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**WELCOME**

We are so excited to have you here and hope that you find this handbook a helpful resource as you and your child begin your exciting journey at Branch Line Preschool.

This is a parent participation preschool and we hope to foster true partnerships among our families and our school. Our goal is to work together to create a joyful experience for both you and your child. Parents are viewed as partners in their child's education. Parents are welcome to share their time and experience both inside and outside the program.

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT BRANCH LINE PRESCHOOL**

At Branch Line Preschool, you play an important role as an extension of Miss Molly's classroom. Each family is asked to assume a helping role.

- » Can you aide in the classroom one morning every other week?  
We need 5 aides a week!
- » Can you be a field-trip coordinator?
- » Can you be an after class lunch monitor?
- » Can you be a classroom cleaner?
- » What do you like to do?

Please take time to consider your talents and how you can contribute. At orientation in August each family will declare their role on a first-come, first-served basis.

**ENROLLMENT & TUITION**

Enrollment is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

A maximum of 12 students are accepted for each class.

A completed enrollment form and registration fee of \$100 is required to confirm enrollment.

Checks should be made out to Branch Line Learning Center LLC and tuition payments deposited in the designated container in the preschool room on or before the first of each month. Alternately, checks may be mailed to the address shown below.

For the 2013-2014 school year a 5% discount will be offered on tuition paid in full prior to August 1, 2013. Tuition may also be paid in 10 equal monthly payments, with the first payment due August 1, 2013 and the final payment due May 1, 2014.

*Tuition covers all academic fees and snacks. We do not require any additional seasonal or annual fundraising to run the program.*

**TUESDAY/THURSDAY PRESCHOOL TUITION**

\$2000/year, or \$200 per month for 10 months.

**MONDAY/WEDNESDAY/FRIDAY PRESCHOOL TUITION**

\$3000/year, or \$300 per month for 10 months.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Branch Line preschool welcomes students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, program, and activities generally afforded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of our educational policies, admission policies or programs.

**COMMUNICATION**

There will be a great deal of information coming your way during the school year. We understand that absorbing and retaining information while parenting a preschooler presents its challenges! Our primary path of communication with parents will be email. Please keep a current email address on record and check your email frequently. Also check the Parent Board posted on the wall above the cubby area to see the monthly calendar and important updates.

**WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

Parents may withdraw their child from the program at any time. However, any payments, including our materials fee, made will not be refunded. We reserve the right to withdraw your child if any of the following conditions apply:

- » Tuition payments are not current.
- » Forms or immunizations are not complete; information is not accurate or current.
- » Child is not or will not be benefitting from program.
- » Child causes a threat to other children or staff.
- » Any school policies are not being followed.

**CALENDAR AND ATTENDANCE****PRESCHOOL HOURS**

Class begins at 8:30AM and ends at 11:30AM.

Please arrive a few minutes early to drop off your child. You will record your child's attendance, including the time of arrival; your child will then wash his or her hands and show their arrival on the "I am here" board. Students will gather for a quiet activity until class begins. Please note that the Creative Play area is closed at this time. It's also helpful to arrive a few minutes early when picking up your child after class. At the end of the day you will sign your child out, including the time of pick-up on the attendance clipboard.

In the Child Information Form you will complete online, you may specify who is permitted to take your child from school. Additions or subtractions to this list may be made at any point during the school year upon notification of staff.

**DAILY SCHEDULE**

8:30 AM–9:00 AM	Quiet gathering activities
9:00 AM–9:30 AM	Circle Time
9:30 AM–10:45 AM	Planning, Choice and Exploration Time
10:45 AM–11:00 AM	Cleanup & Check out
11:00 AM–11:15 AM	Closing circle and preview of next class time

**ANNUAL CALENDAR**

September 3, 2013	Classes begin
November 5, 2013	Election Day
November 27–29, 2013	Thanksgiving Break
December 23, 2013– January 3, 2014	Holiday Break
February 17, 2014	President's Day
April 18–April 27, 2014	Spring Break
May 23–May 26, 2014	Memorial Day

*Conference days will be announced for fall and spring.*

**ATTENDANCE**

On days that your child is not able to come to school due to illness, vacation, etc., please call the school and let us know.

If your child has had a fever or vomited within the past 24 hours, has diarrhea, severe cough, or green or yellow mucous, please keep him/her at home to rest and recover as well as to limit contagion exposure among our young friends and their grown-ups. Please make sure your child is free of all symptoms for 24 hours before returning to class. If your child has a rash, a doctor must provide written approval for returning to school.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER**

When Plymouth-Canton Community Schools are closed due to inclement weather, we are too. Announcements regarding school closings, emergencies, etc. are made on the following television stations: Fox 2 News, WDIV/TV 4, WXYZ-Channel 7 and radio stations-WWJ Newsradio 950, 95.5, 106.7, 100.3, 1130 AM and WJR. You can also check for closings on our website and at <http://www.clickondetroit.com/weather/closings>.

## OUR DAY

*Branch Line School emphasizes values of peace, empathy and kindness, helping students absorb the importance of taking care of their community, both small and large.*

### WHAT TO BRING

A backpack or tote bag. A tote is preferred if possible, because it is easier for little hands to manage.

A change of clothes for water play or toilet accidents; should include replacement underwear and socks. Please label any clothes or outerwear with your child's name in permanent marker.

Comfortable clothing that your child can wear while enjoying classroom activities including art. To make bathroom times easier you may wish to avoid clothing with complicated snaps, zippers, ties and buttons. Elastic waist pants are suggested.

Bringing toys from home is discouraged unless brought for Sharing (our version of show & tell, for Monday–Wednesday–Friday classes).

### CIRCLE TIME

Upon arrival, children are greeted and immediately wash their hands. They engage in quiet activities such as collaborative games or puzzles while they await the arrival of other preschool friends.

During circle time, students and aides sit together and listen carefully to each other and to the day's activity choices, including art center, discovery center, snack and sensory table. We sing, play group games and read stories. Physical activity is important for every aspect of child development and learning, so stories, songs and activities incorporate frequent large and small movement.

Preschoolers are encouraged to sit cross-legged, or “criss-cross applesauce,” in circle, with hands in their own space, raising hands to talk. The children are also encouraged to use the bathroom and drink water as needed, without express permission. These guidelines support learning self-control while teaching independence and responsibility for attending to personal needs.

Aides are encouraged to use soft pats on the back, open laps and direct words of encouragement to support student participation in circle time.

**PLANNING**

Following circle time, children work in small groups with Miss Molly or an aide to complete individual daily plans.

The plan is a cornerstone of the Branch Line School philosophy, and gives students control over their unique experiences within a carefully constructed framework designed to encourage curiosity, exploration and discovery. Student plans nurture forethought, time management skills and independence while providing self-directed motivation for learning. The plan also facilitates daily letter stroke practice and word recognition. Planning makes the learning experience inherently individualized for each child.

When plans are ready, they are hung in an accessible area for children to refer to throughout the day. Plans are sent home each day, and provide a perfect jumping off point for a conversation between you and your child about the school day. You'll find that students are excited about their plans and as they grow, they will demonstrate increasing pride in and ownership of their choices and skills.

**CHOICE & EXPLORATION TIME**

Once plans are ready, children may investigate all corners of the classroom. Students may be gently guided to the items they selected on their plans, but if another activity piques their interest, they may choose to add the activity to their day. They may engage in games, puzzles, reading, math games, writing center, creative plan, discovery, sensory tables...the choice is theirs! As projects and activities are completed, they are crossed off the plan and another circled item leads the student to his or her next adventure.

During this time, teachers and aides facilitate, rather than direct, the classroom experience. When sharing or cooperation issues arise, grown-ups model the "Steps to Conflict Resolution" posted in the classroom. These steps encourage discussions between students, facilitated by a classroom adult, to find a result amicable to all involved parties.

**SNACK**

Healthy snacks are a priority and are part of our daily curriculum. Snack ingredients are prepared before class and available during this time. Picture-based recipe cards and simple foods are provided, allowing children to assemble the healthful ingredients to create their snack. Produce, protein and an occasional marshmallow are common ingredients. Water is available to drink.

**DIETARY CONCERNS**

While we strive to make snack offerings a social and communal experience, if your child has a chronic food allergy, or dietary restrictions/sensitivities which are in conflict with the planned snack, parents should provide an alternative which will be available to their child. Monthly snack calendars are posted, and ingredient cards are always available for investigation. Snack packaging is available for all parents to consult before class to assess if there is any allergy risk.

**CLEAN UP AND CHECK OUT**

When the “doing” part of the morning is over, the children work together to clean up and then return to circle for quiet activities. Each child is called individually for “checkout,” a private conference with Miss Molly to discuss the plan and the day.

Finally, the children and grown-ups gather for a good-bye song, celebration of the day and preview of the fun for the next time they get together before outside time (weather permitting).

**SPECIAL EVENTS****FIELD TRIPS**

We will have periodic field trips to round out our areas of study and have some off-site fun! Parents are responsible for transporting and accompanying their children to field trips. Field trip sites may require small fees.

**BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

Birthdays are exciting for all preschoolers. You will receive information about the Branch Line Preschool birthday celebration prior to your child's birthday. Out of caution for food allergies and intolerances, families who choose to extend their child's in-class celebration may wish to offer a small gift to the classroom, such as a favorite game or book, rather than sweet treats.

**GUIDANCE POLICY**

It is our policy to guide student behavior with unconditional gentleness and respect in a consistently supportive, nurturing environment. Under no circumstances should children experience shame, humiliation, or physical punishment under the care of Branch Line Preschool staff or volunteers.

The basis of the guidance and discipline policy at Branch Line Preschool is to encourage positive behavior and facilitate empathetic social learning and self-control. Since children generally desire positive attention from the adults around them, negative behavior is greatly diminished when those adults provide a supportive, nurturing environment.

The staff provides a safe, hazard free setting and careful supervision. Daily scheduling, curriculum plans, room arrangements and staffing patterns are designed to promote positive and enjoyable learning experiences, including respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children. Our foundations of child guidance include consistency in class routines and encouraging positive behavior. Strategies such as redirecting children and setting clear limits are the basis for facilitating self-management when difficulties arise as well as developing self-control in children.

Discipline at Branch Line Preschool is grounded in kindness, tenderness and humanity. It is an extension of our focus on individual growth and development. Each day, and in each situation, we use our experiences, whether calm and bright or stormy and temperamental, as an opportunity to learn from one another and our environment.

Whether a child is aggressive or wronged, the Golden Rule applies: what I want for myself, I must also want for you; what I want from you I must also be willing to give.

The ultimate aim of guidance and discipline methods are to pave the way for children to become self-disciplined and responsible individuals. The following are some ways in which the staff will guide children toward these aims:

- » Holding realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations of three to five-year old behaviors.
- » Setting reasonable, realistic age appropriate rules/limits.
- » Co-constructing the limits; children and teachers together devise rules and limitations.
- » Redirecting the child to the same or similar activity or a more appropriate situation.
- » Giving children appropriate choices. After the choice has been made, supporting the child's decision.
- » Emphasizing what the child should do rather than what the child shouldn't do. Stating suggestions in a positive way, making sure the directions are made firmly enough so that children understand that they are expected to follow the directions.
- » Noticing and modeling desirable behaviors. Example: "I like the way you are sharing." When a child follows clean up directions, staff thanks him or her for their help.
- » When, in the course of a preschool day, further reflection on behavior is required, a child may be removed from the group setting, in the company of a classroom adult, to reduce frustration and embarrassment. When the child and teacher are in a quiet, controlled place, and the child has taken time to feel calm, the following guidelines are enacted.



- » Ensuring the child's attention ahead of discussion by meeting them at eye level and speaking directly to them in a firm, calm and quiet tone.
- » Stating in simple language why the behavior does not work in the classroom. "I can't allow you to hit Timmy. When you hit, it hurts."
- » Identifying non-verbal cues between an aggressor and hurt child. Because it is developmentally unrealistic to expect a child under six to be independently empathetic, adults can narrate what we understand about feelings and try to make connections to them.
- » Encouraging conversation by inviting the child to "Tell me what you think I said." Based on the child's response, using different words of explanation so that the child understands.
- » After the point of aggression has been identified and the discussion points have been repeated, asking for solutions to avoid a similar outcome in the future.
- » If there is a conflict between friends, asking both for solutions for repairing their hurt relationship.

Overall, our desire is to provide consistent modeling of positive actions throughout each school day.

#### **STUDENT AND SCHOOL SAFETY**

At Branch Line Preschool every child's safety is our highest priority. To that end, a minimum of two adults per 12 children is always present. The lead teacher and head aide are OSHA and CPR trained. Volunteer aides must present a completed FIA Clearance Form to be in the classroom.

#### **VISITOR POLICY**

All family and friends of enrolled preschoolers are welcome to visit the classroom. Please notify staff in advance of special visits. Interested families and prospective preschool students may only visit by appointment subject to the lead teacher's approval.

#### **PERSONAL PRIVACY**

Branch Line Preschool admits students who have displayed independent toilet practices. When toilet accidents occur, only the lead teacher or head aide may assist in any changing or cleaning of a student. This will be done with an open door and adherence to OSHA bodily fluids handling practices.

#### **FIRE/TORNADO DRILLS**

Four times each year, we will practice how to carefully evacuate the building in the unlikely event of fire, and safely sheltering in place in case of severe weather. We are sensitive to the anxiety children sometimes associate with drills and strive to make the experience a celebration of safety.

**CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE**

We do our best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed upon arrival, before and after meals and after toileting. We use paper towels for drying hands, so children do not have to use the same towel. We wash our hands frequently with soap. Children use separate cups, plates, bowls and eating utensils. Surfaces are sanitized daily. Toys and other equipment are sanitized on a regular schedule as posted in the classroom.

**HAND WASHING PROCEDURES**

Hand washing is the most important means of interrupting transmission of infection to children and staff. The following is an appropriate hand washing procedure. An visual guide will be posted near sinks to help our young friends learn how to best wash their hands.

1. Use warm water only-not hot, not cold.
2. Wet both hands and wrists well before applying soap.
3. Apply liquid soap to palms first (about 1 tsp).
4. Lather well; spread lather to back of hands and wrists.
5. Continue scrubbing, paying careful attention to fingernails and between fingers. The scrubbing time should be a minimum of 15 seconds.
6. Rinse hands and wrists to remove all soap and detergent.
7. Dry completely.

**UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

Branch Line Preschool takes precautions to protect children and adults from infections resulting from contact with blood or bodily fluids. We adhere to the following guidelines:

- » Paid staff receives training on bloodborne pathogens and Universal Precautions before they begin work.
- » Incidents where blood and/or bodily fluids are involved are treated as though an infection is present.
- » Staff disinfects every surface that may have been contaminated by fluids.

**WHEN SPILLS OF BLOOD OR BODILY FLUIDS OCCUR THE PROCEDURE TO CLEAN IS AS FOLLOWS:**

- » Staff person must first put on disposable gloves
- » Using disposable paper towel, visible material is wiped up.
- » Soiled towels and other soiled materials are placed in a plastic bag and securely tied or resealed.
- » Spills occurring on a hard surface are disinfected immediately with bleach solution (¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon water).
- » Spills occurring on carpeting are blotted with paper towel and the area is spot cleaned with a detergent disinfectant.
- » When cleaning of the area is completed, staff put the contaminated gloves into a plastic bag.
- » Staff washes their hands and the hands of the children involved.

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY****MANDATED REPORTING**

The State of Michigan requires that teachers and administrators report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect. Branch Line Preschool staff will file a report with Child Protective Services and police any time abuse or neglect is suspected. All information gathered about such matters is regarded as strictly confidential and only discussed with appropriate individuals.

**VOLUNTEER REPORTING**

As caregivers, it is our responsibility to look out for the welfare of those in our care. State law does not explicitly require volunteers in child care centers to report actual or suspected emotional, physical, or sexual abuse (although volunteers' licenses/positions separate from Branch Line Preschool may require a volunteer to be a mandated reporter; a list is provided on the Department of Human Services website). Should a volunteer make a report to civil authorities, the law provides that he or she is immune to civil or criminal liability, provided the report was made in good faith and without malicious intent. So while the law does not mandate volunteer reporting, part of our responsibility as caretakers of children is to immediately report the suspected abuse to the appropriate civil authorities. If volunteers suspect abuse or neglect, they will immediately bring their concerns to the Director.

Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and never for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. No single indicator of abuse or neglect is necessarily cause for alarm, but it may be cause to observe a given person or situation more closely. When multiple indicators appear together, however, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with the appropriate paid staff member or, in urgent cases, to make an immediate report to the civil authorities.

#### **EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING**

All staff and volunteers at Branch Line Preschool must provide a Central Registry Clearance.

#### **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

The Michigan Department of Human Services requires all children to have a Health Appraisal Form on file, completed and signed by your child's physician. All medical information must be current and complete. Please immediately inform staff of any medical changes that occur.

#### **SICK CHILDREN**

For the protection of other children and staff, a sick child should be kept home or have alternate care. Parents with a child exhibiting any of the following symptoms will be asked to take the child home for rest and proper care.

- Temperature over 100°
- Chronic sneezing or coughing
- Discharge from nose, eyes or ears
- Diarrhea or vomiting more than once in 24 hours
- Unexplained rash
- Lice
- Any known contagious illness

If a child becomes ill during the day, parents will be contacted and expected to pick up child as soon as possible. In the meantime, sick children will be cared for away from other children. When the child is no longer contagious and is healthy enough to actively play with classmates he or she will be welcome to return to school. This helps protect the health and well being of all of our students and enables us to provide the best possible environment for the children.

#### **IMMUNIZATIONS**

The Wayne County Department of Health requires the school to have immunization records or a waiver on file for each child. Your Health Appraisal Form includes immunization information, or a copy may be obtained from <http://www.mcir.org>.

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

In the unlikely event of a child sustaining a serious injury, accident or illness, the following procedures are in place:

- » First aid will be given.
- » 9-1-1 will be called.
- » Parents or emergency contact of the injured/ill child will be contacted.
- » Child will be transported to institution designated by the family in the enrollment packet.
- » A verbal report will be made to the Department of Human Services within 24 hours of an accident.
- » The incident report for the State of Michigan will be completed and submitted to the Department of Human Services within 72 hours.

**MEDICINE AT SCHOOL**

All prescription and over-the-counter medications to be administered by Branch Line Preschool staff must be listed on the Medication Permission and Instructions form and provided to Miss Molly or Miss Jenni in original, labeled packaging. Prescription drugs must be labeled by the pharmacy with the child's name. An interruption in medication will require a new permission form.

**LICENSING NOTEBOOK**

Effective May 27, 2010, the Child Care Organizations Act (1973 PA 116) requires providers to maintain a licensing notebook which includes all licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans (CAP). The notebook must also include a summary sheet outlining all the reports and CAPs contained in the notebook. The notebook must include all reports issued and CAPs developed on and after May 27, 2010 until the license is closed.

**EXCEPTION:** The special investigation report for any special investigations defined as high risk by PA 116 are confidential and must not be included in the notebook. The licensing consultant will provide a "Letter of Findings" that must be placed in the notebook in lieu of the high risk special investigation report. A copy of the written notification to parents of the high risk investigation must also be filed in the notebook with the Letter of Findings.

- » The center maintains a licensing notebook of licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans.
- » The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.
- » Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past two years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at <http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare>.