



PARENT HANDBOOK

School Year 2011-2012

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Mission Statement

Morningstar Learning Center's mission is to provide quality care by promoting a child's development in a loving, learning, safe and stimulating environment.

We believe children have the right to expect that their play is respected as a valuable learning tool. Teachers will provide a rich learning environment in which children can explore their world, and be exposed to a variety of experiences to help deepen their understanding. We believe children learn best through a combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated methods, through both guided play and open-ended activities. We believe play is how a child accesses the complexities of the world, and is the primary way they learn about the world around them. It is our belief that through play, children will learn cooperation and problem solving, develop language, mathematics and social skills, and gain independence, self-direction and self-esteem.

Our Program

Our staff consists of one Director and a team of classroom teachers. We plan our months implementing the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines and benchmarks. Our classroom will be busy, fun, age appropriate, and focused. With play as our focus for learning and developmental needs leading our weekly and monthly plans we create a high quality program through fun and discovery.

Open Door Policy

Parents are welcome in the classroom to assist in crafts, reading aloud to the children, joining in or leading an activity, having lunch, or just to hang out. We encourage parents to inquire about their child's day and participate in it when possible. However, if your child becomes upset about your coming and going or if your visits become a distraction, we reserve the right to reassess this policy on a case by case basis. Please understand that your visit to the school is encouraged so that you may spend time with your child. Our teachers need to be attentive to the children at all times and we ask that socializing with teachers be kept to a minimum during parent visits.

Discipline Philosophy

Discipline shall include positive guidance, modeling, redirection, positive reinforcement, offering of alternative choices, and the setting of clear limits that foster the child's ability to become self-disciplined. All teachers will use these appropriate forms of discipline. **Physical punishment, including spanking or other forms of corporal punishment, is *strictly prohibited*** in all child care facilities in the State of Montana. Any punishment or discipline which is humiliating,

shaming, frightening, or otherwise damaging is strictly prohibited. This type of behavior will not be permitted in the facility by parents or teachers and could be cause for dismissal from the school.

Dismissal from Morningstar Learning Center

Morningstar Learning Center reserves the right to dismiss a child from our care for non payment of tuition, inappropriate parent behavior at the Center, parent's unwillingness to cooperate with the teachers when dealing with Child Behavior Problem Solving tactics, non-communication about important changes in the child's life, etc. Communication and cooperation is vital to the success of your child's experience!

Emergency Medical Procedures

In case of a serious injury 911 will be called immediately. Two stocked first aid kits are kept on site and at least one will be taken on all off-site trips including walks to the Big Sky Community Park. Simple injuries will be handled by staff who all hold current certification in Adult and Child CPR and First Aide. Staff will follow procedures of the American Red Cross or American Heart Association Training. In case of ingestion or suspicion of ingestion of a poisonous or toxic substance the Poison Control Center will be called. A list of medical emergency numbers is posted by the phone at all times. Reminder posters of first aid and CPR are also posted. All injuries will be recorded and reported to parents. Some injuries may require a parent to be called to come to the preschool to check the injury. In some cases an ambulance ride to the hospital or a visit to the doctor might be in order. A parent may be called on other injuries just to let them know what happened, or we may tell you about it when you pick up your child.

Illness Policy

In the interest of containing the spread of illness and providing a healthy environment for all, a staff member will assess each child's health upon arrival at preschool. Any child showing symptoms of illness will be excluded from the program under the following guidelines: *This is state regulated.*

- Children must be without fever of 101 degrees F or greater for 24 hours before they return to the preschool, except for children with immunization related fevers, who need not be excluded if they are not able to participate in normal school activities.
- Children must be without vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours before they return to the preschool. Vomiting includes two or more episodes in the previous 24 hours. Diarrhea is defined as an increased number of stools,

- increased water in the stool and or decreased form to the stool that cannot be contained by clothing.
- Children with any of the bacterial infections below must be treated with antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school.
 - 1-Strep throat
 - 2-Scarlet fever
 - 3-Impetigo
 - 4-Bacterial conjunctivitis
 - 5-Skin infections such as draining burns, infected wounds or hangnails.
 - Generalized rashes, including those covering multiple parts of the body must be evaluated by a health care provider to determine their cause before the child can return to the preschool.
 - Children with chickenpox may not be admitted to the preschool until their sores dry up, which usually takes five to seven days.
 - Children who are jaundiced must be excluded pending health care provider evaluation of the cause and authorization to return to school.
 - Children with symptoms of severe illness, such as uncontrolled coughing, breathing difficulty or wheezing, stiff neck, irritability, poor food or fluid intake or a seizure must be evaluated by a health care provider before they may return to the preschool.
 - If a child develops symptoms of illness while at preschool and after the parent has left, the preschool staff must do the following:
 - 1- Isolate the child from the other children.
 - 2- Contact and inform the parents as soon as possible to request that they pick up the child.
 - 3- Report communicable diseases to Gallatin Co. Health Dept.

Medication Policy

Due to state laws teachers are NOT permitted to administer any medication, prescription or non-prescription, to a child at preschool. A Lead Teacher, at their discretion, may administer medication with proper written or recorded permission by the parent. The State of Montana Medication Authorization Form must be completed prior to a Lead Teacher administering any medications.

Abuse and Neglect

As a Montana State Licensed Childcare Provider it is mandatory for our teachers to report child abuse and or neglect.

Fire Drills

Morningstar Learning Center will conduct periodic fire drills. A fire drill procedure is posted throughout the preschool by the escape route and our evacuation plan will be followed each time until no danger exists.

Daily Routines

Drop off/ Sign in – Please sign your child in and out on the daily sign in/out sheet,

Clothing – Teachers will always encourage a child to dress themselves. If a child requires assistance, the teacher will describe what they are doing. This will give the child the opportunity to learn these skills so that he/she will eventually be able to perform this task independently.

Meals – Teachers will encourage children before, during, & after meals to:

- Wash hands (before and after meal).
- Engage in appropriate conversation.
- Learn appropriate table manners.
- Clean up after them selves.
- Use the bathroom after each meal.

Hand washing – Teachers will assist children in washing their hands before and after meals, after using the bathroom and after playing outside.

Nap and Rest time – Morningstar Learning Center does have a scheduled nap time followed by a rest time for the older children. If a child needs to sleep our teachers are respectful of this and will provide an appropriate place in which a child can get some needed rest.

Cleaning of facility/ sanitation – A clean environment is essential. Teachers clean and sanitize the center on a daily basis.

Pick up – This is a good time to speak with a teacher about your child's day. **If a teacher does not recognize the parent, under no circumstance will they allow a child to leave with this person. The teacher will check the person's identification and check the child's registration form to be sure the person is on the approved pick up list provided by the parent. If someone who is not on the approved list will be picking up your child we do require written notice and instructions. The staff will also check their identification when picking up your child.**

Communication

Morningstar has always operated with a “green” mindset. In an effort to continue to teach our students and community members about living green, we are trying to eliminate paper use in the school. We will have a monthly Newsletter that will be available at the school but will also be emailed to you. The phone is a great place to contact us and please feel free to call any time. If a teacher is busy a message will be taken and they will get back to you at their earliest convenience. Last but not least, email will be a constant way in which we will communicate. A non-internet form of communication will be posted on the bulletin board in the classroom. Please take the time to look around and read notices and announcements at pick up and drop off. Please call the school as soon as you can when your child is not going to be at school or you are going to be late.

Nutrition

Morningstar Learning Center has always been a strong supporter of proper nutrition in the classroom and demonstrating good eating behaviors. All students are required to bring with them every day a morning snack, a lunch and an afternoon snack. The State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers Requires the following guidelines for nutrition in a licensed facility:

- ✓ Snacks must include two of the following food components: fruit, vegetable or 100% fruit or vegetable juice; bread or bread alternative; milk or dairy; or meat/meat alternative.
- ✓ Lunch must include one serving of meat or meat alternative, two vegetables or fruits, one serving of bread or bread alternative and one serving of milk or dairy.

Please follow these guidelines when packing your child’s lunch and snacks. Failure to provide your child with adequate food will result in discussions regarding the nutrition of your child. As teachers, we will make sure your child is getting the adequate servings in each snack and lunch. If MLC staff members have to provide your child with proper food to meet these state mandated rules, **a charge will be applied to the monthly statement in order to cover costs of providing such servings for your child.** We also require each child to provide their own water bottle with their name on it. Each student is given a spot to keep their water bottles and are encouraged to refill their water bottle as the day progresses.

Scholarship Assistance

Morningstar Learning Center is proud to offer assistance to families in the community to help with the cost of child care. At the beginning of each new semester (Fall, winter, & summer) families will need to complete the MLC scholarship application and submit it for review. In order to provide assistance to so many families, MLC hopes to have more parent involvement throughout the year. **If scholarship assistance is awarded, MLC families are required to**

volunteer 3 Hours of volunteer time to MLC within 3 months of the award, unless other arrangements have been made prior to the end of the 3 month period. This volunteer time can be distributed in numerous ways throughout the year. Examples of volunteer work are: Fundraising help such as volunteering extra time at Date Nights, at the annual events or at Farmers markets; volunteering to assist in the classroom by reading stories or helping teachers with projects or teacher breaks. After awards have been assigned, the Director will contact you to arrange volunteer time.

Miscellaneous

Phone Use/ Social Visits – Teachers are instructed to turn off cell phones during work hours. If you need to speak with a teacher about something that is unrelated to the Center, a message will be taken. Teachers are paid to work with the children and not to arrange babysitting jobs, etc. A teacher's primary concern is the children and if they are distracted by parents about unrelated school items, they are not doing their job and may be dismissed from their employment.

Parent/Teacher Relationships – Must remain professional. During school hours the teacher and parent relationship must remain just that regardless of how you spend your time outside of the Center. Big Sky is a small town – gossiping by parents, or teachers, is unacceptable and inappropriate for little ears.

Babysitting - Morningstar Learning Center is an academic environment NOT a babysitting service. Teachers are NOT permitted to make babysitting arrangements during business hours. Their focus needs to be on the children and their job at hand, not on another job.

Chain of Command - The Director, Whitney McKenzie, is under direct guidance of the Morningstar Learning Center Board of Directors. All teachers are under direct guidance of the Director. All issues pertaining to enrollment, billing, payments, etc. should be directed to the Director. All issues pertaining to curriculum, your child's day, etc. should be directed to the teachers. If you feel your concern has not been taken care of, please feel free to contact the Director.

Transportation and Trips – Morningstar Learning Center does not provide transportation. You will be notified in advance if we plan to do any special field trips. You will be provided with a permission slip explaining the event, which is to be completed and returned prior to the date of the trip. Volunteers for transporting children for field trips may be requested when needed.