



Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College

Family Handbook

Our Mission

The Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College is an early childhood educational program that serves children, families, Mitchell College students and faculty as well as the local community. It provides multiple opportunities to address a family's need for quality education. Emphasis is placed on family involvement, creating a link between the home and school and ensuring that family members are actively involved in their child's early educational experience. As a laboratory school, the Children's Learning Center guides Mitchell College students to achieve their educational and professional goals through diverse and challenging internships.

Our Staff

The main component of sound, quality child care is the trained, sensitive adult who is the caregiver. We carefully select staff educated in early childhood development who value, respect, and sensitively respond to the unique needs of children. The CLC provides a variety of in-service workshops and requires teachers and staff to attend various conferences relevant to working with children and families. These trainings are planned to support our Center's mission and teaching philosophy, and enhance professional development and expertise. Please understand the need for professional development when your child's teacher is out of the classroom. Additionally, all staff is regularly trained in CPR and first aid.

Quality Standards

The CLC is licensed by the CT Office of Early Childhood and is held to the childcare licensing regulations put forth statewide. We actively participate in Quality Enhancement Grants for SECT (south eastern CT). We will look to gain accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We hope to set and achieve high standards of care. To maintain our quality program, we will rely on parents to complete program evaluations and tally the results. Our families' on-going support and suggestions to improve our program are always welcome and appreciated.

Confidentiality Policy

A child's records are open to the director, teachers, consulting staff, state inspectors/ regulatory authorities, accreditation team and the child's parents or guardians. Children's files are secured in a locked cabinet in the office. Parents must sign a written authorization to release records to anyone other than those parties listed above. At all times, staff are held to the highest standards regarding confidentiality with and among families, students, and when out in the public.

Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with state family child care licensing regulations, child care services are available without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry.

Hours and Attendance

The CLC is open from 7am till 6pm, Monday through Friday, 50 weeks per year. Children are encouraged to attend the CLC on a regular basis in accordance with the days and times scheduled, or as noted in their contract. Tuition fees must be paid regardless of attendance. Each child is encouraged to arrive at the CLC by 8:00 AM to facilitate optimal routines each day. If arrival will be later than 9 a.m., please contact the program Birch Room (860)701-5348/Hickory Room (860)701-7720 or clc@mitchell.edu. A phone call is preferable.

Enrollment

- Registration is open-enrollment and availability to all children regardless of diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.
- Our program serves preschool children age's 3 to 5 and school-age children up to age 12 during the summer and school vacations.
- Enrollment priority is given to current students, their siblings, and alumni families.
- When registration takes place, applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis.
- There is a supply fee for each child. All applicants, regardless of entry date, will be charged the full fee for supplies.

PLEASE NOTE: On occasion, a program is not an optimal fit for a child or family. The CLC is a program that will make every effort to work collaboratively with families to resolve any challenges that arise. Additional resources may need to be used to support a child's success in the school environment. If, after all reasonable efforts are exhausted, and a problem cannot be resolved, the CLC reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program.

Required Forms for Enrollment: (These forms must be on file before a child attends.)

1. Registration Documents
2. Medical forms with current immunizations
3. Emergency Contact(s)
4. Authorized Medical Services Form
5. CLC Parent Signature Page with Enrollment Agreement
6. Child Questionnaire
7. Financial Aid Form
8. Medication Authorization Form (if applicable)

Arrival and Departure Procedures

- Please remember to log your child in and out every day as you escort him or her to and from the Center. The sign-in station is located at the front table. Signing in and out is required by the Connecticut State Department of Health for the purposes of attendance, staffing, and safety.
- Each child must be accompanied out of the CLC by a parent or guardian. Please inform a teacher of your departure.
- Please remember to check your child's cubby and your mail slot daily for belongings and/or notices from the center's staff.
- Special conditions: If we determine a parent, guardian, or authorized person is not mentally or physically capable of taking custody of a child, we will contact the following persons in this sequence: spouse, (if applicable), individuals listed on your child's Authorized Release Form; New London Police Department; Connecticut Department of Child and Family.
- For the safety and health of the children under our care, never leave your car running (even in the colder months) in the parking lot while you drop-off or pick-up your child.
- Please do not leave either keys or children in your car when either dropping-off or picking-up your child.

Beginning on a Positive Note

When you arrive at the Center, please let the teacher know that your child is here. Often children enjoy showing their parent a special place in the room and want to spend a few moments with you. Other children are quick to say goodbye. Every child should begin his or her day on a positive note. Try to read your child's cues.

At one time or another, most children go through a stage of tearful goodbyes. We will help you to separate in a clear, loving, and consistent manner. In most cases, after the parent is out of sight the child recovers quickly and the separation is actually more difficult for the parent. Some children demonstrate challenging goodbyes at the beginning of the year, while others wait a month or two to feel comfortable enough to show their sadness. The National Association of Educators for Young Children (NAEYC) reminds us that, "separation is a lifelong process".

Helpful tips:

1. Say goodbye with a hug or a kiss, but don't insist upon it from your child.
2. Be cheerful. If you look sad or worried, your child may wonder why and feel less secure.
3. Tell your child when you will be back. (i.e. after rest, after snack etc.)
4. Establish a routine time for drop-off and pick-up.
5. If you need reassurance after a tearful goodbye, call the CLC later in the morning. You'll feel better knowing that your child has adjusted and is busy playing.

Birch Classroom Morning Routine

- Enter the side door of the Birch classroom
- Hang up coats and take shoes off
- Have your child put on their slippers
- Place lunch box on shelf in kitchen
- Rest stuff goes into the cubby in the hallway. Rest things will be brought in on Monday and sent home on Friday.
- If you are bringing in a change of clothing, please let the teacher know and he/she will put them in the designated extra clothing bin in the cubby by the classroom.
- Winter and rain gear will go in the cubby where extra clothes are stored. There is a boot tray for snow boots and rain boots under the sink in the main classroom.
- Mailboxes are found in the hall on the right side of the cubbies. This is where your child's important documents, letters home, artwork and investigations are. Please remember to check them regularly because they can fill up quickly.
- Sign your child in and out in the front lobby and then exit through the front door.
- After you have checked in your child, you are welcome to stay and play/read. During the first couple weeks however, we ask you help them through their drop-off routine without lingering. This will help ensure a smoother transition for your child.

Hickory Classroom Morning Routine

When your child first arrives in the morning, they will have a few tasks to complete.

- changing shoes
- hanging up jacket
- putting away lunchbox
- washing hands
- sign-in

At the entrance, there is also a box where student's work as well as informative papers to go home will be located. Please check this box on a regular basis as it can fill up quickly. Parent sign-in and out is located at the door down the long hallway, across from the Loose Parts Library.

After you have dropped off your child, you are welcome to stay and play/read. During the first couple weeks however, we ask you help them through their drop-off routine without lingering. This will help ensure a smoother transition for your child.

Late Pick Ups

Because child/staff ratios must be maintained during all hours of operation, please make every effort to pick-up your child on time. In the event of an emergency, if you are unable to pick-up your child, please contact the CLC as soon as possible and make other arrangements for your child to be picked up. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for any additional time your child spends at the CLC. Late fees will be added to your tuition account. Late pick-ups upset some children and create additional responsibilities for teachers. Chronic late pick-up may result in your child's dismissal from the CLC or a \$10 per hour/ per day fee added to your tuition account.

Half-day pick-up by 1:00 p.m. If your child is enrolled in the half-day program, picked-up time is 1:00pm.

Preschool day pick-up is 4:00 p.m. If your child attends the preschool day program, pick-up time is 4:00pm.

The Children's Learning Center closes promptly at 6:00pm.

Procedures for Late Pick-up

1. If a parent has not arrived at the CLC by 6:05 PM for the full-day session, or 1:05pm for the half-day session, and there has been no call informing the CLC of the emergency, a staff member will call the parent. If the parent cannot be reached, the emergency pick-up contact will be called.
2. Two staff members must stay on site with your child.
3. If parents and emergency contacts cannot be reached, and the child is at the CLC at 6:20pm, 1:25pm, the Director will be notified.
4. After contacting the Director, the New London Police Department will be called.
5. After the police have been contacted, the Connecticut Department of Child and Family Services will be called.
6. Notifying the CLC that you are going to be late does not excuse you from paying late charges.

Authorized Person(s) picking up your child

At any time, if a person the staff doesn't recognize enters the building to pick-up a child, they will be asked for photo identification. When an authorized person from your registration form comes to pick-up your child, they must provide the staff with photo identification, be at least 18 years of age, and have proper car seat restraint. At no time may an unauthorized person pick-up your child; in cases of emergencies, families may email and follow-up with a phone call to confirm a new authorized person.

Communication

Open communication between parents and staff is essential. Feel free to speak briefly to your child's teachers when you drop-off or pick-up your child. Longer conversations can be arranged via private meetings and/or phone calls. If you have concerns, please discuss them with your child's teacher(s). If further input is needed, the director will facilitate discussions and work with staff and parents to brainstorm solutions. In addition, we will keep you informed in the following ways:

1. Our monthly newsletters describe CLC and classroom activities and upcoming events.
2. The Parent Information Board has news and topics of interest for families.
3. Family orientation conferences are scheduled in the fall to set goals for your child and in the spring conferences are planned to discuss your child's development during the year. Additional conferences may be scheduled at your request or the request of the teacher or director.
4. Learning experience plans for each week are posted on the Parent Information Board and available via email and website. They describe the planned activities and on-going projects for the week.
5. Each day a teacher posts a synopsis of the day's activities.

Other options for communication include brief notes or emails to share with teachers comments or conversations your child is having at home regarding school. Phone calls with your child's teacher can be scheduled as well. Please check your parent mailbox daily for notes from your child's teacher and notices from the CLC. We strive to support non-English speaking families by working with community members to provide translation services.

Changes in contact information: If the contact information you provided the CLC changes, please notify the staff immediately. The teachers need this information to reach you in the event of an emergency. Teachers also use this information to communicate with you. Your cooperation in this important matter is greatly appreciated.

Financial Information

Our tuition schedule has been established to provide your child with the best possible care at the most reasonable price. A non-refundable fee of \$50.00 is due with your registration form. A one week tuition deposit is due one month prior to your start date. A materials fee of \$40.00 is required to be paid annually within the first month of school. For children who enroll later in the year, the materials fee will be prorated. This materials fee covers the cost of a new CLC t-shirt, art materials, and enrichment activities throughout the year.

Policies for Student Accounts

- Tuition is due by the Thursday before the week the student is attending.
- Any payments received after that Tuesday may be assessed a late fee of \$25.00.
- After two weeks of non-payment, the parents/guardians should meet to discuss the child's continuation in the program. When a family experiences hardship they should meet with the director to plan a payment schedule to bring their account current. If a family doesn't keep to that payment schedule they may be asked to leave the program.
- Failure to meet will result in withdrawal from the program.
- Tuition is charged by the week and includes all days regardless of attendance or holidays.
- Accounts with payments returned for any reason, including credit card and debit card payments, will be assessed a \$35.00 charge per occurrence.
- Recurring returned payments may require that payments be made bank check.
- Tuition is not reduced for illness, vacations, holidays, center closings or other withdrawals unless arrangements are made per the guidelines. See sick/vacation policy for details.
- If a student is withdrawn, it is the parents' responsibility to submit a written notice two weeks prior to their child's withdrawal from the center.

- With advanced notification parents will be expected to pay the contracted fees for their student.
- All families are asked to fill out our income data form; this form is only used for School Readiness consideration purposes.

Making Tuition Payment

As we approach your child's start date, you will receive an email from the Director with billing information. All of the billing will take place out of the online Procure Software. As of the Thursday prior to your child's first day, your child will have an active student account and tuition will be billed on an annual basis (this can fluctuate based on changes to your tuition). Each week, on or before Thursday, you will login and make a payment via electronic check, debit, or credit card. You may also login at the attendance computer and make a payment at drop-off or pick-up.

Each week, beginning the second week, you will receive a balance statement in your child's mailbox. If you have questions about a payment or tuition, the preschool staff may be able to help you; any questions or concerns that may arise should be directed to the Director.

Subsidy Program

If your childcare is paid in part by a government or community agency, please be advised that registration fees and late fees are not covered by tuition assistance payments. Families may apply to the Care4Kids program if they are income eligible and meet all the requirements determined by the Connecticut Department of Social Services. The CLC will help in filling out the necessary paperwork for eligible families. Families are responsible to make tuition payments, based on the income form data, until Care4Kids becomes active and approved. The CLC is also an approved New London School Readiness program; for 6 full day/full year preschool spaces and 1 school day/school year spaces. Tuition for these spaces is based on the current State Department of Education Child Day Care (CDC) and School Readiness sliding scale fee. After families fill out the financial forms, their family may be eligible to receive tuition at a discounted rate. Approved families are required to discuss any changes to their employment or eligibility with the Director within 2 weeks of the change.

Upon enrollment, and every six months, thereafter, all families are asked to update their financial aid form and, when necessary, provide supporting documentation (one month's worth of pay-stubs) to show continued eligibility for tuition assistance. Failure to return the necessary documentation may lead to the loss of assistance and/or enrollment. After the review of updated financial forms and needed documentation, the Program Director will calculate the fee and provide a Tuition Agreement that both the parent/guardian and the Program Director signs. The parent/guardian receives a copy and the original is attached to the determination/redetermination packet in the child's file. Fee calculation is reviewed with families. All families who are eligible for assistance will have money available to them at the time of their eligibility, based on availability of funds. Should funds not be available, eligible families will be put on a waiting list and, once funds become available, receive assistance in the order in which they enrolled. Families will retain tuition assistance for as long as they remain eligible, based on the Department of Social Services Family contribution equations or rates and the School Readiness Sliding Fee Scale.

Tuition and Fees

All tuition is based upon the yearly cost of the program.

Contact the Center for the current rate of cost for care. The center offers the following programs:

- Preschool Full Day Classroom
- Half Day Program Classroom
- Before-and-After School Program
- Summer Camp program

Withdrawals

We require two weeks written, advance notice of your child's withdrawal from the program. This provides an opportunity to notify another family of the opening. Our CLC reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program if tuition obligations are not met, or it is determined that the child is not adjusting to the program. We will make every effort to assist a child needing an alternative placement.

Tuition charge policy:

Each family will be charged for the weeks/date they have decided to enroll until. Full pay families will not be charged tuition for the week of Christmas, two teacher professional development days, and three days prior to the new school year, late August. Please refer to the current Children's Learning Center calendar for current dates.

Curriculum

The Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College has a curriculum nested in its environmentally rich surroundings. Based on principles that make children partners in the learning process, the curriculum is driven by each child's unique curiosity.

Our focus incorporates the Reggio Emilia approach to learning; this inspired way of teaching was originated in Italy and has a strong belief that the classroom environment is shaped by the children's interests, the community, and the value of learning hands-on:

- All children have potential and curiosity.
- Children have interest in relationships, in constructing their own learning, and in negotiating with everything the environment brings to them.
- Children should be considered as active citizens with rights, as contributing members, with their families, of their local community.

Our methods are built on these principles:

- The Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College will bring the environment into the classroom through experiences with the surrounding woods, pond, and beach.
- Our teachers and children will guide their own learning by integrating curiosity and rich materials with natural possibilities as they observe and listen to each other's needs.
- Teachers use their understanding of best classroom practices to ask questions and thus discover the children's ideas, hypotheses, and theories.
- The families, children, and teachers will work together as a partners in the process of learning.

Teachers are expected to design a developmentally appropriate curriculum based on the interests of children and staff through the principles and focus described above. The CLC uses an emergent curriculum approach to learning. Team planning for curriculum is required weekly to provide the best possible outcome. Materials, equipment, and furnishings selected must reflect curriculum and program goals for children. Lesson plans must be posted each week but are encouraged to have a monthly focus or project the children are working on.

In order to meet nutrition and exercise a guideline, the following policies are to be followed and reflected in your curriculum plans and lesson:

- Each classroom will prepare one snack and/or nutrition activity weekly.
- Children will have a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity (Raising the heart rate) daily for full time children and 30 minutes for morning only children.
- Snack menus will be designed and posted monthly. Parent involvement is encouraged and suggestions welcomed.

Staff is expected to record daily events for each child through an appropriate form of documentation. This could be photographs, journal reflections, teacher notes, and work samples. Observations and projects must be tied to the CTELDs. Teachers should work to select standards as the first step in intentional teaching to plan your curriculum focus. Anecdotal charts and naturalistic observations are key to better understand the children in the classroom. When indicated, teachers will work with the Director and families to make referrals for further evaluation work with specialists to implement IEP's. When requested by families, teachers may attend a PPT to provide input and support families.

Walking Fieldtrips

On a regular weekly basis the preschool will plan and execute walking fieldtrips to the Mitchell beach, Mitchell woods, or fishpond. Teaching staff are required to bring a first aid kit, campus safety 2-way radio, any necessary medications, and cell phone. Staff must notify the Director upon departure and arrival to and from the CLC. Children are encouraged to bring their reflective journals and collecting bags on walks.

Technology in the Classroom

The use of appropriate technology with the children is supported by the curriculum. iPad and cameras are considered to be a learning tool; teachers are encouraged to apply this type of technology to everyday experiences with the children. Children are seen as capable learners; cameras should be an everyday tool at their disposal.

Toys from home

We realize that children like to share their toys or favorite things from home. At the CLC we ask that toys stay home, unless asked for by the teacher for a project or special activity. Toys from home can be a distraction to the program and may not coincide with our learning and teaching philosophy.

Clothing

The best clothes for your child's school day are easy fitting and assure independence. Play clothes should be comfortable, washable, and appropriate for the weather conditions of the day. Outside play is very important, so don't forget to have your child wear boots, mittens, hats, and long pants in the cold weather. Some of our activities are messy, so please provide two sets of clothing labeled with your child's name in a bag. Soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag for you to take home for laundering.

Assessments

The Children's Learning Center values observation of children's learning as a key component of assessment and lesson planning. Throughout the day teachers photograph children's play, their creations, and their engagement in certain small group activities. Teachers also scribe children's conversations, comments and questions. All of this observation is turned into documentation panels, which inform teachers reflections, assessments, and lesson planning.

The Children's Learning Center teaching staff use CT DOTS as their main assessment tool. The Master Teachers were trained in the use of CT DOTS and continue to attend relevant training on a yearly basis. Assessments are shared with families at teacher-parent conferences twice a year, as well as any additional conferences that are scheduled as needed. Our approach to assessment also includes the Reggio-inspired approach to assessment called Documentation. Documentation and CT DOTS align well, as CT DOTS relies on visual documentation, as well as documentation of children's conversations.

Special Services/Referral Process

If parents and/or teachers have developmental concerns, the screening and observation results may be shared with specialists for further evaluation and consultation to promote age appropriate development. We may recommend that you contact your pediatrician or public school for a more thorough examination. At times we have found that children and families may benefit from additional services such as physical therapy, speech therapy, social work referrals, neurological testing, or counseling. Referrals for these services will be made with parental consent. Whenever possible, when connecting families to services, the family's home language will be used and cultural needs will be respected. Our program will make the referral and follow up to ensure that requested services take place. At all times our families confidentiality will be protected when requesting outside services.

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Conferences

Teachers will keep individual child portfolios for each child in the program. A portfolio checklist is available within the curriculum guide. Teachers will plan conferences with families 2-3 times a year to communicate standards, work samples, and goal planning.

Our Approach to Discipline and Behavior Support

In order to ensure a safe and secure atmosphere for children and staff, and support the emotional and social development of all children the Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College has a detailed discipline and behavior support approach and policy. Please feel free to speak to the Director if you have any questions about this policy.

The CLC is dedicated to helping children learn appropriate social and emotional skills. All children will require support from time to time. The CLC embraces the following methods for managing challenging behaviors:

- Staff will build strong relationships with children – relationships are the basis for supporting children to develop appropriate social behavior.
- Staff will create a routine and stick to it. Staff will be willing to adjust the routine to meet individual children's needs. Staff will provide information about the routine, through a visual calendar, transition warnings, and explanations about changes to the routine.
- Staff will use natural consequences, and give warnings about consequences: If _____, then _____.
- Staff will encourage children to communicate with their peers to solve problems, and support each other. Instead of telling children to say "I'm sorry," staff will encourage children to "check-in" with each other, asking "How are you feeling?" "What can I do to help?" "Do you want a hug?"
 - When disputes arise among children or between a child and teacher, the teacher will encourage a dialogue process among those involved. The goal of this dialogue process will be to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using children's ideas whenever possible. A child who may be overly aggressive or is repeatedly destructive of other children's work may be asked to make an activity choice in another area if talking things through has not resulted in better self-control.
- Staff will ask questions rather than give directives, putting the choice in the child's hands. I.e. where does your body need to be? Do you need to take space?
- Staff will help children name their feelings. Staff will sportscast when children are having a conflict, helping them to name what is happening.
- When needed, staff will set firm boundaries and clear limits, and inform children of the consequence of breaking those limits.
- Staff will use positive reinforcement – compliment children for the wonderful choices they are making. Staff will give as much positive feedback, as possible!
- Instead of engaging in a power struggle, staff will use *redirection*.
- Staff will assess the function of the behaviors children are displaying.

The only condition under which a child may be physically restrained is if their behavior is a direct threat to the safety of themselves, another child, or an adult. All of the aforementioned methods of behavior management and discipline must be tried first.

Biting:

Although biting can be a normal developmental behavior for young children, it may also present a risk. Therefore, in instances involving biting, the following will occur:

- The Director will be notified to determine whether a medical consultation is required.
- The parents of a child who bites will be notified.
- If the bite results in broken skin, the parent(s) will be advised that a subsequent bite where the skin is broken will result in the child's removal from the program until the biting behavior ceases.
- If the bite results in broken skin, the parents of the child who was bitten will be notified.

Children should always be supervised, regardless of whether the child is taking space to calm their bodies. Under no circumstance are staff permitted to use any form of physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child. Neglect, humiliation, and threats are also unacceptable and not permitted. The following are examples of physical punishment, psychological abuse, and coercion, all of which is NOT permitted:

- Shaking, hitting, spanking, squeezing, punching, excessive tickling, etc.
- Shaming, name-calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, etc.
- Rough handling, physically forcing a child to sit or lie down, or perform an action.

Staff must sign-off on this policy during the orientation process.

Referral Process and Suspension/Expulsion Policy

Staff must communicate with families regarding a child's repeated challenging behaviors. Unsafe behaviors will be documented using an Incident Report, which families will be asked to sign. Overly-aggressive behavior, or repeated behavioral issues, will be discussed with families through Incident/Behavior Reports and a conversation with the child's primary guardian.

Once all of the methods that the CLC embraces for supporting children in behaving safely (described under STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY) have been exhausted, behavior plans will be developed with families to help children develop appropriate/safe behaviors while at school. If necessary, a consultant/behavior specialist may be consulted to support staff and families to meet the needs of all children.

Our goal is to limit the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. The only condition under which a child may be asked to be picked up early due to behaviors is if staff are unable to support the child in regaining control **and** if the child's behaviors are unsafe to themselves or others, including children and adults.

The only condition under which a child may be excluded from the program is if all of the aforementioned interventions have been exhausted **and** a child continues to behave in unsafe ways **and** there is an agreement between staff, director, the family, and the consultant that exclusion is in the best interest of the child.

If exclusionary measures must be taken, the Director will offer assistance to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement for the child. This policy complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

Health & Safety

Health Records

Children need to be in good health in order to get the most out of their school day. All children must have a current health assessment and emergency contact information on file before they begin our program. Annual physicals, including vision and hearing screenings, and up-to-date immunizations are required by the Connecticut Department of Health. When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, guardians, or both provide evidence of an appointment for those services.

Policy for Under Immunized Children

If a child is under-immunized, due to a medical condition or the family's beliefs, the family must complete the appropriate documentation and submit to the classroom teacher. If a vaccine-preventable disease occurs in the program, any under-immunized child must promptly be excluded until the outbreak clears.

Overall health & well-being

Please do not bring your child to the CLC if s/he cannot fully participate in the indoor and outdoor portions of our day. Children with colds (who are mildly ill) may attend if there is no associated fever or decreased activity. In order to prevent the spread of illness, children are reminded to wash their hands frequently, including upon arrival, after toileting, before eating, and before participating in play dough and water/sand play indoors with peers. To support wellness, we discuss health concerns with our health and/or dental consultants.

The program director is available to assist families in securing medical insurance and finding a doctor. Our nurse consultant provides on-site annual vision and hearing screenings. The Mitchell College Psychologist also provides on-site annual developmental screenings to evaluate language, cognitive, gross motor, fine motor, and social and emotional development.

Infectious diseases

In order to reduce the spread of illness, please keep your child home if they exhibit the following symptoms:

- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
Your child may return to the CLC 24 hours after all symptoms have passed.
- Runny nose with green or yellow discharge, or associated with fever or cough with mucous secretion

Any discharge, other than clear, is usually a sign of infection.

- Fever of 100° F or above
Children may return to the CLC after being free of fever for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
- Conjunctivitis or pink eye
Children with red, itchy, draining, or crusty eyes may have conjunctivitis. Please consult your physician. Children may return to the CLC after 24 hours of successful antibiotic therapy.
- Rashes or skin conditions such as poison oak, impetigo, or contagious cold sores: A physician should examine unusual rashes. If the rash is communicable, written MD clearance is needed before the child may return to the Center. For non-communicable rashes children may return to the CLC after sores are crusted over and dried.
- Chicken Pox
Children with chicken pox may exhibit the symptoms of low fever, rash, blisters, scabs, and malaise. Children may return to the CLC after sores are crusted over and dried. We are required to report cases of chicken pox to the Connecticut State Department of Health.
- Lice/Hair infestations
Children may return to the CLC after receiving a specified shampoo treatment and all signs of eggs are gone. Receipt of treatment product needed before child may return to the Center.
- Other
If the Director or the State Health Department determines that it is inappropriate for the child to be at the Center.

If your child becomes ill or injured while at the Center, you will be notified. If you cannot be reached, we will call an emergency contact listed on your enrollment form. To prevent the spread of infectious disease, it is important that you pick-up your child as soon as possible. State licensing mandates that we isolate ill or contagious children from group care. Sick children will be cared for in a quiet area at the CLC until they are picked-up.

Please let us know if your child contracts a contagious disease; we will inform the families in your child's class.

Handwashing policy & procedures

Preschool staff follow universal precautions/standard precautions include the following:

Hand washing

- Before and after feeding a child
- Before and after administering medication
- After handling garbage
- After diapering or toileting children
- After handling body fluids of any kind
- Before and after giving first aid (such as cleaning cuts and scratches or bloody noses)
- After cleaning up spills or objects contaminated with body fluids
- After taking off your disposable gloves
- Remember that wearing gloves does not mean that you don't have to wash your hands!

Non-Latex gloves should be worn

- during contact with blood or body fluids which contain blood (such as vomit or feces which contain blood you can see)
- when individuals have cuts, scratches or rashes which cause breaks in the skin of their hands.

Environmental sanitizing should be done regularly and as needed. In the child care setting this means cleaning toys, surfaces and diapering areas with a bleach solution (1 tablespoon of bleach per quart of water made fresh daily). Blood spills or objects with blood on them need a stronger solution of ¼ cup bleach to 2½ cups water. (Donowitz, 1999). Wear gloves when handling blood.

Proper disposal of materials that are soaked in or caked with blood requires double bagging in plastic bags that are securely tied. Send these items home with the child, or if you wash them, wash them separately from other items. Items used for procedures on children with special needs (such as lancets for finger sticks, or syringes for injections given by parents) require a special container for safe disposal. Parents can provide what is called a “sharps container” which safely stores the lancets or needles until the parent can take them home for disposal.

Toilet training & diapering policy

On occasion, children start the year not fully toilet trained. If your child is working on independent toileting, please provide pull-ups or diapers. Children wearing diapers or not fully toilet trained will be checked regularly (at least every two hours) and after nap, encouraged to sit on the toilet, and will be changed as needed, following the posted diapering procedure posted in the children’s bathroom. Children needing assistance in the bathroom is part of development and self-help skills; children will be encouraged to try on their own.

Medication Administration

The Children’s Learning Center will store and administer prescribed inhalers and epi-pens, non-prescription topical medications and EMERGENCY oral medications (i.e. Benadryl) with parent’s consent. An authorization form, which must be signed by doctor and parent, is available at the Center. The form includes information such as:

- The child’s name, address and birthdate
- The drug name
- The prescribed dosage
- The method of administration
- The time to be administered
- The side effects
- The prescriber’s name and address

All medications must be in their original container and clearly labeled with child’s name and directions for use. Except for non-prescription medications and pre-filled injectable, (i.e. epi-pens) all medications will be stored in a locked container and, if directed by a manufacturer, refrigerated. Controlled medications will be double locked. Non-prescription topical medications and pre-filled commercially prepared injectable medications will be stored away from food and inaccessible to children.

The Center will keep accurate documentation of all medications administered. Included in the documentation are:

- The date the medication was administered
- The time it was administered
- The dose it was administered
- The signature of the staff administering
- Any comments

Staff is trained in the administration of medication by our nurse consultant. This training is renewed every three years. Training for injectable is repeated once per year. At all times, at least one staff person will be in the building who holds a current medication administration certificate.

Special Medical Management Policy

If a child's physician has ordered a special medical management procedure for a child in care, an adult trained in the procedure will be on-site whenever the child is present.

Allergy Management

An allergy management plan will be followed for children who have allergies that affect their health. A physician's order must be on record to provide the necessary care. Allergy management forms are available in the office and must be completed before your child attends school.

Outdoor activities & Rain Play

Children will have a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity (raising the heart rate) daily for full time children and 30 minutes for morning only children. Outside play will take place unless temperatures fall below 20 degrees. To protect against cold, we request that each child come to school, during winter months, with snow pants, boots, mittens/gloves, winter coat, and hat.

Children often take walking fieldtrips around the Mitchell College campus. Our staff carries a well-supplied first aid kit, cell phone in case of emergencies, and Campus Safety is notified. When smog or air pollution levels are reported to be unhealthy, outside time will be limited. Alternate movement activities will be planned. Within our curriculum rain play is expected; each child should have a pair of rain boots stored in their cubby. Rain pants are strongly recommended.

Footwear & extra clothes

Rubber-soled slippers are requested so children may change out of their outdoor shoes; this will help keep our classroom clean and your child's feet dry in the winter months. Rain boots are expected; a pair may be purchased and stored in your child's cubby. All children must have at least 2 spare outfits stored in their extra clothes bin. Staff will request items as needed with use and weather changes.

Sunscreen and bug repellent

Our natural environment provides ample shaded play areas. Regardless, on hot sunny days we recommend that children wear sun-protective clothing and that parents apply sunscreen and/or bug repellent each morning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommends either sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher. With written parental permission, our staff will reapply sunscreen and/or insect repellent each afternoon.

Toothbrushing

Children have the opportunity to brush their teeth after lunch. Please provide a labelled toothbrush and labelled toothpaste in a labelled enclosed case, if you would like your child to brush his/her teeth.

Afternoon Rest Time

For children in the full day preschool program adequate rest and/or quiet time are necessary for a growing child. A cot/mat is provided by the CLC for your child and will be disinfected and cleaned weekly or more often if necessary. Please bring a small blanket labeled with your child's name and take it home weekly for laundering. A cuddly toy is comforting for those who like to hold onto a familiar object at rest time. In accordance with state law and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program standards, all children attending full day programs must rest for a period of time.

Environmental hazards

In order to ensure your child's health and well-being, our CLC follows State of CT Dept. of Health guidelines, including testing for environmental hazards.

Accident Reports

Although many precautions are taken to ensure a safe environment, occasionally accidents do occur. If an injury does occur, first aid is administered and you will be informed either by telephone or at pick-up time. The staff completes an accident report which we keep on file at the CLC. Parents are asked to sign the accident report to assure that you were notified. Periodically, both our Director and our nurse consultant review our accident reports to identify any persistent safety challenges.

Smoking and firearms

Smoking and/or firearms are prohibited on the Mitchell College campus.

Parking Lot Safety Policy

In order to ensure the safety of all children, we ask that all families agree to the following:

- When leaving your car to pick up your child, please be sure to turn off your car. Idling cars are a danger to children.
- When walking your children from the car to the school, please make sure they hold your hand or stay close to you until you get to the sidewalk or grass.
- Drive slowly and keep an eye out for other families and children.
- No young child should ever be left in a car alone. If a sibling is asleep in the car, please call the school – if a staff member is available, we will happily come to the car to wait with the sleeping child while you pick your child up.

Nutrition

Due to the increasing number of children with severe peanut allergies, the Children's Learning Center is a Peanut-Free facility.

We follow the guidelines recommended by Eat Smart Grow Healthy Program:

- Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- Unless there are extenuating circumstances, food is offered at routinely scheduled times to promote good eating habits.
- Staff model appropriate eating habits and behaviors.
- Water and milk are the primary drinks offered with snack and lunch.
- Classrooms will prepare one snack and/or nutrition activity weekly.
- To prevent choking, children under the age of four will not be served hot dogs, whole grapes, popcorn, chunks of carrots, or hard pretzels.

We also follow the guidelines for portion sizes and the types of food we provide recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The CLC provides two healthy snacks daily, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The snack menu is posted in the kitchen and parent's information board in the front entrance. Upon request we will provide you with a copy of the snack menu each month via email.

Lunches

Lunches are provided by parents or guardians. Please put your child's name on their lunch; any storage container should also have their name on it for clear identification. Children typically will bring a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a yogurt or the prior night's leftovers in a microwavable container or any combination of the above. Lunches should contain a minimum of 4 food groups. If the food in your children's lunchbox requires refrigeration, it MUST have an icepack in the lunchbox; we will not allow lunchboxes in the refrigerator. If an item in your child's lunch will need to be heated at lunchtime, it should be placed in the appropriate basket in the kitchen's refrigerator with your child's name clearly marked. No gum, soda, sweets or candy, please. We do ask that mac and cheese cups be eliminated from our lunchtime, the time allotted to make and heat those is too difficult. Mac and cheese can be heated up but not cooked. Teachers will inform parents of their child's eating habits when necessary.

Birthdays & Outside Food

The Children's Learning Center is a peanut-free facility. All outside food must be labeled and provide a list of ingredients. Our philosophy strongly encourages family involvement and healthy eating. We welcome healthy store bought options or homemade items with specific ingredient lists attached.

Candy/Sugary Sweets Policy

To uphold the Children's Learning Center's philosophy to provide and administer nutritional snacks and foods, and to be respectful of different family's values, cultures, and children's sensitivities, candy is to remain at home. If candy comes to school, it will not be distributed but instead will be sent back home. During times where children may want to share something with their peers, we welcome items such as healthy snacks, handmade gifts, stickers, etc. as alternatives. This policy does include holidays.

Severe Weather Closure Procedure

We will make every effort to remain open on bad weather days. However, if the CLC needs to close for the safety of the families we serve, and our staff, it will be announced on local radio stations; we will follow Mitchell College's closings, delays, and early dismissals.

WFSB Channel 3	Q105 105.5 FM	WTYD 100.9 FM
WTNH Channel 8	WBMW 106.5 FM	WNLC 98.7 FM
WVIT Channel 30	WKDC 107.7 FM	WCTY 97.7 FM

In the event of severe weather that begins in the middle of the day, the CLC will close when Mitchell College closes. In this instance, parents will be notified by phone. If a parent cannot be reached, an emergency contact will be called.

Family Involvement

Family Advisory

We strongly encourage our families to take part in our classrooms and programs. Parents are invited to share their ideas for enriching the environment and programs. The Director approves all mailings and emails sent to families.

If interested, parents may actively take part in serving the CLC in the following ways:

1. Planning monthly family fun events
2. Coordinating community service projects
3. Arranging teacher appreciation activities
4. Organizing fund raising activities
5. Planning enrichment activities for our children

Family Engagement Nights

Throughout the year, the CLC will coordinate educational programs and family involvement activities. Please see the CLC calendar for planned dates. The teaching staff will brainstorm topics with the Director and assist in planning all educational programs; family input is always accepted.

In the spring and late summer of each year, our CLC will provide support to children and their families as they transition to kindergarten.

Participating in the classroom

We have an open door policy stating that parents are always welcome in our Center. Family involvement is an integral and valued part of our program. Please join us at lunchtime, for cultural activities, literacy events, and family education programs.

If you would like to volunteer your time and/or talents, please let us know. If you are interested in becoming a substitute teacher or volunteering on a regular basis, please see your classroom teacher.

Birthdays and Holidays

Birthdays are special to children. If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday in the classroom, please make arrangements with your child's teacher. There are many ways to celebrate your child's birthday. You can:

- donate a book to the CLC in your child's name
- bring in a photo board of your child when s/he was born
- tell a special story about your child

If you plan to spend time in your child's classroom please speak to your child's teacher one week prior to their birth date.

Holidays

The CLC will be closed in recognition of various holidays throughout the year. Please refer to your calendar. At the Children's Learning Center we will be mindful of celebrating holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, and religious events. Instead, families are encouraged to share their family traditions with teachers and children in the classroom. Please speak with your child's teacher to schedule a time to share your traditions with your child's class or discuss the option of celebrating holidays.

Transition to Kindergarten

The following is a list of ideas generated through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Our teachers will help with this transition and offer guidance to families.

- Talk with the children about their feelings about the change. Share your own feelings, too. Children should have many opportunities to talk about their fears and concerns. It is okay to say you will miss them and that you are also proud they are growing up and moving on.
 - Write and illustrate a class book about children's and teachers' feelings about going to kindergarten.
- Invite a kindergarten teacher to visit your program to explain what happens in kindergarten and answer questions. Prepare the children beforehand. If you have not done so yet, introduce the K-W-L format (what we know, what we want to know, what we have learned).
 - Make a list of the children's ideas about what kindergarten is like.
- Support the children who are going to different schools. Ask parents to take photographs of the school the children will attend and share them with the class. Use them to lead a discussion about what to expect.
 - Make a bulletin board about kindergarten using all the photographs and comments from the children.

Supporting learning at home

In addition to these ideas for easing the children's transition to their new classroom, we also have some suggestions to help families. It is our role as early childhood educators to help families understand what kindergarten readiness really means. Children who are ready for kindergarten can take care of personal needs such as hand washing and going to the bathroom. They have the motor skills needed for activities requiring coordination and balance, such as bike riding, skipping, or participating in team sports. They have developed the small muscle coordination needed to hold and write with a pencil or other tool. In addition, they can regulate their own behavior and express their feelings with words, and can learn math, reading, and other academic skills at the kindergarten level.

Most families already do activities at home that support their children's experiences and learning in our program. However, it is always helpful to provide reminders of some of the simple tasks that water the seeds of lifelong learning. We encourage you to

- Read to your child every day
- Provide crayons for drawing and scissors for cutting

- Do playful number activities such as counting, telling the number before and after a quantity, and telling how much you have when there is one more or one less than a quantity
- Offer markers, Legos, and other small manipulatives to support development of your child's grasp and fine motor coordination
- Give your child opportunities to make decisions and smart choices
- Institute early bedtimes and provide healthy meals

Reaching out

We are here to help support our families. We will remind of kindergarten orientations and open house dates in our area. Families can support kindergarten transition activities with your child. You can

- Attend an open house in the fall (many schools have these)
- Attend orientation in the spring
- Visit the school and meet the kindergarten teacher
- Shop for school supplies (teachers typically provide a list)

Communication between teachers

In addition to thinking about our children and families, it is also good for our preschool and local kindergarten teachers to network, share information, and do joint planning. In some locations, there are kindergarten discussion groups in which preschool, kindergarten, and first grade teachers get together to talk about common issues. This networking shows families that teachers are working together to ensure all children learn and make progress toward achieving early learning standards. It is reassuring to families to know that if children are ready to enter kindergarten, they will also be able to meet kindergarten standards throughout the year.

Services for Families

Supporting the whole family is an important part of supporting the child. Please speak with the program director if you are interested in adult education programs, job training, public library services, and accessing services such as WIC/EBT, the New London Food Pantry, and Emergency Energy Assistance.

Protocol for emergency situations follows

1. Emergency Phone Numbers:
 - a. Children Learning Center: 860-701-5348
 - b. Ambulance, Fire, Police 911
 - c. Mitchell College Security 0459 – on campus; if answering machine comes on, call right back Security 443-0214 – off campus phone

Please Note: When calling these numbers from off campus, you must call the switchboard (701-5000) before the extension.

2. Fire Drill Procedure:

- a. Remain calm and in control.
- b. Staff needs to get the children out of the building as soon as possible and call the New London Fire Department 911.
- c. Call Campus Safety: 0459. They will assist in keeping children and staff away from the danger zone.
- d. Teachers will gather the children together at the closest outside exit. A head count will be taken to determine if all children are present. During the very cold weather, staff may grab coats to be distributed to the children once they are outside the building.
- e. Teachers will lead the children to the Clarke Center. Walk along the exit driveway to avoid potential incoming cars. Follow side walk to crosswalk area and cross Montauk Avenue to the Clarke Center. A second head count will be taken.
- f. Teachers will collect the daily attendance log and bring the binder with emergency information.
- g. The Director and/or Administrative Assistant will close all windows and doors, and check the building for any children not present at the initial head count.
- h. The Director and/or Administrative Assistant will join the children and staff at the Clarke Center. All will wait and keep the children calm until the building is reported safe for occupancy.

3. Medical Emergency Procedure:

- a. Have one person assess the situation and administer first aid.
- b. The staff member that witnessed the accident will call 911 and Campus Security 459. If the child must be taken to the hospital by ambulance, his/her emergency card must be taken to the hospital by the staff member accompanying him/her.
- c. Emergency services will be provided at:
Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, 365 Montauk Ave., New London
442-0711
- d. A staff member will call the child's parent and describe the incident and the plan of action.
- e. If the parent cannot be reached, call the emergency person listed on the child's emergency card.
- f. If a staff member is to accompany the child in the ambulance, another staff member will call for a substitute to take his/her place to maintain the required supervision. A substitute list is available near the phone.
- g. An accident report must be filled out as soon as possible by the staff member who witnessed the accident. This form must be signed by the parent. A separate log of accident reports is kept in the office.

Note: Call Campus Safety (ext. 0459) if assistance is needed.

4. Evacuation Procedure:

- a. In the event of an emergency where the children cannot return to the building for a period of time, they will be taken to the auditorium at the Clark Center across the street on the Mitchell College campus. Teachers will lead the children to the Clarke Center. Walk along the exit driveway to avoid potential incoming cars. Follow side walk to crosswalk area and cross Montauk Avenue to the Clarke Center.

- b. The Director and/or Administrative Assistant and/or staff will notify all parents. The CLC cell phone should be brought to the Clark Center by either the Director or the Administrative Assistant.
- c. Follow the same procedures as those listed for a fire drill.
- d. Note: If evacuation is indicated by a state run incident at Millstone or other occurrence, staff will be notified of the precautionary transfer of students. Follow state evacuation procedures: Since our program is located in New London, staff will transport children in their personal vehicles to Windham High School following Route 32. Staff is required to keep their gas tanks at least half full in case of such an occurrence. Additional staff on campus may support this evacuation if deemed necessary. Parents may transport their child if they arrive at the CLC before our evacuation to Windham High School begins.

5. K-I Administration Plan:

In the event of a nuclear disaster, K-I pills are kept in a locked medicine cabinet in the downstairs handicapped accessible bathroom. The Director and the Administrative Assistant will use class rosters to administer medication. Classroom teachers will verify the name and identity of each student. Parent permission slips have been signed and are kept with the emergency binder. If any parent has indicated that a child should not receive the K-I pill, none will be given to the child. The Director or other designated individual will post the evacuation site on the door of the Center. Campus safety will be informed.

6. Bomb Threat Procedure:

- a. Evacuate building and proceed to Clarke Center.
- b. Call Campus Safety 0459.
- c. Do not enter building until cleared by Campus Safety or local law enforcement.

7. Lock-In Procedure:

- a. In the event that a possible dangerous and/or hostile situation exists in our surrounding environment, the police will contact the Mitchell College Campus Safety department.
- b. Campus Safety (ext. 0459) will alert the CLC staff.
- c. All children must be brought inside the building immediately.
- d. Lock all doors.
- e. We will meet and proceed upstairs, lock the doors, and wait with the lights off.
 - 1. Note: If staff is out and about on the grounds with children, a plan will be determined with Campus Safety and the Director.
 - 2. In extremely dangerous situations, such as a subject with a weapon, children should stay clear of all windows and doors.

8. Securing the Building:

- a. Front doors are locked at all times.
- b. Family members may ring the bell for entrance.

Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Policy

Child Abuse Policy:

Child safety is paramount. Therefore, policies and State of Connecticut statutes exist to ensure that child care staff understand child abuse and are prepared to assist in protecting children from abuse or neglect.

- Children's Learning CLC staff is mandated by law to report within 12 hours reasonable suspicions of abuse or neglect to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (CDF). A written report must be submitted to DCF within 48 hours of making an oral report.
- Staff has received training on identifying and reporting cases of abuse and neglect.
- Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowable under Connecticut state law.

Domestic Violence Policy:

The staff will try to support families who are exposed to domestic violence in a variety of ways.

- Referral information is available in the office.
- We will attempt to enforce existing restraining or protective orders. However, we will need a copy of the order for our files to assist with a protection order.
- Descriptions, photographs, and car descriptions of those ordered to stay away from the CLC or its clients will be very helpful in enforcing a protection order.
- While confidentiality is a priority, staff and campus security will be advised of court orders and/or concerns about domestic violence in order to provide protection to the children and parents of our Center.
- Occasionally two court orders are issued which conflict, granting each party a restraining order against the other. If this situation arises, Mitchell College Campus Security will contact the New London Police Department to assist us in determining how best to accommodate the conflicting court orders.
- In some instances, the exposure to domestic violence creates such a risk for a child that staff will be mandated to report the situation to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

Negotiation Disagreements

If a family ever encounters a difficulty or difference of opinion with a teacher and they are unable to mediate the difference directly with the teacher, the family is encouraged to contact the Director for guidance and mediation support. If the family encounters a difficulty or difference of opinion with the Director, the family is encouraged to reach out to Dr. Catherine Wright, Dean of the College.

Additional Information

Is there information that you would like to see included in the Family Handbook? If so, please speak with the Director.

Closing Statement

We hope that you will sense that we have created a home away from home for the children at our center. We appreciate feedback from any visitor or family member. We are pleased to elaborate on any facets of our program. Tours are available by prior arrangement to small groups of persons wishing to see quality programming for children.

Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Parent Handbook for the Children's Learning Center at Mitchell College. While I understand that the Parent Handbook is neither a contract nor a legal document, I recognize that it is my responsibility to read and understand the policies, provisions, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook.

In addition, I understand that the contents of the Parent Handbook are subject to change. I acknowledge that the Parent Handbook will be revised in accordance with the rules or regulations of state, federal, and accrediting entities, best practices for child care service providers, or at the discretion of the Administration of Mitchell College. I recognize that any such revisions will supersede, modify, or eliminate the current contents of the Parent Handbook.

I understand the techniques used to manage child behaviors in the facility and these ideas have been discussed with me prior to enrollment. A review of these policies is available to me as needed during the period of the child's enrollment.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to stay informed of policy and procedure revisions to the Parent Handbook, which will be posted on the Children's Learning Center website at www.mitchell.edu/clc. In the event I do not have internet access, I understand that I can obtain a hard copy of the updated Parent Handbook upon request to the Children's Learning Center.

Moreover, I recognize that it is my responsibility to contact the Director for any questions I might have about the contents of the Parent Handbook now and in the future.

_____ Guardian Name (Print)

Guardian Signature

Date

Hard copy of Parent Handbook Provided by:

Children's Learning Center Staff Member - Signature

Child Registered in Program (1)

Child Registered in Program (2)

10 Ideas for Interactive Literacy Activities at Home

1. Books, books, books! Place baskets with age appropriate books throughout your home and in the car.
2. Read to your child every day.
3. Consider making or buying felt story boards to go along with your child's favorite books.
4. Make a letter matching game using letter cards and stones with letters written on them with permanent markers.
5. Bath time letter identification: bring plastic letters into the bath for your child to hold (feeling the shape with their fingers) and name.
6. Sensory letter tracing: fill a shallow box with some sand or salt, include large letter cards for child to trace the shape of the letter in the sand.
7. Play a scavenger hunt game: find objects around the house that start with the letter ____.
8. Play a sorting game: sort plastic/wooden letters by lines – do they have curvy lines or straight lines?
9. Encourage your child to write his/her own stories.
 - a. Provide blank paper stapled together in the shape of a book and crayons, markers and/or colored pencils.
10. Create a literacy area in the living room or your child's bedroom or playroom with the following open-ended literacy materials:

- a. Scrabble pieces or other form of letters
- b. Small chalk or white board with chalk or dry-erase markers
- c. Letter stamps and stamp pads
- d. Note pad “journal” and colored pencils, crayons, and markers



Kindergarten Orientation Activities for Families

1. Attend the annual Kindergarten Festival organized by the Children’s Learning Center and open to all families. Held in January, the festival orients families to the many options available in New London and surrounding towns.
2. Talk with your child about their feelings about the change. Share your own feelings, too. Children should have many opportunities to talk about their fears and concerns.
3. Schedule a tour of a few schools you are interested in. Bring your child. Prepare your child ahead of time by helping them come up with questions for the tour guide, as well as materials or activities they would like the school to have or do.
4. Attend all parent-teacher conferences to ensure that your child is meeting developmental milestones and getting the support they need in preparation for Kindergarten.
5. Ways to support Kindergarten Readiness at home:
 - Read to your child every day
 - Provide crayons for drawing and scissors for cutting
 - Do playful number activities such as counting, telling the number before and after a quantity, and telling how much you have when there is one more or one less than a quantity
 - Offer markers, Legos, and other small manipulatives to support development of your child’s grasp and fine motor coordination

- Give your child opportunities to make decisions and smart choices
- Institute early bedtimes and provide healthy meals
- Allow and support your child to use the bathroom independently, get dressed independently, and wash hands independently.



Kindergarten Orientation Activities for Teachers

1. Write and illustrate a class book about children's and teachers' feelings about going to kindergarten.
2. Make a list of the children's ideas about what kindergarten is like using the K-W-L format (what we know, what we want to know, what we have learned).
3. Invite a kindergarten teacher to visit your program to explain what happens in kindergarten and answer questions. Prepare the children beforehand.
4. Support the children who are going to different schools. Ask parents to take photographs of the school the children will attend and share them with the class. Use them to lead a discussion about what to expect.
5. Make a bulletin board about kindergarten using all the photographs and comments from the children.