

# Little Acorn



## Preschool & Kindergarten

### PARENT HANDBOOK

Located in the

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

401 E. 33<sup>rd</sup> St.

VANCOUVER, WA 98663

# Welcome to Little Acorn Preschool & Kindergarten

Welcome to Little Acorn Preschool and Kindergarten! I would like to take this opportunity to say what a privilege it is to work with you and your child. I truly love my job and I love what I do! I get to meet great parents and play with intelligent, creative and inquisitive children every day. I am extremely proud of the Teachers and Assistants at LAPSK, they love children and it shows.

We are committed to helping each child have a positive school experience. Our mission is "Opening doors for children through play, nurturing and respect for individual differences". Please feel free to share with me your suggestions and opinions. My email address is: [directorlittleacorn@hotmail.com](mailto:directorlittleacorn@hotmail.com)  
Office: 693-5614

I hope that your child's preschool experience with us fosters their creativity, self-esteem, and a sense of enthusiasm about the world. It is the goal of all Little Acorn Preschool and Kindergarten staff members to assist children in becoming life-long learners!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

*Maria Williams*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

- "Opening doors for children through play, nurturing and respect for individual differences."

## **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

Little Acorn Preschool and Kindergarten is sponsored by the First United Methodist Church in cooperation with the community. We appreciate this opportunity to serve families during their children's early years and accept the responsibility of offering them the finest in early childhood education. All children regardless of economic background, race, religion, or ethnic origin are welcome. We do not provide a Bible centered curriculum, but do place emphasis on universal values as defined by the following examples:

- We teach that all life is to be valued and respected
- We believe each child is unique and we respect each child's timetable for developmental growth
- We explore the meaning of living together and teach that each person has individual rights that are to be respected
- We teach the children the world is good and strive to develop in them an appreciation for its beauty and dependability by providing opportunities to explore, observe, ponder, and question
- Our goal is for each child to experience love, trust, and individual success, thus strengthening his/her self-esteem
- We recognize the importance of adults as examples of behavior for children, as they see teachers displaying such attributes as gratefulness, sharing, patience, love, joy, fairness and enthusiasm.

We also believe the best way to learn is by **DOING**. We provide experiences where children learn on all levels: physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional. We value play as the essence of learning for children in social relations, initiative, language, creative representations, music, movement, classification, number space and time.

Little Acorn Preschool & Kindergarten presents an individualized, self-paced program operated within the context of freedom, choice, active learning, respect for others, relevance, enthusiasm and self-direction. We support each child's individuality and promote independence. LAPS&K believes when children are given choices (should I paint, play blocks or dress up?) they are able to develop the skills and abilities necessary for effective learning, autonomy and positive self-esteem.

## ADMISSION PROCEDURE

Little Acorn Preschool and Kindergarten will accept any child without regard to race, sex, religious affiliation, national origin or ability. We will accommodate children with special needs in our current setting providing we can accommodate their needs. The ENROLLMENT PACKAGE can be downloaded from the LAPS&K website and should contain the following paperwork:

- A signed Registration Form
- A \$50.00 non-refundable registration fee per family until March 31<sup>st</sup>, a \$75.00 non-refundable registration fee per family is due.
- A Medical Release Form
- A Field Trip Release Form
- An Authorization Form
- A Consent Form (video, photographs, assessment)
- Parent Handbook
- BLOG Release Form
- Family Background
- Goals Sheet

A **two-week** prior **written** notice is required if you intend to **withdraw** your child from the program. Filling the space that will be vacated by your child usually takes at least two weeks, even when we have a waiting list.

## BILLING POLICY

Your child's monthly tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month, **unless otherwise noted**. Any payment not received by the **NOON** on the 10<sup>th</sup>; unless the 10<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend and then it is due on the Friday before at **NOON**, it is considered late and will be charged a \$20.00 late fee. Late fees continue to accrue until tuition is paid. For your convenience, tuition payments are divided into 9 1/2 monthly payments, with 1/2 month payment due in June. Tuition may be placed in the tuition boxes outside each classroom, mailed to the school, or handed to the director. A \$35.00 fee will be charged on any returned checks. Outstanding accounts will be sent to a collection agency. A 20% reduction in tuition for additional children in the same family is given. Tuition payments do not change if a child is absent due to vacations or illness. Receipts may be obtained in the director's office.

## KINDERGARTEN

We are extremely proud of our Kindergarten program. Class begins each Monday - Friday at 9:00am and ends at 12:00pm. There are 15 students enrolled, with a Washington State Certified teacher and an assistant. There is not an age requirement for students to be eligible to enroll; however, acceptance into the class is left to the discretion of the Director.

## MEDICATIONS

Under penalty of State Law, LAPS&K cannot dispense and/or administer any medication without the expressed written consent of the child's: parent (s) or legal guardian (s) and physician. All medication must be in the original container with prescription label intact and legible, the label must have the child's name, dispensing instructions, and doctor's name before administered by staff. A special Authorization of Dispensing Medicine Form needs to be filled out by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and physician, and given to the Director. Medicines will be stored in an area inaccessible to the children.

## HEALTH POLICY

If a child displays any of the following symptoms, they must be kept home or they will be sent home.

- Temperature of 100 or above
- Diarrhea of unknown origin
- Vomiting
- Skin Rash of unknown origin (until diagnosed by a doctor as not contagious)
- Continuous cough/pain to degree that prevents normal play
- Conjunctivitis (pink-eye) at least 24 hours after medication is started and eyes are no longer crusted/oozing
- green stuffy or runny nose

When a child is obviously sick, there is a general agreement between parents and staff that the child should not be at school. With less clear symptoms, many factors are considered before the judgment is made. Staff will consider the needs of your child and their ability to participate comfortably in normal activities as well as taking symptoms in to account. The Director will be consulted whenever possible before a child is sent home. A child must be **fever, vomit or diarrhea free for 48 hrs** before returning to school. Please notify the director if your child has contracted chicken pox, lice or another contagious illness so that other parents in the classroom may be notified.

We are required to report significant drops in program attendance to the county Health Department, meaning absences of more than 10% of our daily population must be reported. If more than 10% of our population is absent with the same illness for more than 2 days we are required to close the school for cleaning and sanitizing purposes.

## CALENDAR

LAPS&K follows a typical September to June year, similar to the surrounding school districts. A monthly calendar is available on the website and provided in your welcome packet to keep at home as a reminder. If the Vancouver Schools are closed during holidays, we are closed also. If Vancouver Schools are closed due to in-services, we will typically be open.

## PROMPTNESS

It is very important to pick-up your child from school on time. Sometimes, when a parent is late, a child becomes anxious and worried. Please allow for extra time when running errands during school hours for traffic, road construction, bridges going up, etc. If you are **more than 5 minutes late**, your child will wait in Director's office, as to allow the teacher to close the classroom and prepare for the next class. There is a **\$1.00 per minute late pick up fee** that you will be responsible to pay when you bring the child to the following class time.

## SIGN IN/OUT PROCEDURE

Upon enrolling your child, you filled out an "Authorization Form". This informs the teacher who you consent to pick your child up from school. LAPS&K will not allow your child to leave the school without your permission **IN WRITING**. Please inform the authorized person who picks up your child to bring a Photo I.D. to show the teacher. We may only release to authorized adults (18 years of age or older). Remember that when you drop your child off in the classroom, to sign him/her in on the signature form outside of the classroom. When you pick-up your child from class, be sure to sign them out on the signature form.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE AND CURRICULUM**

Each classroom has a daily schedule. This schedule includes Free Choice, Group Time, Outside Time, Snack, and Circle (which includes music, stories, sharing, etc.) We use "emergent" curriculum in all our classrooms. The lesson plans are posted on each classroom's outside bulletin board. The curriculum is based on child interest, ability, assessment information, as well as a balance of teacher and child directed activities. The curriculum covers the areas of Creative Art, Music, Language/Literacy, Math, Science, Health, Social/Emotional and Fine/Gross motor skills. All of these areas are incorporated into the weekly theme of the classroom and provide a way of unifying the experience for the children. Our staff uses the curriculum to enhance children's language development and expand upon their interest, by following their lead.

### **CURRICULUM**

Our curriculum is developmentally appropriate (DAP). Our definition of "DAP" is honoring each child's timetable for growth, whether it is social, academic, physical or emotional. We have open learning "centers" where children can choose activities, learning in a fun and natural way. While we never coerce children to participate we do observe the children and adapt the environment and curriculum to fit their needs. Emergent Curriculum simply put, means we honor the interests of the children. Children retain more when they are active participants in their own learning experiences. Gross motor skills are developed through creative movement, and outside play. Fine motor skills are enhanced with cutting and coloring experiences. Self-help skills flourish when children take responsibility for own actions. Following simple directions, employing negotiating skills, exploration opportunities and communication of feelings all foster self-help skills. Cognitive development achieved by measuring, weighing, observing, mixing, adding and taking away (in natural environment). Creativity/Speech, Language/Literature is fostered by being read to, creating own stories, and illustrating own stories. Music appreciation is encouraged by listening to music, singing, playing and making instruments.

### **ART**

Art provides the opportunity for children to express themselves. It can be an emotional release, build self-confidence, physical coordination, solve challenges, make decisions and think creatively. Open-ended art is based on the child's choices, resulting in a completely unique design. Prepare yourself to take home

original works of art that might consist of 10lbs of glue! Young children use all their senses to experiment with art materials, just as they experiment with all objects in their environment. For a child, making a creative art project is about how different kinds of papers sound when you tear them, how you have to press harder with a crayon than with a marker, how glue makes your fingers sticky, how paint drips off the brush and how play dough can be manipulated for example. A classroom setting is different than the home setting as the classroom is full of friends and materials, as well as trained teachers who know when to stand back and when to encourage. As children gain control and understanding of their materials, their movements become more purposeful: drawing back and forth or around and around, rolling or pulling play dough, stacking blocks. Children start to name their creations, indicating a shift from sensory exploration to imaginative thinking. Creative art is so valuable in a child's education that LAPS&K offers numerous open-ended art activities every day. It takes more thought, more planning, more hand-eye coordination to cut, paste, draw or paint something alone than to follow simple directions from an adult. Your child's art project is all their own. Please remember it is the process and not the product that counts in creativity. Praise your child's efforts often and the love of art will be present forever!

## **PLAY CLOTHES**

Children who are not yet potty trained need to bring a change of clothes to leave in the classroom. Bring the clothes in a plastic zip-loc bag with extra wipes, diapers or underpants. Please make sure your child's extra change of clothes is labeled with their name. When dressing young children for school, clothing must be easy for them to remove when using the toilet (elastic-waist for example). Tights and jumpsuits are sometimes frustrating for young, anxious fingers to manipulate quickly. Children should be brought to school with clothing appropriate for weather. Layering clothing for easy removal is best. In colder, wetter months, please provide a pair of boots, or warm shoes, a hat and mittens. It is important to a child's health to spend a good amount of time outdoors to receive fresh air and a varied environment for large muscle activity. Proper clothing is essential for the enjoyment of these activities. Our goal is for your child to be free to enjoy! Please bring your child in clothes you don't mind them painting in, playing outside in and exploring in. All the paint we purchase says "washable", however, certain fabrics are easier to get paint out than others are. It is much easier to just bring your child in "play clothes" that can get a little dirty or messy.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

LAPS&K uses positive discipline. We do not want to make any children feel uncomfortable in any way. We try, in a positive way, to help children cooperate with one another and develop self-control. If a challenge arises, children will be given the opportunity to come to their own conclusions of how to resolve the situation. For example, when two children are arguing over the same toy and one child hits another child, the teacher will calmly get close to them and say "Hitting hurts. I won't let you hit John again. What could you do or say instead of hitting John?" The children, with the teacher listening, decide on non-violent ways to settle the conflict. "I could ask to use it when he's done" or "I could play with another toy." Disagreements aren't necessarily bad as they can be opportunities to develop negotiation skills, empathy and learn to work together. We never single out or humiliate children, by giving time-outs. We help give the children the tools necessary to solve their own challenges. If challenges persist, the teacher will contact the director and together they will try to understand why the child is frustrated and determine ideas on how to help. If this doesn't alleviate the challenging behavior the teacher, Director and parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will work together as a team to try to help the child work through his/her frustration in a socially appropriate manner.

## BIRTHDAYS

We realize birthdays are special family days. If you would like to bring a store purchased snack to your child's classroom to share with classmates, please communicate your intentions with the teacher. There may be several birthdays in a given week or month. The teacher may ask you to bring your child's birthday snack on a day other than your child's actual birthday. This will allow every child to have their own special day within class. We recognize this is the age when many children start to have birthday parties with friends outside of school. **If you are inviting children from school to attend then please refrain from placing invitations in children's boxes. Please contact children outside of school for these private parties.**

## CLASS PETS

Animals help boost children's understanding of care, compassion, and responsibility in young children. Several classrooms in our school have class pets. These pets are there to enhance children's experience during school. In order to keep children and pets safe the animals are kept in cages/tanks and only taken out under direct

teacher supervision. Children will not be permitted to remove animals from their cages for any reason. All pet cages/tanks are cleaned on a regular basis, no less than once a week for small animals and fish tanks not possessing a filtration system. Any pet traveling home with a family for the weekend will be asked to keep the pet in a safe area in the home, not in the child's bedroom. This is for the safety of the animal and family. Please talk with your classroom teacher about care and feeding instructions before taking your class pet home to enjoy for the weekend.

### **VISITOR/VOLUNTEER SIGN-IN POLICY**

All visitors and volunteers must sign-in at the preschool office and pick-up a visitor or volunteer badge to wear while on the premises. At the conclusion of your visit you must return to the office to sign-out and leave your badge.

### **PARENT VOLUNTEERING**

LAPS&K requires all families to volunteer 2 hours per school year per enrolled child. Volunteering may be completed in the following ways: Playground clean-up, Fundraising Breakfast, Bake Sales, Book Fairs, Carnival/Silent Auction or Family Fun night events held at school. Parents may opt out of the annual volunteering commitment by donating \$100.00 per enrolled child directly to the school.

### **PARENT INFORMATION**

Teachers post current information outside the classroom. Please check this area frequently as it keeps you updated regarding field trips, special events, weekly activities, etc. Each classroom also posts a weekly newsletter on the website. A preschool newsletter which includes the snack calendar is also published monthly and posted on the website. Copies of the weekly classroom and monthly program newsletters are posted on the bulletin board.

### **PARENT COMMUNICATION**

Please inform the child's teacher and/or Director of any changes in your child's environment that may impact his/her interaction in the classroom. For example: family stress, late night out, health challenges, etc. As always, your privacy is respected and this information is kept confidential.

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

You may come and visit your child's classroom any day, any time. You do not need to make an appointment with the teacher to do so. However, the director reserves the right to revoke this at any time, on a case by case basis.

## **PARKING**

Please park in the angled lots on the north and south sides of the building, as well as the narrow parking lot between our building and 32nd St. Never park along the building where placards clearly read, "Pastor", "Secretary", "Church Staff" etc. Also please refrain from parking in the disabled parking spots unless you have a legally issued permit.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are intended to increase children's understanding specific areas and are related to the classroom theme. Each classroom participates in a field trip approximately every other month. You are responsible to transport your child to and from the field trip as well as supervise your child during the trip. If you are unable to transport your child, you may authorize another parent **IN WRITING** to take your child to and from the field trip. Under no circumstances can a LAPS&K employee transport children to field trips. Field trips held within the classroom will not require parent attendance and supervision.

## **OUR STAFF**

Our teachers are highly qualified in both education and experience. Our teacher's assistants help achieve a low adult/child ratio. All employees of LAPS&K are CPR certified, TB tested, WA State I.D. approved, fingerprinted and must continue their education in Early Childhood Development by attending conferences and classes each school year.

## **FAMILY TRADITIONS**

Feel free to share with us your family traditions. These might include music, foods, and/or any celebrations. We would like to be able to enrich our program and the experiences of our students with your traditions. We strive to provide a non-biased learning environment that adds differing perspectives from a variety of cultures and backgrounds.

## **SPECIAL TALENTS/SKILLS**

We appreciate parent involvement in many areas. Do you have a special talent or skill such as: speaking a different language, playing an instrument or doing a unique craft? Let your child's teacher know what talents you would like to share. These skills enhance the school experience for your child as well as the rest of the children in the class. How cool will it be for you to be a part of our learning experience?

## **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

All classrooms are equipped with emergency essentials. A container with crackers, water supply, and flashlight is stored just in case..... Each month our school has fire and earthquake drills, as well as safety discussions in each classroom.

## **SNOW POLICY/EMERGENCY CLOSING**

For your safety when traveling, we will close due to extreme weather conditions. Our school will close if the VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT is closed, opens 2 hours late or releases early due to weather conditions. School closings will be broadcast on the radio stations KEX (1190) and KXL (750). Information regarding closures will be posted on the preschool website under Inclement Weather, at [www.Flashalert.net](http://www.Flashalert.net) under Private/Charter schools for SW Washington and on the LAPS&K answering machine no later than 8:30 am on the day in question. If you have any questions about whether we are open or closed, please call before arriving.

## **SAFETY**

Your child's safety is of great importance to us. Please keep your child with you at all times when entering and exiting school. We take the following steps seriously:

- We will not allow children to leave the classroom without a parent/guardian signature.
- We will not allow children to rush out of the classroom into the hallway.
- No student will be allowed to exit the classroom alone.
- We will periodically host mock lock-down drills to ensure immediate response should a child become lost.
- Sometimes when weather permits, individual classrooms might visit neighborhood parks. Rest assured safety precautions will be in place. Teachers will bring walkie-talkies and/or cell phones and students will each hold on to a rope when walking along the safest path to the park. The park will never be

beyond 1/2 mile of the school and the director will always be notified before departure.

- Security cameras monitor entryways, hallways and exits in the building 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- When students are using the outside playground, teachers have a walkie-talkie with them to remain in contact with the Director. A 1<sup>st</sup> aid kit is conveniently located in the outside shed.
- As required by state child care licensing guidelines all LAPS&K staff will accompany children to the restroom, playroom and to the playground.

## **SAFETY DRILLS**

LAPS&K practices monthly Fire & earthquake drills. Children and teachers practice the safest and quickest way to exit the building. Teachers carry their classroom roster with them in their emergency backpacks when they exit the building. Once everyone has exited the building safely, classes are dismissed to return to class to practice Earthquake drills. During our Earthquake drill we practice "DUCK, COVER & HOLD." Once the ALL CLEAR is given children resume their regular routine. We practice these drills each month as a way of preparing children for the unexpected. We encourage families to practice drills at home as well.

## **LOCK DOWN**

LAPS&K will lock down for three reasons:

- Lost child
- External Threat/or we have been instructed to do so by the Vancouver Police Department
- Intruder within the building

In the event of a lost child we lock all outside doors and do not allow anyone out of the building until the child is located. Church staff will assist with lock down as needed. In the event of an internal or external threat, we keep children in their classrooms with the teachers and lock the classroom and/or fire doors as well. If children are in the playroom at the time of the lock down, they will remain in the playroom until it is safe for them to return to their classroom. If children are on the playground at the time of lock down they will be brought back into the building and return to their classroom. Parents will be allowed to pick-up children, but may be asked to use a specific entrance or show ID.

## **SHELTERING IN PLACE**

LAPS&K keeps food, water and other basic emergency supplies on the premises in case of a natural disaster. In the event of an emergency, LAPS&K will keep children safe and calm until parents are able to pick-up them from school.

## **BIKE HELMETS**

In accordance with the City of Vancouver Bike Helmet law, we are requiring any child wishing to ride a wheeled vehicle, scooter or tricycle, to wear a helmet. In order to cut down on the likelihood of a lice outbreak, we are asking children to bring their own helmet from home to wear while using these items on the playground. Helmets should be fit for the child and clearly labeled with the child's name. They may be hung with the child's coat each day.

## **BULLYING**

LAPS&K has a ZERO tolerance policy for bullying/coercion. Any child who engages in bullying will be redirected. If the problem persists, the teacher will inform the director and the child's parents. They will meet to determine why the child is displaying this behavior and work to change the child's behavior to a more socially acceptable form of communication. If the behavior continues, the child will be referred to a specialist outside the program, at the parent's expense. If this does not help, the child will be asked to leave the program.

## **WEAPONS**

LAPS&K has a ZERO tolerance policy for weapons. We will not allow weapons of any kind on the premises. We do understand that pretend play with weapons is developmentally appropriate. However, this type of play can make other children uncomfortable. Children engaging in this type of play will be redirected to other types of play.

## **INTER-GENERATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

Each month the children walk across the street to visit the "Grandmas and Grandpas" at the Vancouver Health and Rehabilitation Center (VenCore) nursing home. The lists of values gained from these short visits are many including: acceptance, tolerance, service, sharing, and general social awareness.

## **CONFERENCES**

Formal Parent/Teacher conferences are offered twice a year. This is an opportunity for teachers to share assessment results with parents as well as discuss developmental milestone, strengths and areas of growth for your child. We encourage you to share with your child's teacher your hopes for your child at this time. However, if you have concerns regarding your child please do not wait until conference time to share your concerns with the teacher. Please schedule an appointment to meet with your teacher to discuss these matters as soon as possible. In addition to conferences we also send home progress reports in the spring to keep you informed as to your child's progress.

## **FUNDRAISING**

Through fund raising efforts we are able to provide additional resources to the classrooms, library, playground and students within our LAPS&K family. We appreciate your support in purchasing extra materials to enhance our program.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

At times LAPS&K is able to offer very limited scholarship assistance. Eligibility is determined by income and is held in strict confidence. If you are interested in scholarship assistance, the Director will give you a Scholarship Application to fill out and return along with the past six months worth of paystubs and the most current W-2. Scholarships are determined on a year to year basis and not guaranteed from one year to the next. Families receiving scholarship assistance must strictly adhere to the conditions of the scholarship agreement or the scholarship will be given to another candidate.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information regarding your child and family is kept confidential, either within the classroom or director's office. This includes incidents involving more than your child. When there is an incident involving two children, the teacher will inform you of the issue without identifying the other child involved.

## **PAPERLESS**

In an effort to conserve our natural resources LAPS&K provides information in a paperless format. All weekly classroom newsletters, lesson plans, monthly program newsletters and monthly snack calendar can be found on the LAPS&K website.

## **WEB SITE**

A variety of information can be found on our website. You can find our school calendar, monthly snack menu, program newsletter, classroom and parent handbooks, as well as class availability, inclement weather information and hours of operation. For any current information log on to: [www.littleacornpreschool.com](http://www.littleacornpreschool.com). You may reach the director via e-mail at [directorlittleacorn@hotmail.com](mailto:directorlittleacorn@hotmail.com).

Thank you for providing Little Acorn Preschool & Kindergarten the opportunity to serve you and your family in a safe and nurturing environment.

We reserve the right to make any changes/alterations to this agreement providing a 30-day notification.

We reserve the right to refuse service.