infectious disease (hand, foot, mouth disease, chicken pox, strep throat), please contact your child's teacher so that other parents will be informed of any communicable disease in the classroom.

Parents should exercise every precaution and keep their child home when other unusual symptoms occur. As a private child care center, the administration reserves the right to mandate an additional period of recuperation or recovery when they deem this necessary, even with a doctor's note. Daily Health Checks are conducted throughout the day. The daily health checks are based on the North Carolina Child Care Health and Resource Center.

Picking Up Your Sick Child

If any of the symptoms found in the preceding list are observed, then you will be called to pick up your child immediately. In the best interest of all the children, we also reserve the right to call you if we feel that your child is not feeling well (exhibiting unusual behavior, excessively irritable or tired, etc.) and ask that you have them checked by your pediatrician.

In the event that you are called to pick up your child, you must pick up your child **within 30 minutes**, or late fees will apply. Please be mindful that you have an emergency contact that could reach the center within 30 minutes if you can not make it. The center reserves the right to request a physician's note before returning. When you pick up a sick child, **YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE CENTER THE NEXT DAY**. Once your child has not attended the childcare center the next day **AND** has been symptom-free and fever-free without medication for a full 24 hours, he/she may return to the classroom.

Policies

Discipline

Regarding discipline, The Learning Tree follows the recommended guidelines and policies defined by the North Carolina Division of Child Development. Our guidance policy is designed to help children become independent and caring by learning emotional regulation skills. Our goals are to help children develop positive self-esteem, respect for themselves as well as others, and socially acceptable ways of expressing their needs and feelings. Our staff uses the following guidelines and techniques to help children develop emotional regulation:

- A learning environment that promotes consistent routines and well-defined expectations.
- Use of encouragement through kind words and actions (hugs, smiles, etc) to reinforce desirable behaviors.
- Use of problem-solving instead of punishment.

- Redirection to another activity when a child displays undesirable behaviors.
- If a child causes physical or emotional harm to himself or others, then the child will be redirected to our cozy area for a short time to calm down and to talk with the teacher about alternate, appropriate behaviors.

We believe the primary responsibility for raising young children rests with the parents; however, our staff strives to assist parents in the guidance of their children. We will provide feedback and offer help in dealing with specific behaviors in addition to implementing social-emotional resources.

Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect

All staff members must comply with the provisions of the Child Abuse Reporting Act by bringing suspected cases of abuse and neglect to the attention of the New Hanover County Department of Social Services. All such cases should be reported immediately to the administration.

Under no circumstances will The Learning Tree tolerate negligent or abusive behavior on the part of anyone employed by the school. The Learning Tree provides professional development training related to the prevention of child abuse and maltreatment. The Learning Tree does maintain a baby-shaken syndrome and head trauma policy that must be signed by all parents prior to enrollment. This policy can be found attached at the end of this booklet.

A Final Word

The Learning Tree is a Christian Education Program where the children receive daily reminders that God loves them. Biblical teachings, blessings, and stories are incorporated throughout the children's daily routines. Our goal is for children to feel happy, loved, and safe each day.

Thank you for your interest and cooperation with our program. We hope you will find The Learning Tree to be a warm and caring place for your child's precious years. If you find our program matches your family's needs, we would be honored to have you join us.

