



Introduction

The Learning Tree is owned and operated by Miss Marta's Inc, which was established on October 30, 2009.

Marta Jo Slater serves as both owner and executive director 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, she 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. Her goal is to offer quality child care to the families of this area.

JC Elrod serves as the assistant director of The Learning Tree. She has been working with Miss Marta since 2009, when she first joined The Learning Tree as a Lead Teacher. Originally from Canada, she moved to North Carolina in 2004. She holds a B.A. in Education and in French Literature. She has her Early Childhood Credentials and has taken many childcare classes. Her son is also a part of The Learning Tree family.

Mission Statement

We, at The Learning Tree, seek foremost to glorify the Lord and nurture children in a happy and secure environment, teaching them scriptural morals and values that will allow them to develop strong Christian character.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to have the children and families who enter the doors of The Learning Tree sense the love of Jesus as we build lasting relationships together.

Spiritual Approach

“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 and teachers the awesome 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 in the wisdom and knowledge of God and His ways. Teachers include a daily Bible lesson, so that this personal relationship grows and is enhanced with songs, Bible stories and verses. Teachers also use this time to present life application lessons that connect to children's lives in a meaningful, age-appropriate way. In our curriculum, we pray that God will be perceived as our creator and in control of our lives and universe.

“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

Racial Discrimination Policy

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

Pre-Enrollment

Before accepting a child for enrollment, we require an on-site visit with the parent/parents. A tour will be given of the facility and policies will be discussed at this time. If enrollment is agreed upon by both parties, a registration fee of \$85 (\$60 for part time) is due. This deposit is non-refundable.

Hours of Operation

Child Care: 7:30 am until 5:30 pm

Preschool: 8:30am until 12:30pm or 8:00 am until 12:00 pm

The hours of operation of The Learning Tree are 7:30 am until 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday. For an additional fee, an early drop-off time of 7:15 can be arranged. We accept children between the ages of six (6) weeks and six years.

The Center will be closed New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Good Friday and Easter Monday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Thursday and Friday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and four days yearly for staff professional development. One day of professional development will be in September for the North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children conference.

The Learning Tree admin determines the closings for inclement weather. No refunds will be given for these closings because full time staff will be paid for these days. School closing messages will be left on the school's answering machine, Facebook and television station.

Emergency Information

It is important that we have current contact information at all times in the event of any emergency. Your child will not be released to a person who is not on your emergency contact list without a written note. Also, please notify the office personnel and your child's teacher, in writing, of any changes in your address, telephone number, or place of employment.

If The Learning Tree would need to be evacuated from the building, we would bring all the children to Roland-Grise Middle School with our entire emergency contact file. Once evacuated, we would notify all parents by phone. In case of a street or area evacuation, we would evacuate to Childcare Network on 41st Street.

Financial Information

A fee sheet is attached to the application. Tuition is billed on a weekly basis. If payment of fees is delinquent for two weeks, child care will be discontinued until full payment is received. If personal circumstances prevent the payment of fees, contact the director to make payment arrangements.

Automatic tuition payments can be set up safely and securely through Tuition Express. This can be set up to draft from a bank account or credit card.

A fee of \$35 will be charged for any check returned due to non-sufficient funds (NSF). This fee also applies to declined drafts by Tuition Express.

After one year of enrollment at The Learning Tree, families of full time students will be eligible to receive one week's tuition vacation at the time of their choice.

Withdrawals

Parents may withdraw a child from the program at any time. A two-week notice is required. Parents wishing to withdraw their child who fail to provide a two-week notice will be liable for tuition for the two weeks.

Late Fees

Children not picked up by 5:30 pm will be charged a \$10 late fee. After 5:40 pm, \$1.00 per minute will be charged. This should be paid directly to the staff member who stayed with your child. **This amount must be paid within seven days after you receive the billing statement.**

Orientation

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” will suddenly realize that you are not going to be there. The apprehension that accompanies that realization is a normal reaction.

There are ways that you can help your child with this adjustment process. Some of these ideas will help you during this transition period. Children will sense their parent’s apprehension; therefore, it is important that you also become comfortable with the routine. Come and visit with your child several times before the first day of attendance. Learn the names of your child’s future playmates and the teachers who will be caring for him/her. It is easier for you to communicate with your child about the events of the day if you know the people with whom he spends his time away from you.

Know the center’s policies and procedures and ask questions if you are uncertain about them.

Establish a “good-bye” routine with your child. A “good-bye” is much easier if the departure happens quickly. If your child is reluctant for you to leave, our staff will be happy to help you through this transition. Just remember that it’s best to say “good-bye” and leave. Don’t linger. That makes it even harder for you and the child.

General Information

Arrival and Departure

- Take your child by the hand when escorting him into and out of the school each day.
- Do not allow your child to run ahead to his classroom or the car.
- Please make sure that a teacher knows your child has arrived at or is departing from the center or playground.
- Parents and other authorized adults are asked to come inside the play yard to pick up their child when we are outside. For the safety of the children, they will not be allowed to go outside the fenced play area without adult supervision.
- If your child will be arriving late or will be absent for the day, please call us by 10:00am.
- If someone other than the parent/guardian picks up a child, please inform your child's teacher in the morning, preferably in writing, and make sure they can present a valid ID at pickup.
- Leave a number where you or an emergency contact can be reached if you will be away from the office or home.

Sick Days

Since we pay our staff whether your child attends or not, we cannot give reductions or credits for days your child misses due to illness or other reasons.

Holidays

We do not give credit for holidays when the center is closed.

Inclement Weather

No credit is given for bad weather days when the center closes.

Lunch Information

We ask that parents pack a well-balanced healthy lunch from home along with a nutritious snack.

Lunches should include a cereal or grain, a protein, a dairy product, and two servings of fruits and/or vegetables. Milk **MUST** be sent for lunch. If your child is allergic to milk, we must have a signed statement from the doctor.

Snacks should also be healthy (pretzels, crackers, cheese, fruit) with 100% juice or water.

As an alternative to sending lunch, parents may sign their children up for our catered lunch service. A menu and sign-up sheet will be sent home prior to the first of each month. Each lunch costs \$3.75 and includes all the necessary components including milk. Parents who sign up for catered lunches need only send juice or water and a snack each day.

Illness Policy

Viral illnesses such as colds, flu and other contagious diseases are common in preschoolers. To protect your child and to help contain these illnesses, we will not accept a child at the center if he shows any of the following:

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

In the case of infectious disease (Hand, Foot, Mouth Disease; chicken pox; fifth disease; strep throat; please contact your child's teacher so that other parents will be informed of any communicable disease in their child's classroom.

Parents should exercise every precaution and keep their child home should other unusual symptoms occur. Due to the fact that we are a private center, the director reserves the right to mandate an additional period of recuperation or recovery if she deems this necessary.

Picking Up Your Sick Child

If any of the symptoms found in the preceding list are observed in your child during the day, 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 him/her checked by your pediatrician.

When you pick up a sick child, YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE CENTER THE NEXT DAY. Children may return to the classroom after they have been symptom free for a full 24 hours.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or accident, we shall contact the parents and the child's doctor. If we cannot reach either, and should emergency treatment be required, we will call for emergency medical assistance. Our emergency medical facility is New Hanover Regional Medical Center unless another facility is dictated by your insurance carrier.

Our entire staff is trained in CPR and First Aid according to Red Cross guidelines.

Medicines

Due to the strict guidelines by the state, The Learning Tree does not administer any medications except diaper cream.

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 Administrator.

Under no circumstances will The Learning Tree tolerate negligent or abusive behavior on the part of anyone employed by the school. The Learning Tree will provide staff development activities related to the protection from child abuse and neglect claims.

Discipline

In our approach to discipline at The Learning Tree we follow 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 self-control, decision-making skills, and responsibility for their own actions. Since children are a precious gift from God, we believe they should be treated with the same respect that we, as adults, wish to be treated.

Our goals are to help children develop positive self-esteem, respect for themselves and the rights of others and socially acceptable ways of expressing their needs and feelings. This is accomplished through positive guidance and loving, Christ-centered discipline.

Our staff uses the following guidelines and techniques to help children develop self-discipline:

- A learning environment that promotes consistent routines and well-defined expectations
- Use of praise through kind words and actions (hugs, smiles) to reinforce desirable behaviors
- Use of problem solving instead of punishment.
- Redirection to another activity when a child displays undesirable behaviors.
- When a children need to be removed from a situation, they will be placed on the teacher's lap, next to the teacher or on the Thinking Pond until they have calmed down.
- If a child causes physical or emotional harm to himself or others, the child will be removed from the situation for a short time to calm down and provide time to talk with the teacher about alternate, appropriate behaviors.

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

Staffing

All staff members participate in a continuous program of in-service education and studies for professional advancement in order to remain current to the ever changing needs of today's families. All of our teachers enjoy working with children. We strive to create a warm, loving, happy and secure atmosphere where your child will feel free to be himself.

Placement of Children

Children are placed in classrooms based on their age with regard to the public school's cutoff date for kindergarten (now August 31st). Although some children may be academically gifted, as educators, we must consider other factors, such as emotional and social development.

All classroom assignments are determined by the administrators.

Music Program

We provide a music enrichment program to all Learning Tree students over one year of age. Every Wednesday, the classrooms are visited by Mr. Mark, our music teacher, who plays instruments and sings with the children. Mr. Mark is apprised of teachers' lesson plans and strives to make his lessons relevant to the concepts our students are learning. Mr. Mark also plays at our Fall Festival and Spring Art Show. Our children adore him. He is truly a "rock star" at The Learning Tree.

Physical Development

TLT offers a weekly physical activity program called Stretch 'n' Grow. Although we encourage physical development daily, the staff of S'n'G presents a structured exercise program.

Parent Involvement

Newsletters are published monthly by both the director and the teacher to keep parents informed of the "happenings" at the Learning Tree. These newsletters can be found on paper in your child's cubby or lunchbox, or on our website at <http://www.thelearningtreewilmington.com>.

Our website offers several ways to stay on top of what's happening at the center. In addition to newsletters and announcements on the front page, there are parent forums in which you can interact directly with your child's teacher or other parents. We encourage you to request an "invitation" from your child's teacher to join our website. For safety and privacy reasons, all classroom galleries and forums are locked to members only. We also encourage you to "like" us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

We extend an open invitation to you to drop in often for informal visits. You are also welcome to come and have lunch with your child. Throughout the year we will notify you of any special programs, seminars or lectures concerning parenting and child care issues. We encourage parents to help with special events and field trips.

Parent/teachers conferences are held twice each year to review the child's progress and goals.

Toilet Training

Children three-years-old and up must be toilet trained when classes begin in the fall. They must be able to use the bathroom independently.

Toys from Home

Because toys from home can be lost or misused by other children, they are not permitted at the center unless specified by the teacher for show-and-tell or other class projects.

Clothing Policy

CLOTHES: Because play is a major part of our day, clothing should be practical and comfortable. Clothing should not restrict participation in the daily activities such as gym and playground times.

SHOES: We prefer that children not wear open-toed shoes, sandals, flip flops, or cowboy boots. Sneakers and supportive shoes make running on the playground safer.

OUTDOOR WEAR: 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, coat, sweaters, and other items that might be removed during the day.

EXTRA CLOTHING: Every child at the center must have an extra set of clothing and socks in his cubby or back pack. Water activities, sand play, and even occasional accidents can leave your child in need of a change of clothes. The clothes should be appropriate for the season and all clothing should be labeled with your child's name.

Photography and Publicity

Throughout the year, photographs of the children participating in our program may be taken and published in newspapers, brochures, magazines or other publicity materials. If you do not want your child's picture taken or used, it will be your responsibility to notify the director. If no notification is given within 10 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.

Cleaning Schedule

Infant and Toddler Rooms:

1. All toys are washed daily; cloth books and dolls are washed in the washing machine.
2. Cribs and mattresses are washed daily.
3. Closets and activity areas are organized daily.
4. Hand washing and diaper changing area sinks are cleaned daily.
5. Trash is emptied twice daily.

6. High chairs are washed and sanitized before and after each use.
7. Furniture is washed weekly.
8. Walls, windows, and dust blinds are cleaned weekly.
9. Classrooms are swept, vacuumed, and mopped as needed (at least twice per day).

Twos and Older Classes:

1. All trash is to be removed at lunch and then again at the end of the day.
2. Closets, cubbies, and activity areas are organized daily.
3. Floors are swept, mopped, and vacuumed each day as needed. (at least twice per day)
4. Tables are washed and sanitized before and after each use.
5. Hand washing and diaper changing areas are cleaned daily.
6. All toys and furnishing are washed weekly; cloth books and dolls are taken home to be washed in the washing machine. Other toys in the classroom must be sanitized.
7. Blinds are dusted weekly.

By using a rotating schedule, doing an activity are each day, we ensure that by the end of the week, all toys and furnishings in the classroom are cleaned.

The above list is not inclusive. Areas are to be cleaned as needed.

A Final Word

We are a Christian Education Program and we want the children to know that God loves them. Our Christian staff will be teaching the children all about Jesus and how He teaches us through the Bible to know and serve Him. It is our prayer that each child in our program will come to know Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior at a young age.

Thank you in advance for your interest and cooperation with our program. We hope you will find our Center to be a warm and caring place for your child.