

WELCOME!



Parent Handbook 2010-2011

*The Sycamore Run Early Childhood
Center, Ltd.*

*74 South Plains Road
The Plains, Ohio 45780
(740) 797-8969
Tax ID # 20 2755237*

*Hours: Monday-Friday
7:30am – 5:30pm*

With closings noted in the attached school calendar

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School Calendar 2010-11

We will be closed on the following days this school year:

September 3 & 6 – Labor Day/Staff Retreat

November 25-26 – Autumn Break

December 23 – January 2 – Winter Holiday

January 17 – Martin Luther King Day

April 21-24 – Spring Break

May 30 – Memorial Day

June TBA– Summer Renovations (dependant on public school calendar)

Sycamore Run will on the *last Friday of each month* for staff development. These are days for mandatory trainings and curriculum review.

September 24

October 29

November 19

January 28

February 25

March 25

April 29

May 27

**We will gather for the following seasonal celebrations
this year:**

**October 2 – Anniversary Party/Music Fest at Sycamore
Run**

**December 11 – Winter Presentation and Holiday Feast
(location TBA)**

May 21 – PreK Graduation

Sycamore Run ECC Philosophy

The Sycamore Run Preschool is a new entity, but certainly not a new program – we proudly trace our heritage to the River Valley Community School and Preschool. Although the community school has closed for a while, we will carry on its basic mission and philosophies as they apply to our preschool program. We have modeled our curriculum, classrooms and even this handbook after those well-established by the years of dedication put forth by River Valley families and staff.

At Sycamore Run, we believe that it is our responsibility to enhance children’s natural learning process by exposing them to new experiences and hands-on activities. Our program aims to nurture children’s development and is guided by the following principles:

Children learn from their communities. This process begins with their own life experiences – family life is integral to school readiness. It continues with peer interactions and relationships with children of other ages, and blossoms as children come into contact with a wider community and the natural world.

Our programs are developmentally appropriate. This means they are based on the interests and capabilities of children at different ages and on the understanding that individual children develop at their own pace. We focus on developing knowledge and skills that are integrated throughout the program.

Cooperative learning and individual learning are important components of our program. Children work together in groups within their classrooms, and in other classrooms through projects and special activities. Older children also have opportunities to choose their own projects, follow their own interests, and have learning experiences geared to their abilities.

Discipline and Guidance at Sycamore Run is positive. Children have opportunities to develop skills in conflict management, in understanding and expressing emotion, and setting appropriate limits in the context of the community.

We are advocates for children. We listen to them, respect them, and share ownership of the school and programs with them.

Food Policy

Sycamore Run has been granted a food service exemption. This means that we cannot serve *any* food except that which individual parents have sent for their

individual children. We will provide refrigerator and shelf space for the storage of your child's food.

We recommend a balanced diet, including milk (preferably not chocolate or sweetened milk), a *fruit and/or vegetable* –washed, cut or prepared as needed, a *protein* - meat, cheese, tofu, etc., and a *grain* – crackers, chips, bread, etc.(please no cookies, candy or lots of sweets). We do require that children eat all of their “healthy food” before they move on to sweet treats!

If your child's food for the day does not include sufficient representation of each of the four food groups, we are required by state law to supplement his/her lunch. We will do so with food on hand as described below. We will make allowance for two incomplete lunches per month at no charge. However, you will be charged \$5 for each incidence thereafter.

If you have any questions about what to pack for snack and lunches, please feel free to talk to teachers and/or office staff.

Remember that behavior is closely related to food consumption. Research has shown that processed foods, sugar and artificial colors lead to hyperactivity. Check out the kid's health posters in the office for more information.

In case of forgotten snacks or exceptionally hungry children, we do keep on hand the following items: milk, juice, wheat crackers, peanut butter, fruit, granola bars and popcorn. To supplement insufficient lunches (i.e. those that do not meet the one-third daily dietary allowance outlined in state regulations), we keep on hand cheese, vegetables, nuts, and wheat bread.

Discipline Policy

At Sycamore Run, we believe that the purpose of discipline is to provide guidance for children to develop self control and social skills such as negotiation, conflict resolution, and cooperation. In order to promote self control and pro-social skills, we set clear, realistic limits for the children based on individual and developmental needs; plan our environment in such a way that it is developmentally appropriate; and foster responsibility and autonomy within appropriate boundaries. **We expect all adults (including teachers, parents, lab students and other adults) to uphold our discipline policy while on site – if we see someone behaving inappropriately towards any child, they will be asked to leave immediately.**

The major tool of discipline and guidance is a well structured, meaningful and flexible environment that encourages children to care for themselves and others. This type of environment functions best in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, where children and adults alike are aware of each other as beings with feelings, personal limits and dignity. This attitude is modeled by the adults in our school, toward each other and toward children.

When acts of aggression or disturbance do occur, on-the-spot training in communication and conflict resolution needs to take place. Children and adults are asked to tell their feelings about the event. When someone has hurt someone else or interfered with their learning environment, consequences are put into place as outlined below:

If a child's behavior is unsafe to self or others, s/he will be given one verbal reminder and/or be removed from the classroom.

If the child continues to be unsafe to self or others, s/he will be sent home.

If a child exhibits a pattern of unsafe behavior, a team of staff and consultants will work together with the family to determine a course of action that balances the child's needs with those of the community.

We have adopted specific discipline policy on the following behaviors:

Hitting, Biting, Spitting: If children display these types of aggressive behavior, we will first document the frequency of the behavior to determine whether the behavior is situational (short term acting out) or of a longer duration; document our responses to the behavior; meet with other staff to come up with new strategies; and if none of these efforts prove successful we will meet with you to share our concerns. If it seems that we are unable to sufficiently modify the behavior in question after all reasonable efforts, and the child continues to threaten the safety or well being of others, we may ask that your child leave the center.

Role playing, Gun Play, Inappropriate Language: We do not allow gun play at our center. If children choose to role play “super heroes” or to “play fight,” they will be reminded to be careful with their bodies, but encouraged to explore their physical capabilities in positive ways. If children use inappropriate language, they will be given reminders about what is “ok” and what is not acceptable.

Dismissal from Sycamore Run ECC

Children may be dismissed from the center for the following reasons:

1. Failure to abide by State and center policy
2. Failure to meet tuition requirements (including late fees and meal supplement fees)
3. Failure to work with staff on correcting serious behavior issues

When a teacher is confronted with a behavior issue, our discipline policy dictates that the teacher take several positive steps to manage the behavior. We have found that behavior issues can be linked with room area, social challenges, personality conflicts and other issues beyond and behind the behavior in question. Outside consultants help the teacher to get new ideas and a fresh perspective. If all steps have been taken to understand and modify unacceptable behavior, parents will be called to a conference to discuss a solution which best meets the needs of the child, family and center.

Communicable Disease Policy

Preschools are places where germs love to live. We do our best to maintain clean and sanitary classrooms, but we simply cannot overcome the constant exchange of germs between children! For this reason, it is imperative that all parents understand and abide by the communicable disease policy outlined below. As a general rule, please note that if your child shows symptoms of *any* communicable disease, s/he will be sent home and cannot return until 24 hours after the symptoms have cleared. A communicable disease chart is posted in the main entryway for your information and review. Our illness policy is created to protect everyone in our center. Every parent should have a back up plan in the event that their child becomes ill at the center.

If your child becomes ill at school, s/he will be isolated from the other children and kept comfortable. Parents or emergency contacts will be notified and must pick their child up immediately. We ask all parents to sign an emergency authorization for each child in case of serious accident or illness. All families will be notified of any incident of communicable disease by a sign posted on the classroom door.

In case of emergency, we must be able to contact parents at all times. The center must have home and work numbers on file, and parents should provide the school with additional telephone numbers and schedule changes as appropriate. If parents or emergency contacts are unreachable, we reserve the right to terminate your childcare.

A child with any of the following signs or symptoms of illness shall be immediately isolated and discharged to his parent or guardian or person designated by the parent or guardian:

- (1) Temperature of at least one hundred degrees Fahrenheit when in combination with any other sign or symptom of illness; Temperature shall be taken by the auxillary method with a digital thermometer.
- (2) Diarrhea (three or more abnormally loose stools within a twenty-four hour period);
- (3) Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound;
- (4) Difficult or rapid breathing;
- (5) Yellowish skin or eyes;
- (6) Redness of the eye, obvious discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching;
- (7) Untreated infected skin patches, unusual spots or rashes;
- (8) Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool;
- (9) Stiff neck with an elevated temperature;
- (10) Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestations;
- (11) Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing;
- (12) Vomiting more than one time or when accompanied by any other sign or symptom of illness.

A child isolated due to suspected communicable disease shall be:

- (1) Within sight and hearing of a staff member at all times;
- (2) Cared for in another room or portion of a room away from other children;
- (3) Provided with a cot and made comfortable. After use, the cot shall be disinfected with an appropriate germicide, or if soiled with blood, feces, vomitus or other body fluids, the cot shall be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with an appropriate germicide.
- (4) A school child may be made comfortable on a mat that shall be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with an appropriate germicide.

The center shall implement the following preventative practices for the management of communicable disease on a daily basis:

- (1) The center shall provide training for all staff in the process of handwashing and disinfection procedures prior to working with children, including a thorough review of the requirements for handwashing and diapering.
- (2) The center shall release employees who have a communicable disease or who are unable to perform their duties due to illness.
- (3) The center shall notify parents, within the next day of center operation, when their child has been exposed to a communicable disease.
- (4) Centers shall follow the current version of the "Ohio department of health Communicable Disease Chart" (Rev. 7/2002) for appropriate management of suspected illnesses. The chart shall be posted in a location readily available to center staff and parents.

Children who are experiencing minor cold symptoms will not be excluded from the classroom, however if a child is well enough to attend school s/he is well enough to participate in all activities and go outside. If you feel your child is not well enough to participate at school, please keep him/her home so that they can receive the proper rest and care.

Medication Policy

No prescription **or** non-prescription medication will be administered at Sycamore Run. If you would like for your child to receive prescription OR non prescription medication, you are welcome to come to the center at any time to administer it. No medication may be kept onsite.

If your child requires an inhaler for severe asthma, please let the director know – you will be required to complete a medical care plan, and your physician will be required to complete medication forms for the administration of the inhaler. Additionally, you will be required to train staff in the proper usage of your child’s inhaler.

Sycamore Run does provide non-aerosol spray sunscreen for students of the summer program. Please be sure to complete the sunscreen permission form if you would like us to apply sunscreen!

Visitor Policy

Parents are always welcome at our school and may proceed directly to their child's classroom without checking in at the office. Hocking college and Ohio University students who are participating in lab studies at Sycamore Run will sign in and out on the student sign in sheet located in the office and check in with the office on their first visit to the school.

Release from School

Children will not be released from the school to adults other than the parents or known caregivers. Please alert the teacher in writing if your plans call for someone else to pick up your child. Teachers will request identification from unknown adults.

Absences

If you know your child will be missing school, please call to let us know! If your child is expected at school but does not attend, we will attempt to contact you and your emergency contacts until we are assured that your child is safe.

Families who use the Department of Job and Family Services to assist in paying for childcare must abide by the following attendance policy:

Sycamore Run is only reimbursed for days the child attends, with an allowance of 10 absent days per year. If you exceed this allowance, you may be asked to pay privately for the days missed to compensate Sycamore Run for the loss of income. We reserve the right to terminate your childcare if your child's attendance is less than 20 hours per full time week or less than 8 hours per part time week for more than two weeks.

Miscellaneous Policies/Expectations

Clothing: Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes and shoes. Daily activities are hands on, active and sometimes messy. We want children to feel

comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about their clothes. Please don't *ever* send your child to school wearing something that is irreplaceable!

Each child should have one to two complete changes of clothing that may be kept at the center at all times. The child's name should be placed on all clothing and other items brought from home to ensure the return of these items. The center is not responsible for the loss of unlabeled items.

Outdoor Play: We believe that all children need time outdoors each day. It is our policy that children from each age group will have the opportunity to play outside for at least 30 minutes each morning and afternoon, weather permitting (temperatures below 90 degrees in summer and above 32 degrees in winter). When weather conditions are above 90 degrees, below 32 degrees, or otherwise not suitable for extended outdoor play, we may still go outside for a shorter period of time.

We will play on the playground, ride bikes, and possibly even eat snacks in our picnic area (especially on rainy days). Please be sure that your child is dressed in appropriate clothing to go outside each day. In the event that the weather does not permit outdoor activities, children will have the opportunity to play parachute games, do yoga, and otherwise enjoy indoor large muscle activities.

Toys: We will provide your child with a multitude of engaging and fun toys. Our environment will be carefully arranged and changed regularly. We ask that your child not bring toys and games from home for obvious reasons. However, if your child wishes to bring a special item out of habit or for needed security, it will certainly be permitted in all classrooms. We do not take responsibility for any toys brought into the center from home.

Arrival and Departure: For safety's sake, *children must always be left in the care of an adult, with the children being brought directly into the classroom.* Please be sure to sign your child in with the time of arrival. *NO child shall ever be left alone or unsupervised, including when they are arriving and departing.*

Release: Children will be released only to the parent or designated caregiver unless teachers have received written notice of permission to release to another person.

In the event of an emergency, your child may be released to an individual upon the verbal designation of the parent (by phone or in person), if a staff person can verify the identity of the individual by means of photo identification.

We are mandated by the State to only release your child to those people whom you have specified in writing, so please be sure that your list includes everyone who might pick your child up over the course of the year. If a person designated to pick up your child is not written on the form, your child will *not* be released.

Please be sure to inform the office of custody situations or restraining orders that may affect who can and cannot pick up the child. If a parent is not authorized to pick up your child, custody papers must be submitted at the time of admission. If we have legal documentation on file, law enforcement can be called to take appropriate action.

Tuition

We understand that the payment of tuition is a burden on most families. Please take a moment to consider, though, the actual value of the service we offer. When your monthly payment is reduced to an hourly rate, you are essentially paying *less than* \$5 per hour of care!!! Consider what you pay for other services – gasoline, dining out, cable, medical expenses, etc. And consider the way those services affect your daily life. We take pride in offering a “second home” to the children in our care, and we know that you will agree that childcare is among the most important services you will ever utilize.

Safety Policy: For the well being of everyone at the center, we enforce the following safety policies:

1. All staff members have access to a working non-coin phone
2. No child is ever left alone or unsupervised
3. We conduct monthly fire drills and two annual tornado drills (in spring and fall)
4. When injuries occur, the supervising staff member completes an incident report
5. We report to the local children's service agencies any suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect

Parent Participation: We encourage parents to participate fully in our program, and provide the following opportunities to do so:

- Family nights and all school presentations
- Cultural presentations (parents come in to share something of their culture – foods, music, stories, etc.)
- Donating toys and other needed items
- Exchanging volunteer hours for tuition credits
- Other ideas as presented by individual parents

We also expect that parents develop good relationships with teachers – we do enjoy checking in at pick up and drop off times, but if you feel that you need to speak formally with your child's teacher please do not hesitate to find a mutually convenient time to do so. Remember that teachers are busy during school hours and that they may not be able to give you their full attention unless they are able to meet with you outside the classroom.

State Regulations

Emergencies: The center will take the following actions in case of emergency or accident (as posted in each classroom):

- Calm the injured person and immediately call for assistance
- Check to determine the degree of injury
- If serious, arrange for emergency services (911) then contact parent
- Use necessary first aid until the arrival of emergency services

If bleeding profusely:

- Arrange for emergency services (911) then contact parent
- Use necessary first aid until the arrival of emergency services

If minor bleeding:

- Apply direct pressure with a sterile gauze or clean cloth
- If bleeding continues for 10 minutes, contact parent and call 911
- Check for tooth damage or knocked out tooth
- Use necessary first aid until the arrival of parent and/or emergency services

In any situation such as illness, incident or accident which requires first aid, bump or blow to the head, or an unusual/unexpected event which jeopardizes the safety of the children, an incident report will be completed by the staff and signed by the administrator. This form will be given to you for your review and signature of notification. If there is any concern on the part of the staff that the injury is severe, you will be notified immediately.

When an extreme injury that may require a professional consultation has occurred, the local emergency squad will be called. Parents are required by state regulations to give Sycamore Run Early Childhood Center permission to transport in an emergency vehicle in the event of emergency. If you refuse permission, we cannot enroll your child.

All staff are required to take a six-hour first aid course within the first year of employment. Our center ensures that at least one person trained in first aid is present and available during all hours of operation.

In the event of a general emergency, parents will be notified as soon as the children are secure and safe. A general emergency is defined as any event that is a threat to the safety of the children: natural disasters such

as fire and tornado, a loss of power, heat or water, threat of violence or other unforeseen danger.

Fire drills are conducted monthly, and tornado drills are conducted in fall and spring.

During an emergency, staff/child ratios will be maintained.

Complaints/Concerns Policy

The conflict management approach at Sycamore Run is geared to help children learn how to manage conflicts by addressing their problems face-to-face with the person they feel has wronged them. Guidelines for adults are based on the same principles, as outlined below:

Discuss concerns directly with the people involved

When you have a problem or concern, first clarify the issue. Find out what has been done and why it has been done. This is usually best explored directly with the people involved. Sometimes clarifying the issue requires the clarifying and/or venting of emotions. Choose a mutually convenient time and place for sharing strong feelings before addressing the issue itself.

Second, express your concern directly to the person or group involved. This expression should include your understanding of what has happened, your reaction to it, and what you think should happen next. Discuss your concerns respectfully.

Issues can often be addressed in one-on-one meetings, but sometimes this is uncomfortable or inappropriate. When one-on-one meetings don't seem to be a good option, a neutral third party can be helpful (we will work to ensure that the third party is acceptable and "neutral" to all parties). It is also important to make sure that all parties are aware of, and agree to, who will be present when sensitive or controversial issues are discussed; no one appreciates surprises in these situations.

Third, try to understand the response. This step can be more difficult than it sounds, but it is important to be clear about whether the person or group you are talking to agrees with your view of the situation, and what s/he plans to do about it.

Often, this third step will be enough. Sometimes it is not. Resolving differences takes time and patience. Initial discussions may not completely resolve all the issues because:

- One person does not acknowledge that there is a conflict
- The people involved cannot reach a compromise
- One person thinks a solution has been reached, but another is not satisfied
- There is a compromise, but in the process, feelings were hurt or new issues raised

Listen to the concerns that are brought to you

For this approach to work, we need to agree to listen to the concerns brought to us and speak up about the concerns we have. If someone approaches you with a concern on issue, be willing to listen respectfully in a face-to-face meeting. As discussed above, if one-on-one meetings don't seem workable, arrange for a neutral third party who is acceptable to all those who will participate. Listening requires the effort to understand the specific concerns that are expressed.

You do not have to agree with everything that is said. If you have different perceptions of events, or reasons for events, or ideas about what will lead to a good solution, those differences should be clearly expressed. Glossing over real differences will not lead to a workable solution. It is usually best, however, to let the person with the concern express their ideas and feel that they have been understood before you share your ideas with them.

It may take several cycles of clarifying, stating concerns, and getting a response to a particular issue to reach agreement among the parties involved. As long as progress is made, multiple cycles of clarification, expression, and response are OK and, in fact, part of life.

If, however, people feel that their concerns are not understood, are being ignored, or steady progress is not being made, then:

Put your concerns in writing

When several attempts at face-to-face discussion have not resolved an issue, address a written statement to the person or group involved. Your letter should contain: 1) your description of what has happened up to this point including the original issue and the discussions and actions to attempt to resolve it; 2) what you think should be done to resolve the issue; and 3) a request for a response in writing.

If moving to the formality of written requests and responses leads to a resolution, it is appropriate to acknowledge the resolution in writing. This resolution closes the cycle and creates the opportunity to address any new issues in direct discussion.

Enrollment Procedures

If you inquire by phone, you and your family will be invited to visit our center. The office staff will give you information about our philosophy, programs and policies. You will be encouraged to ask any questions you may have before enrolling your child.

Registration:

At the time of registration, you will be required to sign or complete the following forms. **The following forms must be on file before your child can be left at our center:**

1. **Enrollment and Health Form**
2. **Parent Contract**
3. **Emergency Contact Form**
4. **Emergency Medical Authorization**
5. **Water and Field Trip Permission Forms**
6. **Permission to Release Form**
7. **Family Survey**

The following form must be on file *within 30 days* of your child's admission to the center:

8. **Medical form (signed by physician)**

If all required forms are not on file within 30 days of your child's registration, we may decline childcare services until the necessary forms are completed. Your child is officially enrolled at Sycamore Run when *all* forms are complete and signed.