



RUTGERS

Community Leadership Center Camden

Early Learning Research Academy

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A FAMILIES' GUIDE TO THE EARLY LEARNING RESEARCH ACADEMY

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Welcome from our Directors

Welcome to the Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy family. We are blessed with the opportunity to receive your children into our new program for Infants and Toddlers and look forward to working together with you as we provide these children with quality experiences that will set the foundation for them to be healthy and successful.

As you enter this new programs and a new partnership, I wanted to share with you the principles that are driving our design and approach for working with your children, since they set the context and tone for our work together. We are committed to:

1. Promoting the growth, development and individual differences of each child.
2. Supporting family-child relationships.
3. Respecting the individuality, culture and language of each child and family.
4. Valuing and preserving teacher/child, child/child, parent/teacher relationships.
5. Using care-giving routines and play as the media for curriculum.
6. Providing a welcoming physical environment that is healthy, safe, aesthetically beautiful and culturally sensitive.
7. Offering a responsive curriculum that respects the child's initiative and abilities and is closely linked to his or her experiences.
8. Using a variety of assessment tools to understand and document children's developmental growth.
9. Offering health consultation, developmental screenings and referrals for appropriate developmental services.
10. Revising practice in response to outcomes measured by ongoing research and documentation through internal and external evaluation.

At ELRA, we will be working to ensure that your child's development and growth is nurtured, respected and appreciated. The family unit will be supported as the family caregivers, whether parents, grandparents, or extended family members are the child's first teachers and ultimately responsible for the ongoing care of the child. This early experiences will be enhanced by the nurturing interactions between teachers, children and families. Learning will focus on hands-on inquiry based experiences with well-organized, varied and stimulating materials. Every child's learning path will be celebrated. Our teachers and staff will ensure that your child is fully prepared to transition successfully into subsequent educational settings.

We welcome your input and participation and thank you for placing your trust in our staff. Your children are the most valued resource and therefore we consider our work an investment in their future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gloria Bonilla- Santiago
Director, Community Leadership Center

Stephanie Rogers
Director, Early Learning Research Academy

Letter from our Family Workers

Dear Families,

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Early Learning Research Academy at Rutgers–Camden. We are delighted to serve you and your children. Our environment is designed to nurture your child's early years of learning.

The program supports not only your child but also the whole family. We encourage you to be actively involved in your child's learning experience. Your Family Workers are available to assist you through this process. Our involvement with you extends beyond your child's initial enrollment and orientation. We also facilitate home visits that allow us the opportunity to keep you abreast of your child's learning and to provide continual holistic support to your family. These visits ultimately bridge the home/school connection that our program highly advocates.

We see our parents as partners and an integral part of our program. Our goal is to provide you and your child with skills necessary for success in early education and future school experiences. In addition to the home visits we also will provide resources or referrals as needed; assist you in becoming a stronger observer of your child's learning style and are available for other developmental and administrative concerns. Keep in mind that our services to your family are not limited to just the above.

Please feel free to contact us throughout the year with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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History of the Early Learning Research Academy at Rutgers–Camden

The Early Learning Research Academy (formerly the Rutgers/LEAP Early Childhood program) was created in 2001. In the last 16 years, over 2500 Camden City children have passed through ELRA and have made a successful transition into primary education.

Each year, ELRA's Preschool Program provides full-day preschool education and health services to three- and four-year old children in Camden City. It is funded as part of the Camden Board of Education's Abbott Early Childhood Initiative and currently enrolls 240 students. Our Non-BOE class currently enrolls 20 students. We also offer an infant/toddler program for 56 students.

The Academy includes six major components:

- 1.** An Early Care and Education Program serving children in Camden City, ages birth to five, and transitioning them into the best schools;
- 2.** A Research Unit providing ongoing evaluation and commissioning research studies on key areas of early childhood development for publication, dissemination and replication, as well as to inform public policy;
- 3.** An Academic Component that will focus on the development of undergraduate and graduate level programs to prepare professionals for the field of early childhood development and education;
- 4.** A Professional Development and Training Center (to include Infant/Toddler, P-3 certification, and CDA credentialing) that will work with service providers, teachers, parents and families as a strategy to build and sustain capacity for the field and provide teachers with appropriate early care credentials and endorsements;
- 5.** A Health Center that will provide comprehensive care for families and specialize in pediatric care; and
- 6.** A Parent Development and Resource Center that will provide parents with opportunities for training and development to maximize their involvement with their children's education strengthen their parenting skills and nurture their leadership skills as partners in the educational process.

Philosophy

The Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy was founded on the philosophy that every child deserves a high quality early childhood experience that builds a solid foundation for future successes.

ELRA's curricula are drawn from the latest educational concepts and teaching techniques. We take the very best from different schools of thought and apply our knowledge to develop a curriculum that promotes learning for all children.

Our care is based on a nurturing attitude that is expressed through:

- Respecting each child and his or her abilities;
- Fostering intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development; and
- Developing positive attitudes through positive experiences.

To support our philosophy, we:

- Employ and train certified professional staff with special qualities needed to work with young children.
- Develop program goals for each age group and provide children with support to reach these goals.
- Maintain bright, inviting, cheerful facilities with ample space for small, well-supervised groups.
- Provide a rich Dual Language curriculum and carefully support our students' developing bilingualism.
- Provide staff with professional development opportunities relevant to specific needs of staff and children.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Early Learning Research Academy is to enhance the future school success of Camden City children from birth through age five by providing high-quality, research-based education and comprehensive wellness services while improving research and best practices in early childhood development and education.

ELRA also seeks to enhance children's future learning and school success by providing high-quality, research-based early care and education, family partnership and ownership, professional development, comprehensive wellness services and community leadership.

C CHALLENGING CURRICULUM

H HIGH QUALITY PROGRAM

I INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

L LIFELONG LEARNERS

D DUAL-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

R RESPONSIBLE & RESPECTFUL CITIZENS

E ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

N NURTURING STAFF

Education Research at ELRA

As the name indicates, the Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA) is dedicated to contributing to the body of literature and research about early childhood development and education. We firmly believe that the more knowledge that is gathered from direct interactions with children, the more informed our educators, advocates and policy-makers become, strengthening our national education, health and other social systems.

The Early Learning Research Academy is maintained as part of the instructional and research functions of the Community Leadership Center at Rutgers–Camden. Among these functions are providing opportunity for observation by students in child studies, psychology and other disciplines who are interested in children; training potential daycare and nursery school teachers; providing experience in the administration of psychological tests by students in Psychology; and facilitation of student and staff research based on children's learning and other processes.

Children in the Center are expected to participate in these instructional and diverse activities. Towards that end parents also give permission for staff and approved researchers to observe and monitor their child's behavior during these activities. Enrollment into this program indicates agreement with and participation in these activities and observations, as well as authorization for children's faces to anonymously appear in photographs and videos taken in our school building in the name of research. Please ask a program administrator if you have questions about these activities and the documentation thereof.

What is an Abbott Preschool?

On May 21, 1998, New Jersey's Supreme Court mandated that children in New Jersey's Abbott districts - the 30 highest poverty districts in the state - receive a high-quality preschool education beginning at age three. The purpose is to prepare children to enter kindergarten with skills and abilities expected at that level. The court's mandate has a strong scientific basis. Intensive, high-quality preschool programs can close much of the early achievement gap for lower income children. This substantially increases their school success and produces a host of life-long benefits, including increased school achievement and social and economic success as adults.

The New Jersey Supreme Court set out a few basic standards for quality preschool education:

- 1) a certified teacher and an assistant for each class
- 2) maximum class size of 15 students
- 3) developmentally appropriate curriculum
- 4) adequate facilities
- 5) health, and other related services as needed.

*As found in Abbott Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines, N.J. Department of Education, February, 2003

Enrollment

The Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy is an equal opportunity provider. We accept applications for admission and employment without regard to race, religion, gender, national origin, color, creed, physical or mental disability or any other protected status.

Registration requirement for infant/toddler

- Child must be at least 8 weeks of age in order to attend ELRA

Registration requirements for preschool

- 3 years old on or before October 1 for preschool registration
- 4 years old on or before October 1 for pre-kindergarten registration

For a child to attend Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy, a registration packet must be completed. This packet consists of the following forms that are required by the State of New Jersey's Department of Education as well as the Department of Human Services and Rutgers University.

- ✓ Registration Form - contains important information such as emergency numbers (including cell phones), your child's special needs and information on pick up authorizations to ensure that your child is released to only the people that you specify.
- ✓ Birth Certificate
- ✓ Immunization, Medical Records, and Current Physical.
- ✓ Proof of Residency in Camden City (BOE classes)
- ✓ Child's Social Security Number
- ✓ Doctor's Release Form.
- ✓ DYFS Information to Parents Form.
- ✓ Child's IEP (if applicable)
- ✓ Emergency Medical Care Form.
- ✓ Photograph/Video/Evaluation Release Form.

All documents must be received PRIOR to enrollment.

Attendance

*Every day is of school is important...
from the first to the last, from preschool to college!*

A child enrolled in an Abbott preschool program is expected to attend on a regular basis. Although attendance is mandatory, your child should not attend if he/she is sick.

It is imperative that your children attend on a regular basis. **Any absence of ten consecutive days can and will result in termination from the program.** Please notify your child's teacher and family worker of any absence of two days or more. Documentation is required upon return.

Any **unexcused** absence of ten consecutive days will terminate your child from the preschool program

Attendance also impacts the wrap around portion of the day (before and after school care). If a child is absent more than 5 days a month (not consecutive) funding is cut for their wrap around care. This jeopardizes the child's enrollment in the before and after school portion of our day and results in a monetary charge to the family. If wrap around care is terminated, the child will only be able to attend the Abbott portion of the day (8:30-3:00 preschool).

To ensure that your child continues to receive both Abbott and wrap around services attendance must be a priority. In the event of an illness a doctor's note is necessary to excuse the absence.

Good Attendance Tips:

- Get a good night's sleep EVERY NIGHT.
- Be ready for the day. The night before school, gather items for the next day (extra clothes, books, forms).
- Be absent for valid reasons only.

Valid reasons for a student's absence:

- Student illness.
- Death in the immediate family.
- Observances of a religious holiday.
- Family emergency.
- Circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent or legal guardian for the safety of a child.

Attendance Intervention Timeline:

- **Second** Absence (Excused or Unexcused)
 - Teacher calls home
- **Third** Absence (Excused or Unexcused)
 - Family Worker calls home
- **Fifth** Unexcused Absence
 - 5-day letter sent home
 - Conference scheduled to develop an attendance improvement contract
- **Tenth** Consecutive Unexcused Absence
 - Termination from program
 - Program informs Camden Board of Education

Lateness

Late arrival disrupts learning and the children's daily routine. Children with wrap-around services can arrive any time after 7:30 AM. Children without wrap-around services are expected to arrive at 8:30 for breakfast. If your child has eaten breakfast at home, they may arrive any time before 8:50 AM.

Please note: arrival after 9:00 AM is considered tardy. Excessive lateness will jeopardize your child's enrollment in the wrap around portion of our program. If you arrive after 9:30 AM you will need a doctor's note to be admitted to the program.

We understand there are unforeseen emergencies, which may result in a late arrival. If this occurs it is necessary to call your child's teacher to order lunch. This should be a rare occurrence.

Separation

Separation can be stressful for parents as well as children. We are here to help in this sometimes difficult, but very common, developmental process. Please understand that this is a common occurrence, especially if it is the child's first experience away from home.

Sometimes children are upset during their first few weeks of school and often do not express anxiety until a few weeks later, when they feel comfortable enough to do so. This is completely understandable because they are in a new environment with people they don't yet know. It will take time for them to develop bonds and relationships with their teachers and other children in the classroom.

When you leave your child, please don't 'sneak out'. Make the good-bye and hug something your child can count on, even if it brings some tears at first. When it's time for you to leave the classroom, after you say your good-byes, make the departure definite. Lingering can make a child unsure of what is expected of him/her. It is helpful when parents develop a routine. Consistency is the key. Over time your child will become accustomed to this routine and learn that you always come back when you say you will.

Arrivals & Departures

- The preschool instructional day begins at 8:30a.m. Children may arrive from 8:30a.m.to 9:00 am. In the event of a late arrival (after 9:00 am) please call your child's teacher so arrangements can be made for lunch.
- **Children will not be admitted to the program after 9:30 AM without a doctor's note**
- ONLY Children with Wrap-Around coverage may arrive any time after 7:30am.
- Classrooms at 532 Cooper Street - Enter the building using the door on the 6th Street side entrance through the playground.
- Classrooms at 501 Cooper Street - Enter using the main door on Lawrence Street.

- Escort your child to the appropriate classroom. Children may not enter the building or classrooms alone. **Child's escort must be 18 or over.**
 - To help control the spread of illness, ALL children are required to wash hands upon arrival and at various times throughout the day.
 - A page is reserved for each child in the sign-in/out book in each classroom. The child's parent, guardian, or designated representative must sign each child in and out each day. All alternate representatives must be at least 18 years of age as noted on the pick-up authorization.
 - No child will be released from the school's care to an adult other than the child's registered parent, adult guardian or designated adult representative.
 - All adults picking up children must provide picture identification. Please inform your contacts to bring it each day.
 - Pick-up time is 3:00pm. A late charge of \$1 per minute after pickup time will be incurred for all late pickups.
 - Children with Wrap-Around coverage must be picked up by the 5:30 p.m. closing time. In the event that a child is not picked up by closing, the school staff will attempt to arrange for an alternate representative to pick up the child.
 - If such arrangements cannot be made, and contact cannot be made with the child's family within a reasonable time, a staff member will call the Division of Youth and Family Services / Police Department to seek assistance in caring for the child until his or her parent/adult guardian is available to pick up the child.
 - Disregard for closing time pick up will jeopardize enrollment in the before and after school portion of our program as well as incur a fee charge of **\$1.00 per minute. All late pick up fees MUST be paid upon arrival**
 - We understand that emergencies arise but excessive lateness will not be tolerated and can result in termination of wrap around services.
 - During pick up, the child must accompany the adult who is picking up.
 - Parents are responsible for the safety and well being of their child(ren) anytime they are at the school including parent programs, drop-off, and pick up times
- Please do not allow your child to be left unsupervised while on school property. (This includes all school grounds, the building, the playground and the parking area.)
- State law mandates that no child may be left in a car that is unsupervised by an adult.
 - State law mandates that car engines must be turned off unless attended by a licensed driver.

Emergency School Closings

Closings, early dismissals and late openings are intended to provide for the safety of the children, families and staff.

We understand the inconvenience that early dismissal causes. However, we cannot control the frequency or severity of storms. When weather is bad make appropriate emergency pick up plans, just in case the weather worsens and requires an early dismissal. Listen to the news. If there is a weather or storm warning, be prepared to pick up early.

Emergency closings are not just 'snow days'. Be prepared and plan for various types of emergencies. While heavy snow or ice is the normal reason for closing, in the past we have had to close due to water emergencies, power outages, and floods.

We follow LEAP Academy's emergency closing policies. In the event of severe weather or other unplanned emergency closing, the media will be notified. For delayed openings the program opens at 9:30 am. Breakfast will not be available on these days.

- The channels to listen to are: KYW 1060, ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX
- The School number is: 639
- The name to look for is: Leap Academy Charter School

Uniforms

Preschool children are required to wear uniforms each day. Samples are on display at the sites.

Shoes: Black plain sneakers or dress shoe. No colors. No boots. No lights. No high heels.

<u>School Year: Girls</u>	<u>School Year: Boys</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navy & red plaid drop waist jumper with round collar• Navy short or long sleeve polo shirt• Navy knee-hi• Navy ribbed or opaque tights• Optional• Cardinal v-neck cardigan sweater	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navy pull on elastic waist or pleated twill pants• Cardinal short or long sleeve polo shirt• Navy/Black socks• Navy v-neck cardigan sweater
Change of Clothing	Field Trips:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gym uniform• Navy sweatshirt and navy sweatpants	ELRA T-shirt (available in preschool office) and navy sweatpants
Winter:	Summer: July 1st – Aug 30th ONLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Girls may wear pants under their skirt for cold weather. They will change after arriving at school.• Boots may be used as weather dictates however, children must change into regular uniform shoes upon entering the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navy blue twill shorts (NO JEANS)• Burgundy or navy polo style shirt.• Shoes/Sneakers MUST BE ALL BLACK (NO LIGHTS, and NO DESIGNS).• Also note that NO SANDALS OR FLIP-FLOPS WILL BE ALLOWED.

Clothing and Supplies

Every child is expected to have two emergency changes of clothes. Please include full sets, including underwear and socks. These are to be kept in the child's personal cubby at school every day. **If we do not have the 2nd change of clothes, you will be called to either bring a change of clothes or to pick your child up.**

All clothing is to be labeled with the child's name. This includes change of clothes, coats, and sweaters. We are not responsible for damaged or lost clothing or personal items. Clothing should be appropriate for the weather. Weather permitting children go outside each day. In the winter each child needs a jacket, scarf, hat and mittens. When spring arrives a sweater is usually appropriate. Girls may wear blue pants under their skirts for outside play on cool days. Otherwise, we recommend wearing shorts under the skirts.

Each child will have a hook to hang a jacket, sweater, and book bag. Due to space constraints, book bags must be small. No bags with wheels or oversized camping backpacks are allowed. Stuffed animals to snuggle should fit in the child's cubby.

Each child must have 1 sheet and blankets for rest time. They need to be twin or crib size. Do not bring sleeping bags. *We are not responsible for damaged or lost clothing or personal items.

Items Brought From Home

Our program maintains a generous supply of materials, toys, and equipment for the children. Parents are asked to keep toys and other personal items at home. We cannot be responsible for an item from home once it is brought to school. Such items include but are not limited to:

- Toys
- Jewelry (post earrings only)
- Watches
- Food, candy or gum
- Money
- Electronic games
- Videos
- Weapons

Curriculum Overview

Primary Curricular Goals for all ages:

- ◎ To support exploration and investigation;
- ◎ To encourage a passion for learning;
- ◎ To foster understanding of new and different cultures;
- ◎ To teach children how to build strong relationships.

Infants

(based on Bright Horizons and the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos)

- *Cognitive Development*: Sensory and intellectual stimulation, exploration and developing interest in environment;
 - Dual-language: Build receptive language in a second language while strongly supporting the child's native language;
 - Whole Language: Songs, finger-plays, rhyming games, alliteration, exposure to literature;
- *Physical Development*: Large muscle development, gross motor movement, toys that motivate children to move and manipulate;
- *Social-Emotional Development*: Primary attachment, how to get needs met, moving towards awareness of others and building motivation for engagement;
- *Assessment and Data Tracking* – Physical and socio-emotional milestones and tracking of language emergence

Toddlers

(based on Bright Horizons and the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos)

- *Cognitive Development* – Continued exploration, Teacher-designed challenges that develop problem solving skills
- *Dual Language* – One-teacher-one-language, understanding of separation of languages
- *Whole Language* – Encouraging love of books, understanding what print is
- *Physical Development* – Toys that encourage manipulation, continued gross motor but also beginning fine motor development (crayons).
- *Social-emotional Development* – Parallel play, interaction with peers, understanding self, developing autonomy
- *Assessment and Data Tracking* – Milestones, Language progress tracking

Infant Daily Schedule (Sample)

*Infant schedules will vary due to individualized feeding, diapering & care

- 7:30-8:00am Arrival time, free play with toys and books
- 8:15-8:30am Breakfast
- 8:45am Diaper Change*
- 8:50-9:15am Bottle
- 9:30-10:30am Nap
- 10:30am Juice
- 10:45am Story Time, music, floor play, toys
- 11:15am Lunch/Juice
- 11:45am Diaper change
- 12:00pm Floor play, story time
- 12:30-12:45pm Bottle
- 12:45-1:45pm Nap
- 1:50pm Snack/Juice
- 2:00-3:30pm Music, floor play, toys
- 3:30pm Swings, chairs, hold toys, read aloud
- 4:15pm Diaper change, floor toys
- 4:15-5:30pm Pick up Time

Toddler Daily Schedule (Sample)

- 7:30-8:30 Arrival, table toys, books
- 8:30 Breakfast
- 8:45 Diaper Change / Bathroom
- 9:00 Circle Time (Story, Movement, Songs, group activities)
- 9:30 Outside (weather permitting), gross motor activities
- 10:00 Juice/Snack
- 10:30 Puzzles, table toys, story time
- 11:30 Lunch
- 12:00 Diaper Change / Bathroom
- 12:15-12:30 Story Time
- 1:00-2:15 Nap
- 2:30 Diaper Change / Bathroom, Table time with books
- 3:00 Snack/Juice
- 3:30 Outside (weather permitting), Indoor free play
- 4:00 Diaper Change / Bathroom
- 4:15-4:45 Music, Story Time, Group Activities, Free Play, Preparation for Pick-Up
- 4:15-5:30 Pick up Time

Preschool

(based on NAEYC and NJ State Early Learning Standards, as well as Creative Curriculum Integrated Curriculum)

- **Cognitive Development:** Investigation into science and social studies topics, long term projects that integrate all core content areas (mathematics, science, literacy, etc) as well as elective content areas (arts, music, dance, etc)
- **Dual Language:** Every-other-day two way immersion program supports development of strong bilingualism and biliteracy
- **Whole Language:** Appropriate pre-literacy instruction to familiarize students with sounds and uses of language, both written and spoken
- **Physical Development:** Continued movement, strength and agility practice incorporated into classroom curriculum, as well as monitoring of growth
- **Social-emotional Development:** Projects and classroom environment that teaches and rewards collaboration and positive interactions with peers and adults
- **Assessment:** Teaching Strategies GOLD system closely aligns curriculum with objectives related to all areas of the curriculum. Teacher observations and student work portfolios provide progress evidence. Second language acquisition is carefully monitored by quarterly language inventory checklists to measure receptive language, monthly language data collected

PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE					
TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:30 - 9:00	Breakfast/Greeting/ Table activity				
9:00 - 9:20	Whole Group/Read Aloud				
9:20 - 10:30	Free Choice/Small Group/Informal Read Aloud/ Fit Kids				
10:30-11:00	Music & Movement				
11:00 - 11:45	Gross Motor /Outside play/ Get Fit				
11:45 - 12:00	Read-A-Loud/ ready for Lunch				
12:00 - 12:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:30 - 1:30	Nap/Rest	Nap/Rest	Nap/Rest	Nap/Rest	Nap/Rest
1:30 2:40	Free Choice/Small Group/ Shake up Wake up				
2:40 - 3:00	Whole Group (Reflection)/Read Aloud				
3:00 – 5:00	JumpStart	JumpStart	JumpStart	JumpStart	JumpStart

Dual-Language Education

Balanced bilingualism is a great asset in many aspects of modern society. The goal of ELRA's dual-language program is to support children in their growth into bilingual, bi-literate, and bicultural people. Young children develop their language skills rapidly and they use that new language ability to connect to other human beings on a social level as well as make sense of the world around them. For this reason, it is beneficial to actively promote advanced language learning as a method of strengthening the curriculum and supporting the areas of development discussed above.

Studies show that early language and literacy learning in a child's native language will facilitate the learning of academic subjects in later school. For native Spanish speakers, a Spanish-English dual-language program provides long-term support of their home language and development of an academic vocabulary in that language. The more proficient students become in their native language, the more skills they develop in their second language. It also increases self-esteem because the language and culture of the student's family is supported and valued.

Dual-language education is tremendously beneficial for native English speakers as well. Research supports that children of any language background succeed when provided with a high-quality, dual-language education over the course of several years. Those students can be expected to achieve fluency in both English and Spanish on both social and academic levels, increased academic achievement in all areas, and a greatly increased awareness and value of other cultures.

The young children in our program practice their Spanish and their English every other day during the week. Teachers will continue to provide the rich curriculum and opportunities for exploration, learning and play that they always have, while also making the content understandable for children in the earliest stages of learning language.

Please don't hesitate to contact the Center if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas about our dual-language curriculum.

Jumpstart at Rutgers–Camden

Dear Preschool Parents and Guardians:

On behalf of Dr. Gloria Bonilla Santiago at the Rutgers Community Leadership Center, I am pleased to inform you about Jumpstart at Rutgers–Camden. Jumpstart is an early childhood literacy program that places college students into urban preschool classrooms in order to mentor children and increase their literacy, writing, and social and emotional skills. This September will mark the second year Jumpstart has worked with preschoolers at LEAP Academy and last year's amazing success has us all excited about the opportunity to work with you and your children again.

Beginning in October, children in the ELRA preschool program will be assessed and then randomly selected to participate in Jumpstart. Children will be paired one-to-one with a Jumpstart Corps Member and together will work on activities that engage them in active learning and support their emerging reading and writing skills. Jumpstart members will also provide classroom assistance time for teachers and build supportive relationships with parents.

The goal of these Jumpstart sessions is to provide the extra attention and support that children need to enter kindergarten prepared for success. Jumpstart was created in 1993 as a national effort to combat America's growing school readiness crisis, which has a direct relationship to the educational achievement gap in urban school districts. To date, the organization has grown to work with 70 other universities and colleges and last year served over 13,000 urban preschool students across the U.S.

In addition to our weekly classroom sessions, Jumpstart will hold special literacy days like *Read for the Record* (October 8) and our Fall Festival, community service activities, and special program events like our annual book drive that collected over 300 books for preschool children last year. If you have any questions regarding the Jumpstart program, please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below.

We eagerly await the opportunity to meet you and your children and to work together to make sure your children are prepared for school success!

Sincerely,

Dania Reid, Site Manager
Jumpstart at Rutgers University–Camden
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Teaching Staff / Professional Credentials

We take great pride in our professional staff, their qualifications, their credentials, and their ability to work together to maintain a safe, nurturing, and productive environment for your child. Rutgers/LEAP Early Childhood Programs proudly employs a college-educated teaching staff. Their degrees are in education and other child-related areas of learning. Our teachers are certified in the field of early childhood education in accordance with the N. J. Department of Education preschool through grade three requirements. In addition, each teacher receives special training from Rutgers/LEAP Early Childhood Programs prior to working within the program. Teachers also attend numerous continuing education classes every year provided by Rutgers/LEAP and the Camden City Abbott Early Childhood Program.

Staff is observed and evaluated several times over the year by the director, Camden City supervisors, and state officials. The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) is used to assess all areas of the early childhood program. Our instructional assistants have two or four year college degrees or are currently enrolled in a university program. Our staff is involved in many child related organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Assessment

As an Abbott preschool program, we are required to administer the Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) to all newly enrolled preschool children. This screening helps the teacher identify children who might be at risk for a possible learning difficulty. This screening is a tool to help teachers meet the needs of each child. ESI-R looks at children by quickly sampling their skills across areas of language, reasoning, gross motor, fine motor and social development. This screening is only a first step in the assessment process.

All screening and assessments are done in the child's classroom or director's office.

Teachers are trained to assess children's progress, needs, and strengths using the following:

- Teaching Strategies Gold
- ESI-R and Brigance
- Alphabet Recognition Skill
- Developmental Checklists
- Teacher Observations
- Anecdotal Records
- Portfolios

Creativity

Children need to explore and learn with all their senses. Our program provides opportunities for children to paint, glue, experience sand, dirt and water as well as shaving cream, play dough and other goop. Celebrate your child's creativity. Do not squash his learning by cautioning him to 'stay clean' or complaining that his clothes are too dirty. Honestly, if you pick up a sparkling clean child at the end of the day, then our teachers have not done their job. We do use smocks and make every effort to reduce the stains however preschool children are a magnet to stains and smudges, some more than others.

Cleaning tips:

- Use a stain stick and wash
- Do not dry until you see no residue of the stain
- Repeat stain stick and wash again
- Use bleach on the white shirts
- Use color safe bleach on the other uniform pieces
- Remember: do not dry until the stain has gone

These tips work. We know because the staff ends up with the same stains!

Homework

It is not developmentally appropriate for young children to have homework assigned. However, it is extremely beneficial for learning to continue when away from school. The following enrichment suggestions extend the curriculum and learning to your home.

- Utilizing the home lending library
- Turning off the TV
- Dancing together
- Reading a story
- Taking a walk and talking
- Playing a game
- Drawing a picture together

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences are at the end of every marking period. Conferences are a time when information concerning the child's abilities, needs and progress can be exchanged. Children's assessments and portfolios are also discussed at this time. The staff is also available for additional conferences throughout the year at the parent's request. Since it is necessary for the teachers to devote their time during the school day to the children, we ask that you please set a conference appointment if you need to confer with a teacher at length.

Parent Teacher Communication

Communication is vital for a positive and successful preschool experience. Parents and teachers can initiate communication daily and as needed. There are many opportunities to communicate. Parent and teacher determine the method that works best for the family teacher, child and circumstance.

When can we talk?	Pros	Cons
Afternoon pick up	-allows more time to touch base	-little privacy -sometimes the teacher has gone home
Planned Telephone call	-teacher is available -time to talk -little interruptions -private	-not face to face

POSSIBLE COMMUNICATION METHODS

Immediate communication required (usually by phone)

- serious illness or injury
- behavior that puts child at risk

Pick Up Time to touch base at the end of the day

- splinter or small ‘boo boo’
- child complaining of not feeling well but symptoms limited
- did not eat or nap
- potty accident

Phone Call to touch base during the day

- child unusually tired or cranky
- needs change of clothes

Conference scheduled

- on-going concerns regarding behavior, health, or learning

Behavior Charts

- used for specific, on-going behaviors after conference with family-preschool team

Memos, Reminders and Updates

- field trips
- school closing
- special events

Incident Reports

- all accidents witnessed by staff or reported by child
- bites

We DO NOT report....

- *occasional* age appropriate conflicts or behaviors, including but not limited to...
 - ❖ hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing
 - ❖ yelling, talking rudely
 - ❖ taking toys
 - ❖ tattling
- name of the *other* child in any conflict (this is confidential)

Field Trips

The preschool usually takes three field trips during the academic school year and several additional trips during the summer enrichment program. All trips are arranged for academic value and developmental levels of our children.

- Each child must have a signed permission slip in his/her file prior to the day of the trip.
- Your child's teacher will provide specific needs for the day of the trips.
- We try to give parents as much notice as possible as to field trip dates, however due to circumstances beyond our control, trips and dates are subject to change.
- We usually ask for three adults from each classroom to act as chaperones. Keep in mind that a chaperone is acting as the child's parent during the trip.
- Children can wear sweat suit uniforms on trip days unless otherwise directed.

Trips we have taken in past years:

- Philadelphia Zoo
- Discovery Museum
- Johnson's Farm to pick strawberries, radishes and plant seeds
- Springdale Farm to pick pumpkins
- Aquarium
- Please Touch Museum

Siblings may not attend unless accompanied and driven by parents.

Due to a child's specific needs, we may require the parent to attend the field trip with the child. If this is the case, we will pay for the parent's admission. In the event that a child becomes ill or is otherwise unable to safely attend a field trip. The child will remain at the center with appropriate supervision and activities. Parents will be notified in a timely manner.

CHAPERONE RESPONSIBILITIES

****NEVER LEAVE GROUP UNATTENDED OR SEPARATE FROM CLASS.****

Chaperone Responsibilities

The role of the chaperone is to assist the preschool teacher and staff with the supervision of the children. Field trips are part of the preschool program and are not private outings. All Abbott, DHS and Rutgers regulations and policies apply to the field trip itinerary and activities.

- ✓ Arrive to classroom at designated time for trip
- ✓ Keep your group together with the class at all times. As the chaperone you are to follow the preschool itinerary. You may not take your own child or those assigned to you to different locations or activities.
- ✓ Never leave group unattended or separate from the class.
- ✓ Know how many children are in your group and their names
- ✓ Assure your group behaves appropriately and safely (walking feet, quiet voice)
- ✓ Assist with emergencies
- ✓ Escort students to restrooms
- ✓ Do a head count from time to time
- ✓ Arrive to lunch and bus at designated times
- ✓ You must accompany the class to and from the trip on the bus.
- ✓ You may not sign your child out from school while on the trip. You must return to the school to sign your child out for the day.

Do not take children to gift shops, face painting or snack vendors.

Do not smoke or participate in any other unhealthy or unsafe practice.

Chaperone sign up is on a first come basis, however, parents who have not had the opportunity to chaperone will be given first priority on the next trip.

Please note: If all chaperone positions have been filled for a particular trip and a parent would like to accompany their child the above conditions apply as well as the following:

- ✓ The entrance fee for the trip must be paid to the teacher prior to leaving the school.
- ✓ There must be enough seats on the bus. If there are not enough seats, you will need to find your own transportation.

Weather Guidelines

Early childhood experts, pediatricians, teachers and parents agree that children need and benefit from outdoor playtime. Our daily schedule allots the recommended 45 minutes of outside time per day.

The following charts have been developed to better communicate ‘weather permitting’ conditions to parents and staff.

In the event of any of the following circumstances, there will be no outside time.

- Ozone or heat warning
- Poor air quality
- Cold blue warning
- High wind warning
- Temperature below 10 degrees
- Rain, sleet, hail
- ‘Feels like’ temperature that falls in the bitter cold (or colder) category according to the National Weather Service (see chart below)

Please note:

- ‘Feels Like’ temperature includes the wind chill factor
- Children are to have the required clothing available everyday. If your child does not have the clothing we will make every effort to loan the needed article of clothing. If this is not possible, you will need to bring in the necessary clothing.
- Requests to keep children inside cannot be accommodated

‘Feels Like’ Temperature	Amount of Time	Required Clothing
50 and above	45 minutes	Light coat or sweater if needed
45-50	45 minutes	Heavy coat
45-32	30-45 minutes	Coat, scarf, hat, mittens
32-10	10 minutes	Coat, scarf, hat, mittens

Assemblies

The preschool children are invited to assemblies based on the interest and developmental levels of the children. We do not attend assemblies that do not meet these criteria.

In the past special visitors have been arranged to visit our program such as:

- Music Man
- Bug Lady
- Children's Discovery Museum
- Environmental Center
- Dental Hygienist

Referrals

As an Abbott preschool program, our children are eligible for supplemental services. Staff will observe ALL children enrolled in the program. If concerns arise they will then determine an appropriate course of action. The family worker is available to visit/observe in the classroom, meet with the parents and staff and assist in developing strategies appropriate to the concerns (i.e. behavior). This is an important aspect of our program and the parent ultimately determines what services, if any, are provided for their child. Keep in mind, however we have the right to discontinue care for a child who we feel is not responding to our program. (Refer to Termination of Child Care.)

We also use the services of the Camden City Board of Education. The Preschool Intervention and Referral team helps pre-school teachers design and monitor the implementation of strategies. In addition, the child study team provides developmental screening, speech, occupational therapy and language assessments.

Special Needs Services

We pride ourselves on serving a diverse group of children with differing abilities within our center thus creating a rich learning environment. We will, however, look at the individual situation of every special needs child whose family might desire services. We will consult with appropriate resource personnel to determine our ability to provide the services required for each child. The resource team may consist of the program director, assistant, teachers, registered, licensed, and/or certified resource personnel such as physicians, psychologists, family workers, speech therapists, physical and occupational therapists, educators and other technical and professional personnel, as indicated by the child's special needs. It is expected that the parents of a special needs child will provide our staff with appropriate information to assist us in providing the best possible care for their child (i.e. an IEP).

Child care may also be terminated for currently enrolled children based on: our inability to meet their needs; the child's lack of benefit from our program; the parents reluctance to provide information or seek assistance for their child. For more information, please see the policy entitled, 'Termination of Child Care'.

Holidays

Since we plan curriculum on an emergent basis, in a way that is reflective of children's needs and interests, the exact amount of time we spend on holidays will vary. However, we feel it is important to define holiday activities because the words "holiday" and "celebration" mean different things to different people. Holiday activities can be as simple as reading a book, having a party, a musical celebration or inviting a guest into our classrooms.

Our goal is to validate children and family holiday traditions, expose children to different ways of celebrating and foster respect for celebrations and traditions different from their own. Each year we evaluate our holiday policy and ask for input from our families and staff to ensure we are providing our children with a diversified program.

Birthdays

Children may bring in a special treat to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions. There are 15 students per class. Please remember that we are a PEANUT-FREE school.

Special treats need to be planned ahead of time with the classroom teacher. Parents are welcome to participate or send in a disposable camera for pictures of the celebration. For safety, candles, decorative picks and treat bags are not permitted. To maintain a consistent schedule and to maximize instructional time; celebrations will occur during snack times and special visitors i.e. clowns or magicians are not permitted.

If your family does not participate in certain events due to religious reasons please inform the classroom teacher.

Transitions

Our program has a transition plan that enables the children to smoothly transition from classroom to classroom and Pre-kindergarten to Kindergarten.

Our plan includes:

- Introducing the children to the kteachers
- Organizing visits to the classroom
- Providing portfolios to accompany children to new classrooms
- Planning articulation meetings between teachers and grades

Health & Human Services Center

The Rutgers/LEAP Health and Human Services Center provides comprehensive primary health care services and related social work services to the children and families who attend the LEAP Academy, as well as to neighboring residents. The Center is located at LEAP Academy's High School building at 130 N. Broadway Street. It works to improve student educational achievement by providing for their health and social needs. The Health Center has day and evening hours available.

Please speak with an ELRA Director or Family Worker for more information about enrolling your child/family in the health clinic.

Sick Child Procedures

For the health and safety of all the children, it is mandatory that sick children not be brought to school. If a child becomes ill at school, the nurse or team leader will determine if the child needs to be sent home. If a child has any of the following symptoms, he/she should be monitored at home and see the pediatrician if necessary.

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Acute diarrhea
- Acute vomiting
- Elevated oral temperature of 101.5 degrees
- Sore throat or severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin
- Red eyes with discharge
- Infected untreated skin patches
- Difficult rapid breathing
- Skin rashes lasting more than one day
- Weeping or bleeding skin lesions
- Swollen joints
- Visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- Stiff neck

If your child is sent home for fever, diarrhea or vomiting they cannot return to school until they are symptom free for 24 hours.

Health Issues

1. Your child's teacher should be notified if your child is sick more than one day.
2. Once the child has been free of any excludable symptoms for 24 hours he/she may return to school.
3. A doctor's note is required after an absence due to illness more than **three days**.
4. A current record of the child's immunizations, and a statement signed by the child's physician to the effect that the child is in good health and may attend school must be on file at the school.
5. Medications must be signed in with the school nurse or team leader if the nurse is not available.
6. All known allergies or special diets should be listed on your child's registration form. This should include allergies to foods, medicine, animals and seasonal allergies.
7. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school if their child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, as noted in the table below.
A doctor's note must be provided for the child to return to school.

Table of Excludable Communicable Diseases

Acute Respiratory Illnesses

E. Coli
Lice
Influenza
MRSA
Pertussis
Scabies
Chicken Pox
Meningococcus
Whooping Cough

Conjunctivitis Purulent

Fever
Hepatitis A
Impetigo
Mumps
German Measles
Shigella
Giardia Lamblia
Strep Throat

Gastro-Intestinal Illnesses

Coxsackie Virus
Herpes Gladiatorum
Measles
Norovirus
Salmonella Typhi (Typhoid)
Ringworm
Hemonophilus
Tuberculosis

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

http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/outbreaks/guidelines_for_outbreaks_in_school_sttings.pdf

Medication

Children who need to continue medication for an illness after they are able to safely return to school will be given their medication provided that:

- An authorized medication form is completed by the child's physician and signed by the parent or guardian
- The medication is in the original container with the prescription label intact
- Over-the-counter medication must have a form signed by the family and the child's physician in order for the center to administer the medication

Procedure for Minor Injury

- Each classroom has a first aid kit for minor scrapes
- Ice packs are available for small bumps
- The instructional assistants bring the first aid kits whenever the children leave the classroom i.e., playground, assemblies and trips
- A staff person certified in first aid by the American Red Cross will be present at all times
- First aid treatment (i.e., washing skin surface, small bandages, etc.) will be administered by the child's teacher or school nurse.
- A written Accident report will be completed by the child's teacher or school nurse and signed by teacher in charge. This form will provide specifics about the injury sustained and treatment administered. Parent or guardian will sign form.
- Depending on the severity of the injury, the child's family will be called immediately to take him or her to a physician.
- The child's teacher or school nurse will remain with the child and continue to apply first aid as needed.

Procedure for Serious Injury

- Certified first aid personnel, the school nurse, and/or the teacher will remain with the child and appropriately apply first aid.
- A second staff person or director will call the ambulance, retrieve the child's file and call the family and authorized emergency contact.
- The child's teacher and or person in charge will ride with the child in the ambulance to the hospital. The child's file goes along in the ambulance to the hospital.
- A parent or authorized emergency contact person will be contacted to meet the teacher at the hospital to authorize treatment for the child. Signed consent for treatment must be recorded in the child's file if a parent or contact cannot be reached.

It is to your child's benefit that you keep the program up-to-date on phone numbers, emergency numbers, and other pertinent information.

Sleep

Young children need their sleep. It is imperative for them to be well rested when they arrive at school in the morning. Well-rested children are able to learn more and socialize appropriately. Tired children miss much of circle time trying to get it together and sometimes have emotional moments of crying or yelling.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following:

- Maintain a regular and consistent sleep schedule.
- Have a relaxing bedtime routine that ends in the room where the child sleeps.
- Child should sleep in the same sleeping environment every night, in a room that is cool, quiet and dark – and without a TV.

In addition, we recommend the following:

- If your child has been up all night, we suggest allowing them to sleep in
- Adjust bedtime routine to provide adequate rest
- Think twice about allowing your child to attend a concert, watch the Super Bowl or attend late functions on a school night.

Nap

Children are provided a time to nap during the school day, generally from 12:30-2: Each child has his or her own cot and is to bring two crib/twin sized sheet or blanket. They may also a soft toy or pillow to snuggle. Toys and pillows must fit into the child's cubby. The lights are dimmed, soft music is played and a story is read. Staff members cover children and pat/rub backs according to the child's preference. After 20 minutes of quiet rest, any non-nappers are given a quiet activity to do on their cot. The following are not permitted for naptime: sleeping bags, full-sized bedding, musical or light up toys, or pacifiers.

Food Service

1. Breakfast is served from 8:30 am to 8:50 am and is provided by the school. If your child needs breakfast in the morning he/she must be present at 8:30 am. Later arrivals cause breakfast to be rushed or missed altogether. **Please feed your child breakfast if they are going to arrive after 8:50 am (Breakfast will not be served)**
2. Lunch is served at 12:00pm and is provided by the school.
3. Breakfast and lunch menus are sent home monthly.
4. Afternoon snack is served at 3:30pm and is provided by the school.
5. Except for allergies and/or special diet food may not be brought from home. If you would like to donate a snack please consult with your child's teacher for an appropriate choice.
6. Menus and meal times are subject to change.

Allergies/Special Diets

The program must be notified in writing of any allergies or special diet limitations. All staff will be notified of the restrictions and specials considerations. Medical documentation is required. No Outside Food is Allowed.

DYFS Information Statement to Parents

Our program must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by the parent (s) to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the program. Our program must have a policy about dispensing medicine and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our program must cooperate with all DYFS inspections/investigations. DYFS staff may interview both staff members and children. Our program must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and discuss with us any questions you may have.

Our program offers parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to participate in and observe the activities of the program. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the program should discuss their interest with the team leader or director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies of the program. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of physical abuse, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the program or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the Division of Youth and Family Services.

Discipline Procedures

The Rutgers/LEAP Early Childhood Program's discipline policy adheres to the guidelines presented in Jennifer Birckmayer's "Seven Procedures of Discipline" (Discipline is Not a Dirty Word, Jennifer Birckmayer, New York: Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1995).

1. Tell children what they can do instead of what they can't.
2. Protect and preserve children's feelings so that they are lovable and capable.
3. Offer children choices only when they are willing to abide by their decisions.
4. Change the environment instead of the child's behavior.
5. Work with children instead of against them.
6. Give children safe limits they can understand. Recognize their feelings without accepting their actions. Maintain authority calmly and consistently. If children break rules, allow them to experience the consequences of their behavior.
7. Set a good example. Speak and act only in ways you want children to speak and act.

These guidelines provide a framework for ensuring effective disciplinary situations with the children. Although each disciplinary situation is unique, an example of accepted methods would include:

1. Tell the child we do not like what he or she is doing and why.
2. Redirect the child to a different toy or activity.
3. Remove the child from the group (but within eyesight of the teacher) until the child is ready to rejoin the group and follow the rules.
4. Our policy is designed to teach children how to:
 - A. use their words to solve problems
 - B. walk away
 - C. ask for help

The center does not, and will not, employ any of the following disciplinary procedures:

1. harsh or abusive tone of voice with the children
2. physical punishment, including spanking, hitting, shaking, or grabbing
3. any punishment that would humiliate, frightens, or subjects a child to neglect.

Physical restraint will not be used unless it is necessary to protect the safety and health of the child or others.

Adult Code of Conduct

Parents, guardians and family members of children attending preschool must refrain from the following behaviors:

1. Physical punishment of any child
2. Verbal abuse of any child
3. Abusive or profane language
4. Quarrelling with staff or other adults
5. Smoking
6. Cell phone use

Parents may not employ any staff member in any capacity.

Court Orders

A complete certified copy of all court orders must be in your child's file to enable us to comply with regulations. Without a court order prohibiting the child's release, we must release a child to either parent or guardian who can prove they are such.

Termination Policy

A child may be dismissed if:

1. The enrollment packet is not complete
2. Immunization form is not up to date
3. The child is a threat to self or others
4. Specific needs are best met elsewhere
5. Threats
6. Parents or guardian fail to honor school rules or contract
7. Excessive absences (10 consecutive days)
8. Adult code of conduct is violated

Prior to termination, Rutgers/LEAP will intervene through our social services to try to do what is in the best interest of the child. Referrals and a child study team evaluation may be in the best interest of the child and may be suggested. A partial placement in another program may be recommended where the child can receive the services he/she needs. Termination is rare and would only occur after all of the above were exhausted and another placement would be what is most appropriate for the child. Rutgers/LEAP and the Camden City Abbott Early Childhood Program would assist in finding the child a more suitable placement.

SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION

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

- The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period.
- The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the center.
- The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent an adequate amount of time to seek alternate child care (approximately one to two weeks notice depending on risk to other children's welfare or safety.)
- Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.
- In the event of an expulsion, the child will not be permitted to attend the before and after school hours. The child may continue to attend the Abbott hours.
- Another appropriate placement will be found with the collaboration and advisement from the Board of Education.

Parental Engagement/Volunteer Hours

Parents as Partners

The Parents as Partners for Educational Change Institute is a parenting education-training program. The curriculum for this program supports the perspective that a belief in self and self –understanding are key to helping the family grow and gain strength to impact schools and communities. For this reason parents and children are considered active learners and participants in the curricular package. Early training sessions takes an in-depth look at parenting and covers the following areas:

- Values/ Needs of Learning
- Reading & Writing for Parents
- Literacy Learning at Home
- Portfolios for Parents
- Communication
- Advocacy
- Parents as Leaders
- Engaging Parents as a Resource in the Community

These sessions are followed with seminars addressing issues for school leadership and advocacy. The Academy trainers introduce parents to concepts of positive thinking, assertiveness, and empowerment. Parents learn new strategies for working with the system, building coalitions, handling fear, exercising parental rights and accessing resources available to them.

Our program promotes an open door policy. Parents are welcome to visit the classroom any time. The following guidelines ensure a positive experience for all the children.

- Separation can be difficult for some children. If this is your child it is best to visit at a time when the child can leave with you after the visit.
- Unknown adults frighten some children. When visiting sit quietly to observe or participate with your child. Maintain friendly and happy body language.
- Staff must follow approved schedule, curriculum and discipline guidelines. Visitors must adhere to the same.

Volunteer Hours

Volunteer time is used to meet the recommended number of volunteer hours in the contract (40 Hours per family). These activities need to be scheduled ahead of time with the classroom teacher. Drop in or spur of the moment volunteering is not acceptable. Volunteer activities are to coincide with the classroom routine or learning experience. The volunteer should be prepared to be actively engaged in the classroom activities.

Sample volunteer activities:

- reading a story to a small group
- participating in a center activity (i.e. dramatic play, puzzles)
- playing basketball during outside time
- serving breakfast or snack
- chaperoning a field trip
- participating in celebrations

Quality time visits are times you would like to visit, watch and interact with your child and their friends. This does not count toward volunteer hours.

Sample quality time opportunities:

- joining your child for breakfast or lunch
- observing your child participate in circle
- participating in center time with your child
- celebrating a birthday

Please note: “Hanging out to pass the time” before your next appointment does not count as volunteer or quality time and is not an acceptable means to fulfill this obligation.

Parents' Roles, Rights and Obligations

The Role of Parents

- Experts on and advocates for their own children.
- Advisors concerning policies, procedures, staff, and curriculum
- Evaluators through polls and surveys
- Promoters of the program

Rights:

- Assurance that your beliefs, concerns, and values are respected and reflected in your child's care.
- Information about all aspects of the program.
- Information about all your child's experiences in the program
- Freedom to visit or observe
- Freedom to ask questions of staff (at times when staff are able to respond without interrupting the program).
- Confidence in the complete confidentiality of all matters involving the welfare of your child and family.

Responsibilities:

- Knowledge of this guide and acceptance of its policies, and procedures;
- Volunteering current important information (address, medical exams, etc.) and responding to staff's requests for information;
- Daily review of your child's notes and activities;
- Exchange of essential information about the care of your child with staff;
- Respect for staff as professionals who work with you to provide quality education for your child.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions about your child or the program the first person to ask is your child's teacher. You can talk at drop off, pick up, over the phone or schedule a conference. The teacher will direct you to the family worker or program director as appropriate.

In the event that your concerns persist, please contact the director immediately.