

2016/2017



SCHOOL HANDBOOK

The Tree House preschool is a nurturing and creative preschool that encourages the social development and individual potential of children ages 2 to 5 years old through play-based, active learning. This handbook provides insight into our philosophy as well as helpful procedural and program information for parents.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to The Tree House. We look forward to an exciting year together as we observe your child's growth and development through the ever-changing experiences he/she will have.

This handbook explains many of our policies and procedures. Its purpose is to provide you with the day-to-day practical information you will need throughout the upcoming year. Please read this handbook carefully now and share it with your caregiver (if appropriate). Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. We work very hard to keep the lines of communication open to work with you on behalf of your children. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and hope you will refer to this handbook throughout the year. Your continued support and active involvement is what makes our program at The Tree House unique.

Sincerely,

Jen Nowack, Director
The Board of Directors

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Introduction

The Tree House is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Basking Ridge. It is under the direction of a Board of Directors which includes members of the Church, the Church staff, center parents, and the director of The Tree House.

The Tree House experience is designed to compliment family life. We encourage frequent and open communication with parents. Our goal is to provide a quality learning experience which will enhance the intellectual, social, spiritual, emotional and physical development of each child.

The Tree House offers full-day and half-day programs for children ages 2 to 5. Children may participate in the full-day program from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM everyday, or they may attend a half-day program from 8:45 AM to 12:45 PM on a full or part-time basis.

History of The Tree House

The concept of the establishment of a preschool was proposed to the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Basking Ridge in the spring of 1982 by Church member Beeb Jackson. The Session approved of the idea and the Trustees concurred if a minimum of eighteen children enrolled.

Although shy of eighteen students, the Session agreed to open the school as a way to meet the needs of working parents in the community.

Today, The Tree House has approximately 24 staff members and serves approximately 120 children from ages 2 to 5. It provides full and half day programs for preschool. The Tree House continues its original dedication to providing nurturing, stimulating, and developmentally appropriate enrichment to the children enrolled in the program.

Philosophy

It is the goal of The Tree House to provide a quality pre-school and childcare center to meet the needs of the families in the community. Its purpose is to operate a professionally staffed, state certified, Christian center. At The Tree House, we encourage the development of the individual potential within each child with the goal of helping that child to achieve a positive self-image.

The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. Learning is not just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn first hand about the world in which we live.

In their early years, children explore the world around them by using their five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste). In using real materials such as manipulatives, and through observation and experimentation, children learn about sizes, shapes, colors, sounds and numbers and they notice relationships between things.

In time, children learn to use one object to stand for another. This is the beginning of symbolic thinking. These early symbols are similar in shape to the objects they represent. Eventually, children become more and more able to use abstract symbols, like words, to describe their

thoughts and feelings. They learn to “read” pictures which are symbols for real people, places and things. This exciting development in symbolic thinking takes place during the preschool years as children play.

“Play” provides the foundation for academic or “school” learning. It is the preparation children need before they learn highly abstract concepts such as interpretive reasoning, sounds and number concepts. “Play” enables us to achieve the key goals of our early childhood curriculum. **“Play” is the work of young children.**

The Tree House strives to provide a warm and nurturing community that is loving and supportive of each child’s own learning. Our goal is to provide an experience that is fun, educational, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate for the children.

Registration/Applications

Our program is open to children of all faiths and denominations. Registration begins in January for the upcoming year. Children must be the appropriate age and meet the cut-off dates (October 1st) for a class in order to be enrolled in it.

Priority registration is given to existing Tree House children, their siblings and members of the Presbyterian Church of Basking Ridge. Applications are then accepted from anyone interested in attending The Tree House.

Class placement is determined at the Director’s discretion. All class sizes are limited. Minimums must be met for a class to run.

The Registration Process includes completion of registration forms, payment of a *non-refundable* application fee and payment of one month’s tuition. For additional information, please see Tuition Policy.

Tuition Policy

School tuition, payable in monthly installments, is set by The Tree House Board of Director’s in accordance with the programs being offered. School tuition is designed to cover expenses within the contracted enrollment. The following policies pertain to tuition and associated extra fees:

At the time of registration, one month’s tuition is due. Thereafter, monthly tuition payments are due one month in advance on the first of each month. Checks should be made payable to The Tree House and mailed or delivered to The Tree House office. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, a late fee of \$15.00 will be imposed. Should payment not be received by the 10th of the month, the child will not be permitted to continue in the school’s programs. The participant will, however, continue to be responsible for any outstanding tuition payments and fees.

In the event a check is returned by a bank due to insufficient funds, a \$25.00 service charge will be imposed.

There is no childcare *before 7:30 AM or after 6:00 PM.*

A late fee of \$15.00 per quarter hour or part will be imposed for pickups after the normal closing. This is 12:45 PM for the morning session and 6:00 PM for the afternoon session. Tardiness in excess of three may result in dismissal from the program.

Children staying on an unscheduled basis will be charged at the rate of \$16.00 per hour. In order for your child to stay extra hours, prior approval is required from the Director.

All extra fees are payable at the end of the month in which they were accrued.

No refund of payment will be given in the event of: (1) withdrawal of pupil without one month's written notice; (2) change of schedule unless approval has been received one month in advance from the Director; (3) withdrawal of pupil after April 1st for the current Sept.-June contract; (4) absence occurring at any time during the school year regardless of reason (including, but not restricted to, holidays, illness or weather related school closing); (5) no refunds or changes may be made after June 1st for the Summer Camp Program; and (6) withdrawal after June 1st for the following September admission. Refunds will be mailed within 60 days of notice.

Tuition is charged strictly according to the tuition schedule. Any deviation from this schedule will be computed in terms of half and full days attended and not extra hours. The tuition cost will be set by the Director and The Tree House Board.

Once a schedule of attendance days has been established for the child, as documented in the individual's contract, *no substitution or exchange of days within a month shall be permitted and all changes in contracted days and additional days require approval from the Director in advance.*

Tuition Schedule

Tuition	Due
September Tuition	At time of Registration
October Tuition	September 1st
November Tuition	October 1st
December Tuition	November 1st
January Tuition	December 1st
February Tuition	January 1st
March Tuition	February 1st
April Tuition	March 1st
May Tuition	April 1st
June Tuition	May 1st

Role of Parents

Upon arrival and dismissal, every child, regardless of age, is required to be accompanied by an adult up the path and into the classroom to the teacher. In the afternoon, parents must come into

the building to pick up a child. It is in everyone's best interest that children are picked up promptly. A late fee will be imposed for pick-up after the normal closing time of the program in which your child is enrolled (See Tuition Policy). Parents who are continuously late for pick up will be contacted by the Director, and, if necessary, asked to remove their child from the program.

For the safety of your child, parents are asked to park in the Allen Street parking lot next to Finley Avenue and not along Finley Avenue. The parking lot in front of the playground is reserved for staff parking only. **No vehicles may drive up the path through the cemetery or park in designated fire lanes.**

The cemetery that we walk through to get to the Tree House is extremely old. We request that you be diligent in keeping your children off of the grass, encouraging them to walk on the paved areas only. Some of the gravestones are extremely old and delicate and could be knocked over with the slightest push. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Parents are invited to participate in the program as much as possible. If parents have any special talents, hobbies, or interests that they would like to share with the children, we encourage them to make arrangements with the teacher.

Tree House Parent Organization

THPO had its first inception in November of 2009. Parents have the opportunity to get involved in fund raising events, staff recognition, school assistance and seasonal decorating. Getting involved in THPO is a wonderful opportunity to make social connections while providing avenues for the school to offer the best it can to its children and community.

Communication Policy

The Tree House believes that communication between home and school is vital to a successful preschool program. Because of this, The Tree House communicates in many different ways with their families.

To begin with, for school-wide, non-emergency information, The Tree House will communicate with parents using email, telephone, The Tree House website, parent orientation, Back to School Night and notices sent home in children's backpacks.

Classroom information is also communicated in many different ways to the parents. At the beginning of the month, parents receive a calendar highlighting specific activities, themes, etc. for the month. In addition, weekly newsletters are provided to the parents at the end of each week. At the end of the day, each teacher will place a note on the white board outside the classroom so that parents will know what activities were included in the day. For our two year olds, parents will receive a daily note regarding their child's school day. Finally, please be sure to check the contents of your child's school bag each night so that you can find important notes, art projects, and so forth.

Often times, parents have questions regarding their own child. We ask that during arrival and dismissal times, staff members must devote full attention to all of the children. Please keep conversations brief. If you need to communicate specific information, a written note or email is preferred.

Parent-teacher conferences are held two times per school year (fall and spring). Each conference is a time for parents and teachers to have an opportunity to discuss the growth and development of the child. If, at any time, you have special concerns, please feel free to contact your child's teacher – use email, send a note, or call the office to leave a message. Teachers have prep time from 1:00 – 2:00 PM on the days your child attends The Tree House and can accept your call at that time. If you have a message for a teacher during school hours, please call or email the office, and we will relay the message. The teacher will respond as soon as possible.

Finally, please do not discuss problems or concerns in the presence of your child or other parents. Please communicate with the teacher about any changes at home or within the family (i.e., parent on a trip, family member in the hospital, sick grandparent). These changes can affect your child's behavior, and it is useful for staff to be aware of these developments. The Tree House will always respect your privacy.

Home Language Policy

The Tree House welcomes families of all backgrounds. We make every effort to ease communication challenges when we have children who speak a different language in their homes. Our staff encourages children to use their home language, gestures, communication devices (if appropriate and provided by the parent), sign language and pictures to communicate when needed. If necessary, parents may be asked to provide age appropriate materials that will assist in the communication process.

Absence Policy

If your child is going to be out of school for any reason, please let the office know. For illnesses, this is especially important so that we can inform families of any communicable disease symptoms while maintaining confidentiality. In addition, teachers and children miss a child when they are absent, so they would like to know that the child is okay.

The Tree House is required to track and monitor attendance. Because of this, we will contact families when a child is absent more than 3 consecutive days if we have not had communication from the family regarding the absence.

Arrivals and Departures (signing in and out)

1. Parents must accompany their child to their classroom and complete the Daily Sign-In Sheet. Then, parents should speak directly to a classroom teacher to let them know verbally that their child is here and ready for school.
2. Parents must pick-up their child in their classroom and complete the Daily Sign-Out Sheet. After signing out, parents should greet their child and verbally acknowledge that they are picking up their child.
 - ❖ At that time, the teachers and the Center are no longer responsible for your child. Please be sure that you know where your child is at all times.

For safety purposes, children are only released to their parents or individuals on the Emergency Contact Form. If someone other than a parent will be picking up the child, please ensure his/her name is on the Emergency Form or provide a note to the child's teacher with the designated pick up person's name on it. Also, please ensure that the individual brings a valid photo ID.

For security reasons, the doors to the school will remain locked. Parents will receive a key card to open the doors at the beginning of the school year. If the card is lost or additional cards are needed, a small fee will be charged for each additional/replacement card.

Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy

Due to the rise in childhood obesity, The Tree House has taken an active role in promoting healthy eating and physical activity through supporting, educating and engaging parents in developing a healthy living environment.

The Tree House is a part of the Let's Move Healthy Child Care Movement. For this reason, our program implements national health and safety standards and embeds these practices into daily routines. We expect that children will come to school with a well-balanced lunch and healthy snacks.

** Please ensure that ALL food sent to school is NUT FREE.*

Healthy Eating Guidelines:

- Please send a snack with your child every day. Please ensure that it is labeled with your child's name. We request that parents send healthy snacks, a whole grain snack and fruit or vegetable is ideal. If your child attends full day, please send a second healthy snack for the afternoon, labeled as such.
- Water is available at all times in the classrooms. A drink does not need to be sent for snack.

Eating Environment:

- Children will be given 20-30 minutes to enjoy meals.
- Staff members will sit, eat and converse with the children during meal times.

Lunches from Home:

- It is important that children have a well-balanced meal for lunch. For this reason, please provide healthy choices of whole grains, meat (or alternatives), vegetables and fruit. Please make sure portions are child-sized.
- Please provide beverages such as lowfat milk, 100% juice or water. Please try to avoid sugary drinks.

Physical Activity Guidelines:

- Outdoor time is in safe settings, including play equipment and open space, supervised by adults.
- Children spend 30 minutes or more outside (weather permitting) each morning and afternoon.
- A variety of indoor equipment is available, such as balls, hoops, and tumbling mats.

Physical Activity Education:

- Teach children about physical activity and make it fun.
- Include information in newsletters to encourage families to be active.
- Physical activity shall not be used as a punishment.
- Physical activity shall not be withheld except when a child's behavior is dangerous to himself and others.

Physical Activity Promotion Guidelines:

- Ensure physical activity is co-operative and noncompetitive in nature.
- Ensure all physical activities are developmentally appropriate.
- Follow safety recommendations for all equipment and activities.
- Limit screen time (computer, video games, movies) to 30 minutes a week, or less, for ages 2 and older.
- Incorporate physical activity into group times and special events.

Food Service Policy

The Tree House does not provide food or snacks for the children. Water is available to the children throughout the day. Parents are asked to send appropriate snacks and lunches to school with their children. Please see the Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy.

Breast Feeding Policy

While The Tree House does not have students of breast feeding age, we provide a breast feeding friendly environment. Mothers are welcome to breast feed their babies in the Witherspoon room. We support breast feeding employees as well. Employees have access to a clean, private location (Witherspoon Room) to nurse their babies or express their milk and employees are able to break as necessary to do so. Breast milk is accepted and stored in the refrigerator in The Tree House kitchen.

Birthday Celebrations

Children are welcome to celebrate their birthdays at school. Please consult with your child's teacher in advance so that the teacher can plan appropriately. You are welcome to bring in a special snack (or send it in with your child). Please do not send in party favors or special paper goods. Children who have birthdays in the summer will have a special celebration sometime at the end of the year.

Clothing

Your child should wear play clothes designed so that he/she can become independent in dressing and toileting. For safety reasons, children should wear rubber-soled shoes. Please, no sandals and no necklaces or drawstrings around the neck of the clothing.

The outerwear must be suitable for the temperature and the weather. Boots will be needed when the ground is damp and throughout the winter as we try to provide outside playtime whenever the weather permits. *All clothing must be marked with the child's name.* A complete change of marked clothing should be provided for each child. When used, this change should be replaced on the following day.

Parents of full day children are required to purchase a compact sleep bag for rest time. These are available at The Tree House office for a minimal charge. Some children like to bring in a stuffed animal from home to help them relax. Bedding should be taken home every Friday to be laundered and should be returned the next time the child returns to school the following week.

Remember that when dressing your child paint does splatter, juice does spill, and the weather changes.

Sun Protection

All parents are requested to apply a generous coating of sunscreen on their children before sending them to school on sunny days.

Parents of full day students are required to complete a permission slip allowing The Tree House to apply sunscreen. Parents are asked to leave sunscreen at school for their children. It will be applied in the afternoon as needed. Sunscreen is not shared among the children; only the lotion you provide will be used by your child. Please be sure the container is clearly marked with the child's name and given directly to the class teacher.

Personal Hygiene Requirements

We accept children in our 2 and 3 Year Old Programs in diapers, but we strongly encourage children in the 3 year old classes to be toilet trained. Diapers are changed as needed in a designated changing area. Gloves are worn as needed. 4 year olds must be potty trained.

Teachers will be supportive of each child's individual toilet training styles/habits. We encourage you to communicate your child's toilet training needs to our teachers so the transition will be made

as easy as possible for everyone; however we do not toilet train your child. This process must begin at home.

Snow Policy

The Tree House will close for snow days if travel is hazardous. The Director will make the decision by 7:00 AM as to a delayed opening or a school closing. When there is a delayed opening, the school will open at 9:30 AM for our early arrival students. School will begin at 10:30 AM. Parents may call the school after 7:00 AM for a recorded message. Parents will also receive notification by 7:00 AM through the SchoolReach emergency notification system.

In the event of an early closing, parents will receive notification of the closing through the SchoolReach emergency notification system.

Emergency Notification System

The Tree House uses a telephone broadcast system that enables school personnel to notify all households and parents by phone within minutes of an emergency or unplanned event that causes early dismissal, school cancellation or late start. This service is provided by Honeywell, a company specializing in school-to-parent communications.

Program Overview

Our program is designed to encourage children to become independent, self confident and inquisitive learners through active play. The program exposes each child to various experiences. Age appropriate hands-on activities are planned according to a variety of studies and themes, which provide children with meaningful learning experiences.

Children and parents will have the opportunity to meet their teacher before the first day of school. All parents will be able to share specific information and concerns about their child at this time.

Curriculum

The Tree House follows The Creative Curriculum™, a nationally- and state-recognized curriculum for young children. The curriculum allows the teachers to focus on the whole child and is designed to meet the diverse social, physical, emotional and cognitive needs of individual children. It also promotes curiosity, persistence, creativity and initiative as approaches to learning. Additionally, the program fosters a sense of self-respect, concern for others, independence and environmental awareness.

Creativity Statement

We are extremely interested in the development of creative expression. Some of the projects the children bring home (and work on in school) will be teacher-directed, but for the most part we will strive to provide activities that involve children in discovery, exploration, independence and free expression. We are most focused with the process – the giving of one's self to drawing, painting, and constructing – rather than the end product.

Please help us by not expecting each piece of artwork to be a representation of something recognizable. We never ask, "What is it?" of a child. Children's artwork is often nothing more than an exploration of materials. It is much more important that art be a means of self-expression rather than a realistic representation.

A good response to a child's work of art is "Can you tell me about it?" When asked in that manner, the child does not feel a loss of self-esteem, if by chance the product is not meant to "be" anything. You might mention the colors or the lines.

We hope this statement will help you understand our goals and the "masterpieces" you will be receiving this year.

Screening and Referral Policy

Our certified staff members are professionally trained to observe a range of age appropriate behaviors in young children. During on-going parent-teacher communications, your child's teacher will share observations concerning your child. Should recommendations be made in reference to your child's behavior, the Director and your child's teacher will meet to share referral services, both public and private.

The Tree House uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a screening tool, as one way to learn about a child's development and skill levels. The ASQ is a research-based developmental screening tool that is used for all children, birth through age 5. The screening tool, which is completed by a parent/guardian, shows how a child is developing in comparison to the standardized "typically developing" child. It allows teachers to identify areas on which to focus in order to meet an individual child's needs.

Upon entry, all parents will be given the ASQ to fill out as part of the Developmental Screening Program. If any discrepancies are evident based on parental results and teacher observation, another screening may be completed by the teacher. If this occurs, a meeting will be scheduled in which the parents and teacher will meet to review the results and discuss further plans.

The Director may recommend a privately trained "shadow," *to be paid for by the parent*, to work one-on-one with their child in order for them to continue their child's education at The Tree House.

Project Child Find

Based on classroom observations and any results received through the ASQ, the Tree House may suggest an additional evaluation of a given student. This evaluation would be completed by the public school district for children three to five years of age and Early Intervention for children up to age three.

3 to 5 Years of Age

The various school districts that will enroll Tree House students have a responsibility to locate and evaluate all their resident students with disabilities who are in need of special education and

related services, including students with disabilities attending nonpublic schools. The districts locate, identify and evaluate, where appropriate, children below school entry age, 3 to 5.

Upon written request, the school district will conduct an initial identification meeting for any resident child to determine whether a referral for special education and related services is appropriate.

The contact person for the Bernards Township School District is Jean O'Connell. Please call the Office of Special Services at (908) 204-2600 ext. 121 for more information. Families in other districts should contact their Superintendents office for more information.

Birth to Age 3

Upon identification of a child's possible concerns or challenges, the parent will first be advised to bring the specified concerns to the child's pediatrician.

In addition, the New Jersey State Department of Education, through Project Child Find, has established Project CHILD FIND, a free public awareness and referral service, to assist families, professionals and interested individuals in identifying available early intervention, preschool handicapped and special education programs and service throughout New Jersey. The phone number is 1-800-322-8174.

2-2 ½ Year Old Programs

This program is designed to provide the 2 and 2 ½ year olds with a secure and caring environment to make their first steps away from home safe and comfortable. This program of play-based educational activities includes: circle time, music, story time, snack time, arts and crafts, free play, outdoor/indoor play – all done in a supportive and loving way.

Social and Emotional Development:

We will be working on...

- Dealing effectively with separation issues while developing a sense of security.
- Beginning to understand basic self reliance skills.
- Sharing and interacting with peers.
- Becoming aware of other people's feelings.
- Beginning to develop self-respect and a positive self image.
- Learning to make simple transitions from one activity to another while following a classroom routine.
- Practicing simple manners i.e., *please, thank you* and taking turns.
- Introducing the concept of personal hygiene.
- Making the child's first school experience fun and meaningful while engaging in a positive manner, with adults and other children outside of the home environment.
- Developing independence.

Cognitive and Language Development:

We will be working on:

- Responding to simple directions, including classroom rules.
- Understanding a daily routine.
- Recognizing common objects.
- Exposure to numbers, colors, and shapes.
- Initial discovery of the alphabet.
- Providing opportunities for language development through: circle time, singing, story telling, arts and crafts, etc.

Music:

Daily music will provide children with an opportunity to explore their world through sing-a-longs, finger plays and other musical expressions.

Fine Motor Development:

Achieve eye-hand coordination through: coloring, working with manipulatives, playing with dough and clay, painting, folding, cutting, tearing, etc.

Gross Motor Development:

Achieve body awareness through: dancing, jumping, climbing, stretching, throwing, etc.

3 Year Old Program

Our 3 year old program is designed to provide children with a nurturing, caring environment where they feel safe to continue to learn and grow as individuals. By examining the child's own world, including nature, the seasons, the community, the family and so forth, children become aware of themselves and others around them. The program of educational play experiences includes: circle time, music, story time, snack time, arts and crafts, centers, and indoor/outdoor play.

Social and Emotional Development:

We will be working on:

- Continuing the process of fostering self-reliance and self-control.
- Reinforcing good manners including: sharing and health values.
- Reinforcing personal hygiene.
- Continuing to develop independence, a positive self-image and self-respect.
- Beginning to develop effective "self-help" skills.
- Following classroom rules and safety as well as daily routines.
- Developing communication and problem solving skills.
- Following simple step-by-step directions.

Cognitive and Language Development:

We will be working on:

- Exposure to numbers, colors, patterns and shapes.
- Beginning to recognize letters and their sounds.
- Enhancing language development with quality children's literature read a-louds.
- Increasing knowledge of the alphabet.
- Pre-math skills, including: one-to-one correspondence, sorting, calendar activities.
- Recognizing spatial relationships (big/small, puzzles, building with blocks, etc.)

Music:

Daily music will provide children with an opportunity to explore their world through sing-a-longs, finger plays and other musical expressions.

Fine Motor Development:

- Achieve eye-hand coordination through: coloring, working with manipulatives, playing with dough and clay, painting, folding, cutting, etc.

Gross Motor Development:

- Achieve body awareness through: dancing, jumping, climbing, stretching, throwing, etc.
- Develop a sense of each body part and how it works.
- Balance.
- Using playground equipment to enhance physical development.

4 Year Old Program

Our 4 year old program is designed to enhance self-esteem, listening skills, ability to follow directions, and the child's importance to the group. This program of play-based educational activities promotes each child to grow socially – encouraging consideration for others, self-sufficiency, and self-discipline in a happy and productive setting. Children will continue to be involved in circle time, centers, music, arts and crafts, snack time, story time, indoor/outdoor play – all in a nurturing and caring environment.

Social and Emotional Development:

We will be working on:

- Fostering positive problem solving skills, while expressing needs and feelings towards others (peers and adults).
- Improving self-reliance skills such as:
 - Ability to take care of all personal hygiene needs.
 - Encouragement of independence.
- Demonstrating respect and concern for other children, adults, and property.
- Reinforcing the use of manners when relating to peers and adults.
- Continuing development of positive self-esteem by focusing on each child's personal style.

Cognitive and Language Development:

We will be working on:

- Expressing our ideas and opinions through class discussions about different subjects, calendar activities, poems, finger plays, and most importantly, books
- Following directions.
- Incorporating independent daily routines.
- Maintaining focus on a chosen task.

Reading Readiness:

Exposure to:

- Sound recognition.
- Distinguishing words that begin with the same sound.
- Developing a basic level of listening comprehension

Writing Readiness:

Exposure to:

- Recognition of number concepts.
- Rote counting.
- Beginning to identify patterns.
- Identifying size differences, sequencing objects by size, categorizing objects, etc.
- One-to-one correspondence.

Music:

Daily music will provide children with an opportunity to explore their world through sing-a-longs, finger plays and other musical expressions.

Fine Motor Development:

- Achieve eye-hand coordination through: Coloring, working with manipulatives, playing with dough and clay, painting, folding, cutting, etc.

Gross Motor Development:

- Achieve body awareness through: dancing, jumping, climbing, stretching, throwing, etc.
- Develop a sense of each body part and how it works.
- Balance.
- Using playground equipment to enhance physical development.

4 Plus Class

Our 4 Plus class program is designed to foster an early love of learning and to develop skills and attitudes essential for success in school. Our curriculum encourages children to be active and

creative explorers. Literacy, math and science concepts, and art are taught through themes, allowing for an engaging school day. Through integrated units of study, children have an opportunity to learn through center activities, music, art, and play.

Children in this program will explore these concepts, but are not required to master them before entering Kindergarten. Children learn these concepts at their own pace. Children will be taught with hands-on materials, songs, and games.

In addition to the skills introduced in our 4 Year Old Program, the 4 Plus class will be working on:

Literacy Development:

We will be working on:

- Daily exposure to alphabet: letter names and sounds
- Recognizing, spelling, writing first name
- Holding a pencil, marker, crayon correctly
- Retelling and drawing pictures about stories and experiences
- Answering questions about stories
- Understanding concepts of print: left to right direction.
- Building new vocabulary and listening skills

Math Development:

We will be working on:

- Recognizing numerals 1-50
- Counting, sorting and patterning
- One-to-one correspondence of objects
- Identifying sizes and shapes
- Matching: symbols, shapes, patterns, etc.
- Graphing, charting and recording data
- Exploring measurement

Social Development

We will be working on:

- Practicing problem-solving skills in social situations
- Working in groups or with a partner on a variety of projects
- Sharing classroom materials with the group
- Practicing using good manners: please, thank you, excuse me, table manners

Music

Daily music will provide children with an opportunity to explore their world through sing-a-longs, finger plays and other musical expressions.

Fine Motor Development:

- Achieve eye-hand coordination through: Coloring, working with manipulatives, playing with dough and clay, painting, folding, cutting, etc.
- Proper use of scissors.

Gross Motor Development:

- Achieve body awareness through: dancing, jumping, climbing, stretching, throwing, etc.
- Develop a sense of each body part and how it works.
- Balance.
- Using playground equipment to enhance physical development.

Assessments

The Tree House uses the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ assessment tool. This tool is used by the classrooms to evaluate and track each child's individual development during his/her time at TH. It is an on-going assessment system, meaning that teachers are continually watching, observing and documenting each child's development. The same tool is used from birth through kindergarten, to allow a more complete picture of each child's development. By tracking a child's development, TH staff are able to plan activities that are appropriate for each child's developmental abilities.

Field Trips

On occasion, the children will either leave the building for a field trip or an event will be provided at the school. In both cases it is necessary to receive permission and payment (when applicable) from the parents for each trip/event. Your child's participation in any field trip is purely optional, however if you do not wish for your child to attend these events then other arrangements must be made for your child for that day and he or she may not come to school.

Parent chaperones may be requested for off-site field trips. No more than two (2) chaperones per class may attend unless a specific need is identified by the classroom teacher.

Preventative Health Care Policy

Our Health Care Policy is in compliance with the New Jersey Division of Licensing for Child Care. Each child is required to be in good health, to have an annual physical examination and to be fully immunized. All families are encouraged to have a medical home. A medical home is an important mechanism for uniting the many segments of a child's care, including behavioral and oral health. The medical home is a cultivated partnership between the patient, family, and primary provider in cooperation with specialists and support from the community.

In order to attend The Tree House, every child must submit a Universal Health Record completed by the child's physician with attached immunization record prior to the child's first day of school. The Emergency Medical Information Sheet must be returned with the child by the first day of school. No child will be permitted to stay at the school without these forms on file. In addition, in accordance with NJ State Law, all children under 60 months of age must receive a flu shot by January 1st of the current school year in order to attend the school.

Please do not send your child to school if he/she has exhibited any signs of communicable diseases within the past 24 hours including fever, vomiting and/or diarrhea. If your child becomes ill while at The Tree House program you will be notified and expected to pick up your child or arrange to have him/her picked up as soon as possible. For more information on this, please see the section *The Tree House Communicable Disease Prevention Policy*, on page 19.

Hand washing is the first line of defense against disease. We are vigilant with both children and adults that hands are washed before eating or cooking, after toileting, handling body secretions and after cleaning. Please remember to have your child wash hands before entering the classroom in the morning.

In the event of an emergency or accident involving your child, all efforts will be made to contact you immediately. If we are unable to reach you or your emergency contacts, in the case of a respiratory emergency or if there is profuse bleeding, an ambulance will be summoned if deemed necessary by The Tree House staff.

Oral Health Policy

While The Tree House does not offer oral health care at our facility, we believe it is extremely important for each child to have a dentist as part of his/her medical home. The Tree House stresses the importance of having good dental hygiene through regular conversations with the children. The school also sponsors a visit from a local dentist who provides the children with an age appropriate lesson on the importance of tooth brushing, use of floss and general good dental hygiene.

Behavioral/Mental Health/Community Resources

In addition to preventative health care, there are many additional resources available to parents. Please use the links below for additional information. In addition, many of these documents are available weekly in The Tree House email. All of these resources can also be found at www.njparentlink.nj.gov.

Developmental Milestones: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

Positive Parenting: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html>

Special Child Resources: <http://nj.gov/health/fhs/sch/index.shtml>

Developmental and Behavioral Evaluation Centers: <http://nj.gov/health/fhs/sch/cec.shtml>

Community Resources:

Mom2Mom: <http://ubhc.rutgers.edu/mom2mom/index.htm>

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network: <http://www.spanadvocacy.org/>
Family Success Centers: <http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/families/support/success/>

Communicable Disease Prevention Policy

(As per the N.J. Dept. of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services licensing requirements)

If a child exhibits any of the following symptoms, he/she should not attend The Tree House. If such symptoms occur at The Tree House, the child will be separated from the other children and you will be called to take him/her home.

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Elevated oral temperature of 100 Fahrenheit**
- Sore throat or severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundice skin
- Red eyes with discharge
- Infected, untreated skin patches
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Skin lesions that are weeping or bleeding
- Swollen joints
- Skin rashes lasting longer than 24 hours
- Visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- Stiff Neck
- Blood in urine
- Nasal discharge that is unclear

Once the child is symptom free, (**with an elevated temperature the child must be fever free for 24 hours, a child must also go 24 hours with no vomiting and/or diarrhea) or have a physician's note stating that he/she no longer poses a serious health risk to himself/herself or others, he/she may return to The Tree House.

Table of Excludable Communicable Diseases:

If a child contracts any of the following diseases, please report it to us immediately. The child may not return to The Tree House without a physician's note stating that the child presents no risk to himself/herself or others.

Respiratory Illnesses

Chicken Pox
German Measles*
Hemophilus Influenza*
Measles*
Meningococcus*
Mumps*
Strep Throat

Gastrointestinal Illnesses:

Giardia Lamblia*
Hepatitis A*
Salmonella A*
Shigella*
Rotovirus

Contact: Illnesses:

Impetigo
Lice
Scabies

Tuberculosis*
Whooping Cough*

* Reportable diseases, as required by N.J.A.C. 10:122-7.10 (a).

If your child is exposed to any reportable disease at The Tree House you will be notified in writing.

Medication Administration Policy

The following guidelines will be followed for the administration of medication at The Tree House Child Caring Center:

1. In certain medical situations such as diabetes, seizure disorders and asthmatics, The Tree house reserves the right to call qualified emergency personnel to administer medications that the staff does not feel qualified to administer.
2. Medication will be given only after receipt of written authorization and instructions from the child's parent(s). Parents must update their authorization and instructions each day that the medication is to be given.
3. Non-prescription, over the counter medication will not be administered unless accompanied by a doctor's note. It is particularly important that aspirin never be administered without a doctor's note.
4. Parents must deliver any medication to the Director or office staff. All medication will be stored in a secure area that is inaccessible to the children.
5. All medication must be prescribed for the child who is receiving it. It must be stored in its original container which has been labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, the date it was prescribed or updated, and the directions for administration.
6. Parents are responsible for picking up the medication at the end of each day or when no longer being administered.
7. Trained staff members giving medication will follow directions carefully, using a measuring spoon, not an ordinary teaspoon, for giving liquid medication. Children will be watched to be sure medication has been swallowed. Containers will be removed from the child's reach immediately. Staff members will observe a child carefully for twenty minutes after having administered medication to watch for any adverse effects. Additionally, staff members will never take medication of their own in front of the children.
8. The Tree House will maintain on file a record of:
 - The child's name and parental authorization;
 - The name of the medication;
 - The instructions for administering the medication, including the dosage and frequency;
 - The time and by whom the medication was administered to the child; and
 - Any adverse effect the medication may have had on the child

This record will be updated each day that the medication is to be given.

It should be noted by parents that there is not a nurse on staff at The Tree House.

Release of Children Policy

The pick up procedure at The Tree House Child Caring Center is in accordance with The State of New Jersey's Department of Human Services Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers Article 10:122-6.5 which states:

Each child may be released only to the child's custodial parent(s) or persons authorized. Pick up authorization should be done in writing or by authorization on the white Emergency Medical Information Sheet. A child shall not be visited by or released to a non-custodial parent unless the custodial parent specifically authorizes the Center to allow such visits or releases in writing. This authorization, including the name, address, and telephone number of the non-custodial parent(s), shall be maintained in a file. If the parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to the child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to this effect and maintain a copy on file.

If a child remains at the center past closing time, the staff members will attempt to contact the parent or authorized person from the white Emergency Medical Information Sheet. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or authorized person(s) have failed, the staff member shall call the Division's 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child until they are picked up.

If a parent or authorized person arrives at the Center and appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the Director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released, the child shall not be released to the impaired individual. Staff members will attempt to contact an alternative person authorized by the parent(s) and if the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the Division's 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child.

Emergency Plan

If an emergency situation occurs in or around the Center, we have prepared an emergency operations plan. If we need to go to a central location, we will proceed to Calvin Hall. If we need to vacate the premises, we will proceed to either the lower playground or to the Church house across the street. The main office is the primary command post with the Witherspoon room being used for dismissal. The director's office is the alternative on site command post. A copy of the entire Emergency Plan is available for review in the director's office.

Discipline Policy

At The Tree House, we strive to prevent discipline issues from arising by providing an environment that is comfortable for children in a group setting and provide activities which allow for freedom of choice. We offer many different play centers and activities which keep children busy and happy and allow them to interact in a constructive and stress-free manner.

Adults in the classroom will always model acceptable behavior to children. This is the most basic way in which children learn how we expect them to behave. On occasion, children may become frustrated. When a child's behavior becomes unacceptable or unsafe, positive discipline is a

necessary part of guidance. In these situations, we apply the following procedures to assist the child in regaining self-control.

1. **Redirection** – When a child is experiencing frustration in a situation, we will direct the child toward another activity where the child may experience more success.
2. **Limits** – Explaining and defining limits are done in a classroom situation and children are made aware of the behavior that is expected towards others. Children will be reminded on an individual basis when warranted.
3. **Reinforcement** – Through praise and encouragement, children will learn that acceptable behavior is far more rewarding. Young children learn quickly that positive attention is far more fulfilling than negative attention. In a classroom setting, the praise of their teachers and approval of their peers is often the only reinforcement necessary to maintain a high level of self-esteem. We strive to encourage acceptable behavior at all times and reward that behavior with praise.
4. **Time Away** – We may choose to remove a child from a play situation or equipment if the child is having difficulty resolving a conflict with the situation or with another child. This will occur if redirecting the child was unsuccessful. The child will be moved away from the area to discuss the problem and to allow the child an opportunity to regain composure. We do not label this discipline procedure as “time out” or “time away.” There is no specific place associated with this procedure such as a chair or corner. The child is given sufficient time to amend the behavior and no time period is allocated to this.

Parents will always be notified in person or by phone if a serious discipline issue occurs with their child. In the case of repeated disciplinary incidents, the teacher will contact the parents to discuss how they can work together to resolve these issues so that the child will achieve success in the classroom.

Expulsion Policy

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center:

Causes for Immediate Expulsion (not necessarily a complete list)

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself.
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members.
- Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

Parental Actions Leading to a Child’s Expulsion (not necessarily a complete list)

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
- Failure to complete required forms including the child’s immunization records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child.
- Verbal abuse to staff.

Child’s Action Leading to Expulsion (not necessarily a complete list)

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.

- Uncontrollable tantrums/ angry outbursts.
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
- Excessive biting.

Schedule for Suspension or Expulsion

If the remedial actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting a suspension or expulsion. A suspension is meant to be for a specific period of time so that the parent/ guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the center.

- The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the suspension period.
- The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the center.
- The parent/guardian MAY be given a specific suspension date that allows the parent sufficient time to seek alternate child care.
- Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.

A Child Will Not Be Expelled

If a child's parent(s):

- Made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a center's alleged violations of the licensing requirements.
- Reported abuse or neglect occurring at the center.
- Questioned the center regarding policies and procedures.
- Without giving the parent sufficient time to make other child care arrangements.

Proactive Actions to Be Taken in Order To Prevent Suspension or Expulsion

- Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior.
- Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriate of activities, supervision.
- Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children.
- Staff will praise appropriate behaviors.
- Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules.
- Child will be given verbal warnings.
- Child will be given time to regain control.
- Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality.
- Parent/guardian will be notified verbally.
- Parent/guardian will be given written copies of the disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion.
- The director, classroom staff and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors.
- Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation on premises

DYFS Information to Parents

Under provisions of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 10:122), every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written

information on parent visitation rights, state licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents this written statement, prepared by the Bureau of Licensing in the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing Law to be licensed by the Bureau of Licensing in the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services. A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our center must comply with the **Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers** (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the **Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers** and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may secure a copy of the Manual of Requirements by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJ Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, New Jersey 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the **Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers**. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing standards, you are entitled to report them to the Office of Licensing at: 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parent(s) to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center.

Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the Office of Licensing's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are issued after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint investigation, you are also entitled to review the Bureau's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review.

Our center must cooperate with all DCF inspections/investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the Office for the children's use. Please talk to us if you have any questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements; and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents.

Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c. 169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division of Civil Rights in the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292-4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required to periodically review the Department of Law and Public Safety (DLPS), Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA), unsafe children's product list, make the list accessible to staff and parents, and ensure that items on the list are not at the center. The list is available at www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/recall/recalls.htm. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the DLPS, DCA, toll-free at 1(800) 242-5846.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the State Child Abuse Hotline, toll free at 1 (877) NJ ABUSE. Such reports may be made anonymously. Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292-0422 or go to www.nj.gov/DCF and select Publications.

