



# The Learning Center Parent Handbook 2023/2024

*“The goal of childhood education should be to activate the child’s own natural desire to learn.” – Maria Montessori*

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## Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative Board of Director Members

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## **Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative Statement of Purpose**

Mission: The Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative (MLLC) aims to inspire children to become joyful, life-long scholars and engaged, compassionate citizens in their community.

MLLC carries out its mission by:

- Creating learning environments where learning is meaningful.
- Building a caring community that supports a holistic learning approach for local youth.
- Collaborating with individuals and organizations to develop additional learning opportunities and service projects for youth in our community.
- Sharing and communicating information about learning opportunities and educational resources within our community.
- The Learning Center is the flagship program of MLLC.

### **Learning Center Goal**

The goal of the Learning Center (LC) is to provide a stimulating, nurturing environment where students can gain the knowledge, practice the skills, and develop the intellectual tools that are important and necessary for success in today's world.

### **Learning Center Philosophy**

The Learning Center follows the philosophy and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori and believes in her ideas of independence, respect, and "following the lead of the child."

"[A school should be] an environment in which the child, set free from undue adult intervention, can live its life according to the laws of its development." Dr. Maria Montessori

Hours of Operation for Children: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 8:15 – 3:00

Ages Served: 3 – 12

Licensed Capacity: 60

### **Learning Center Organizational Structure**

The Learning Center is licensed as a Child Care Center by the WVDHHR and is operated by the Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative, a nonprofit corporation organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes. The LC provides educational support to homeschooled families.

The business of the organization is managed by a board of directors (the Board) with at least 6 and no more than 12 members. The Board is responsible for maintaining the overall policy and direction of the organization. The Board shall delegate responsibility of day-to-day operations to the Learning Center Director, Assistant Director and Guides with support from all staff. Board members shall receive no compensation (other than reasonable expenses) for their service on the board.

No staff member, staff family member, or employee of a public agency that regulates or makes eligibility decisions for the center may serve, but the Director may be an ex-officio non-voting member and will directly supervise all staff.

The Board shall meet at least four times in a twelve-month period and preserve in writing the minutes of each meeting, including but not limited to, the meeting’s date and time, members in attendance, issues considered, and decisions made.

The Board shall appoint a full-time Learning Center Director to manage the daily operations at each site where a center operates; submit the director’s qualifications in writing for approval by the WVDHHR Secretary prior to employment; conduct an annual evaluation of the Director; and oversee any necessary action regarding the Director’s job performance.

All staff shall meet or exceed the minimum qualifications for employment required by the WV DHHR Child Care Regulations, Section 71-1-8.

**Age-Based Programs**

**Homeschool Information**

The Learning Center is an educational program offered by Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative, a non-profit organization. It is not a private school. For school-age children, the LC requires a copy of your acknowledgement letter from the Board of Education indicating you have filed your Notice of Intent to Homeschool.

In WV, this letter is received after you file your Notice of Intent. The Notice of Intent in WV needs to be filed one time only. The form and information can be found on tuckercountyschools.com under the “Parents & Child” tab. For additional information regarding homeschooling requirements, contact your county’s Board of Education office.

**Primary Program – Ages 3-6**

Our primary program recognizes this stage of life as the beginning of control and coordination of mind and body. Learning revolves around tangible experiences. Children use concrete materials to learn math, movable alphabets to explore language, and cubes, cylinders, and other objects to categorize, find special relationships, and more.

**Curriculum includes:**

- Science and nature
- Music and movement
- Sensorial activities
- Practical life skills
- Language arts
- Mathematics
- Cultural awareness
- Geography
- Physical Fitness

## **Lower Elementary Program – Ages 6-9**

We challenge every child at his or her own level. The Lower Elementary curriculum, for children 6-9 years old or in first, second, and third grades, is designed to give children the resources and materials they need to master material, and time if it proves difficult for them. Advanced children are presented with appropriate challenges to excite their minds. All children are inspired to learn about their world.

### **Curriculum includes:**

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Geometry
- Zoology
- Botany
- Matter and Astronomy
- History
- Cultural Awareness
- Music

## **Upper Elementary Program – Ages 9-12**

The Upper Elementary curriculum is designed to be responsive to the social, emotional, and academic needs of children ages 9-12 years old or those children in grades four, five and six. Developmentally, children this age become stronger abstract thinkers and the curriculum continues to accommodate their developmental changes. As their competency and capacity for independence grows, Upper Elementary children take on more responsibility for their studies. Learning life skills, such as time management and project planning, are woven into the routine of their days. The children arrange the details of field trips, make decisions about research and study topics, and maintain the atmosphere of the classroom, all under the watchful eye of the guide.

### **Curriculum includes:**

- Language arts
- Mathematics
- Physical and Life Sciences
- Cultural Studies
- Practical Life
- Music

## **LEARNING CENTER ADMISSION, ENROLLMENT and PAYMENT POLICIES**

People interested in enrolling their children in the Learning Center are invited to make an appointment to visit and meet with the Learning Center Director and the Classroom Guide.

2024/2025 Enrollment dates:                      Re-enrollment period: February 5 – February 16, 2024

Open enrollment begins: February 26, 2024

Current LC participants and their siblings are considered “enrolled” for the purpose of determining the potential number of openings for each following year. They receive preference for all available spots.

By the first day of Open Enrollment, the number of available openings in each class will be determined. Prospective new participants must submit Enrollment Contracts and admission will be determined based on availability. In the event of a full class, families submitting applications will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which the applications are received.

## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

The Learning Center does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or other protected classifications. The Learning Center provides an equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate by following policies and practices of inclusion, integration, and reasonable modifications.

**Primary Program:** The primary class has a 1:10 staff:child ratio. All participants must be at least 3 years old and fully potty trained. Preference will be given to full-time enrollees; however, several part-time options may be available for children based upon space availability.

### **Primary Program enrollment options:**

Option 1 – Parent(s) may choose a weekly schedule to attend four days per week. Parent(s) can choose the full day or half day.

Option 2 – Parent(s) may choose a weekly schedule to attend two days per week - either Mon/Tues or Wed/Thur. Parent(s) can choose the full day or half day. Upon enrollment, the child's parent(s) will choose which weekdays to attend for the semester.

Schedules cannot be changed unless approved in advance. Additional fees may apply. There are no refunds for missed days due to illness, weather, or unapproved schedule changes.

**Elementary Program:** Both Lower and Upper Elementary classrooms have a 1:16 staff:child ratio. Previous Montessori experience is preferred. Participants must be enrolled full-time. Full-time attendance is preferred but not required.

If your child does not have previous MLLC Center experience, we request the previous year's academic assessment or a summary of learning from the parents detailing where their child is academically. These should also include a list of your child's strengths and weaknesses regarding academics. Applicants will be notified of acceptance by email.

***Full-time enrollment is defined as enrollment four days per week for the full day.***

**All Enrollees:** Once accepted, we require the following to be completed before the child begins his or her attendance at the Learning Center. These forms are required every year.

- Enrollment Contract & Payment Agreement Form
- Handbook and Policy Acknowledgment Statement
- Image Use Policy Statement
- Release of Liability Statement
- Emergency Contact Form
- Child Health Assessment & Immunization Record
- Family Participation Agreement
- Parent Directory Preferences

## Program Fees

There are 5 options for payment:

- 1) Fees paid in full. Due August 15.
- 2) Fees paid in 2 payments. Full fees divided equally between 2 payments. Due August 15, January 15.
- 3) Fees paid in 4 payments. Full fees divided equally over 4 payments. Due August 15, October 15, January 15, March 15.
- 4) Fees paid in 9 payments. Full fees divided equally over 9 payments. Due the 15th of each month August through April.
- 5) Fees paid over twelve months starting June 15. Full fees divided equally over 12 payments due the 15th of each month.

A Resource Fee for LEL and UEL is added to all August invoices.

## Late Payment Policy

Program fee payments are due by the 15th of the month at 10 am. After a three-day grace period, a \$10 late fee will be added to your account each week. The late payment will be due with your next payment. Any other fees (i.e., late pick-up fees, returned check fees etc.) will be posted to your account on the date of occurrence and are also due with your next scheduled payment.

***Invoiced program fees must be paid in full by August 31 in order to begin attending the first day of September programming.***

After September 1 invoices are sent, any account not rectified within 1 month of the scheduled payment will be considered in arrears. If your account is in arrears, your child/children will be unable to attend MLLC starting the following Monday until your account is current. MLLC will hold the spots(s) for a two-week period before offering it to another family on the waiting list. Once the account is current, you can only re-enroll if the spot(s) has not been filled.

## Refund Policy

Monthly program fees are non-refundable. If a child leaves the Learning Center for any reason and program fees have been prepaid in full, in 2 payments or 4 payments, a refund will be issued effective the 1st of the month following the child's removal.

## Withdrawal Policy

A two-week notice is required before withdrawing a child from the Learning Center. Account must be paid in full before withdrawing—including your child's fees for that two-week period. MLLC reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child at their discretion, or for the following possible reasons:

### Learning Center Initiated:

- Non-payment or excessive late payments of tuition and fees.
- Not observing the rules of the center as outlined in the parent agreement.
- Special needs that we cannot adequately meet with our current staffing patterns. \*\*
- Physical and/or verbal abuse of staff or children by parent or child.

**Parent initiated:**

A two-week written notice is required for release from contract. Withdrawal without a two week written notice will result in being charged for that time.

\*\*The Learning Center will make every effort to accommodate the needs of all children. When the Learning Center cannot reasonably accommodate the special needs of a child without undue hardship or with the current staffing patterns, parents are contacted to discuss the concern.

**Emergency Closings Policy**

**Snow Days:** The Learning Center does not follow the public school cancellations for snow days. If by chance, the Learning Center will be canceled due to extreme weather conditions, you will receive an email or text by 7:00 am.

**Other:** Occasionally, the Learning Center is canceled due to facility issues. In this case, families will be notified via email or text as soon as possible.

Three weather-related or facility-related cancellation days are built into the Learning Center schedule. Refunds or makeup days will only be arranged for days canceled above and beyond these three. This applies to days officially canceled by the Learning Center. There are no refunds or make-up days issued for time taken off when the Learning Center is in operation.

**Holidays**

The Learning Center will be closed on the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, Christmas Eve Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, and Presidents Day.

MLLC closes for a week in November, two weeks in December, and one week in the Spring.

**Absences**

Parents should notify the Learning Center by email (Shannon and/or Julie) or by phone (304-851- 4099) on days your child will not be attending for any reason. If an absence is planned for vacation or other family reasons, please notify your child's guide in advance so arrangements can be made as necessary.

# **LEARNING CENTER PROCEDURES**

## **Communication**

The parent bulletin board contains information pertaining to fundraisers, conferences, parent involvement, and other items the staff feels may be of interest to parents. Emails will be sent regularly with Learning Center updates.

## **Birthdays**

Children are welcome to celebrate their birthday by bringing in a special snack and some pictures from their past so that we can celebrate the story of their life. Guides need to be notified ahead of time if you plan to bring in a “birthday snack.” Parents are welcome to be a special guest during the celebration.

## **Special Events in the Classroom**

All LC children are welcome to attend our special events. If a part-time child is not regularly scheduled to attend the Learning Center on a day in which a special event or other activity is happening, the parents may contact Learning Center staff ahead of time to discuss arrangements to attend.

## **Transportation/Field Trips**

Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the Learning Center each day. For field trips or other special events, transportation may be arranged. Parents will be notified prior to any field trips and signed permission forms will be required before children may be transported on a field trip.

## **Drop-off and Pick-up Policies**

All arrival and dismissal must be through the front door. Parents/guardians/responsible adults are expected to accompany their child into and out of the Learning Center each day. Staff are glad to assist you and your child at drop-off and you are welcome to stay for a short while to assist your child through this transition. Staff, however, will not assume direct responsibility for your child until you are ready to walk out of the building.

Only the adults listed on the Emergency Information/ Permission Form, or on a written permission note from the parent, will be allowed to sign out your child. Your child’s Guide may be available at pick-up time for short questions. For longer discussions or specific concerns, please schedule an appointment. Parents are expected to assume full responsibility for their child once they sign out their child. Parents wishing to chat should do so outside of the classroom and lobby.

## **Arrival/Drop-off**

Children should arrive between 8:15 – 8:30. Children should be in the classroom shortly after 8:30. The front door will be unlocked for admittance during this time. After 8:30, please ring the doorbell.

## Dismissal

The program day ends at 3:00. Children must be picked up no later than 3:15. The front door will be unlocked at about 2:50 for dismissal. Prior to that time, please ring the doorbell.

**Sign-in/sign-out notebooks are located in the lobby. PLEASE SIGN LEGIBLY!**

## Late Pick-up Policy

The Learning Center program ends at 3:00 pm. If your child has not been picked up by 3:15 pm, a \$20 late fee will be assessed. For all pick-ups after 3:15 pm, parents will be required to sign a Late Pick-Up Log Sheet before departing with their child. Parents may not request that a staff member sign out their child when that staff member is working - even if they are on your pick-up permission form.

If the Learning Center staff have not heard from a parent or designated person by 3:10 pm, the call procedure (parents & emergency contacts) will be started to arrange for a timely pickup. An additional \$20 late fee will be added for every 15 minutes after 3:15 pm.

If your child has not been picked up by 3:30 pm, at this point it is considered an emergency and it may be necessary to transport your child to another nearby location by Learning Center staff.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or Emergency/Alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time. Repeated lateness and/or failure to pay late fees may result in dismissal from the program.

## Daily Schedule

8:15 – 8:30	Arrival	12:45 – 1:15	Exercise
8:30 – 11:20	Work time	1:15 – 2:30	Work time
11:20 – 11:45	Group Lesson	2:30 – 2:50	Music
11:45 ½ day	Dismissal/Arrival	2:50 – 3:00	Dismissal
11:45 - 12:30	Lunch		

### Items to bring daily:

- Snack
- Water bottle
- Appropriate clothing and footwear for outdoor walks and play
- Lunch/Napkin
- Backpack

## **Nutrition**

Participants should provide snacks and meals that meet the USDA nutritional guidelines found in the WV Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) Child Care Center Regulations (APPENDIX 78-1 C: NUTRITION – MEAL AND SNACK PATTERNS). Foods must be prepared and stored so there is no threat of cross-contamination. Children will not be allowed to share food with others. Please make sure food from the home is clearly labeled with the child's first and last name and the date. No additional preparation will be allowed for food brought from the home and no refrigeration is provided.

If parents wish to purchase snacks and meals through the Learning Center, written notification must be provided on Wednesday for the following week's menu. The cost is \$5.00 for lunch and \$3.50 for snacks.

If a child arrives at the Learning Center without a snack or lunch, staff will first contact parents to bring the meal. If that is unsuccessful the LC will ensure that a meal or snack is provided. Fees may be incurred.

## **Staff Ratios**

Staff Ratios are determined by WVDHHR and MLLC's internal plans. MLLC will ensure that a minimum of two staff will be on-site while children are present at the Learning Center.

No less than two staff or qualified adults will accompany any/all groups of children during any/all MLLC-sponsored events.

**Background checks:** All persons, whether paid staff or volunteers, who are responsible for maintaining ratios while they are at the LC are required to have a WV CARES Background Check. Anyone who is compensated as paid staff is also required to have a current WV STARS Career Pathways certificate on file and maintain yearly training requirements per DHHR regulations and WV Code.

## **Visitor and Guest Policy**

**Visitor:** This includes parents, caregivers, guardians, or community members/volunteers involved in Learning Center activities such as guest speakers, program specialists or classroom volunteers; persons visiting the Learning Center for business reasons; or any other non-staff member.

Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative is committed to providing, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe environment, for employees, center LC children, and lawful visitors, as far as reasonably practicable. The Learning Center Director has overall responsibility for children who attend the LC and visitors both on the LC premises or involved in LC activities. Any special arrangement required by LC children or visitors must be established in writing 24 hours before arrival and suitable adjustments will be made, where possible. Please note, LC employees are solely responsible for LC children and or visitors in their care and should ensure that the requirements of this policy are always adhered to.

1. Parents, visitors, and guests may only enter through the front door. A doorbell is used to alert staff. The front door will be kept closed and always locked – other than for specified drop off/pick up times. Generally, the Director or Assistant Director will respond to the doorbell.

2. Staff must verify the identity of any visitor they do not recognize before allowing them to enter. Requesting personal ID may be necessary.
3. Parents and preauthorized responsible adults may drop off and pick up children without being accompanied by a staff member. Time, date, and name will be recorded on sign-in sheets.
4. Parents/caregivers/guardians visiting the LC after drop-off time must sign in and wear an ID tag. Exceptions for incidental visits may be made.
5. Every approved visitor to the LC must first sign-in with a staff member in the designated Visitor Log Book that is maintained in the office. Visitor name, time of arrival, and purpose of visit must be recorded. Visitor ID tags will be provided and worn. Visitors must also sign-out and return the Visitor ID tag.
6. Regularly scheduled volunteers do not need to sign in or wear a name tag. They do need to be pre-approved by the Director/Assistant Director, and all staff should be notified of all guests.
7. Service and repair personnel, such as Cintas, Ehrlich, Dave's Plumbing and Heating, are not required to sign in and out, or to wear an ID tag, but they must check in with staff and be accompanied to their work area and all staff informed of their presence.
8. A staff member will always accompany visitors in the LC whilst in the building; AT NO TIME SHALL A VISITOR BE LEFT ALONE WITH A CHILD OR GROUP OF CHILDREN.
9. Visitors and Guests should be scheduled in advance when possible. Staff will be notified of all planned visitors.
10. Any person who does not sign-in and is on LC property without authorization should be asked by any staff member to identify themselves properly, sign-in and receive a Visitor/Guest ID tag, or to leave the grounds.
11. No visitor may see a child in the LC unless it is with the specific approval of the classroom guide. If an emergency situation requires that a participant be called to the office to meet with a visitor, a member of the administrative staff must be present during the conference. A child is never to be permitted to leave the LC with anyone who is not clearly identified as his/her parent or an authorized person.
12. LC participants are prohibited from bringing guests to the LC unless permission to do so has been granted in advance by the Director or Assistant Director and the Classroom Guide.

Parents, other than those who have been asked by a guide to be in the classroom, who wish to observe learning activities taking place in their child's classroom are to confer, in advance (24 hours), with the Director and the Guide and state the purpose of the visitation. A suitable time will be arranged.

It is important that each parent understands that because classroom visitations can be distracting to the participants, the following guidelines have been established:

- Visitors at any one time in each classroom should not exceed two parents.
- Parents are to be respectful observers and not create any type of disturbance or disruption to the learning process.
- Comments made by individual participants are to be maintained in confidence by the visitor.
- No visitor shall be allowed to videotape or photograph participants in the classroom, without the prior consent of the Director, as it may violate the privacy rights of participants unrelated to the visitor.

- Comments or concerns should be discussed with the guide in a confidential setting, before or after the school day when participants are not present..
- Visitors are encouraged to meet with the Director and Guide during non-instructional hours to discuss the observation and ask questions.
- If a parent has a concern about their child's classroom, they should first address the matter with the Classroom Guide and, if not rectified, then meet with the Director.
- Visitors will be made aware of the LC fire procedure and exits should the alarm sound.
- Visitors will be provided with a Visitor/Guest ID tag upon signing in. This will provide identification to staff, parents, and children within the LC.
- Visitors must report all accidents or near-miss incidents on Learning Center premises/or when taking part in activities to a member of staff.
- Visitors must look after their own and others' health and safety while on LC premises.
- Parents, visitors, and participants should be reminded not to allow entry to any person whether they know this person or not. Only Administrators or Staff are permitted to allow visitors into the building or grounds.
- Visitors must comply with MLLC policies and procedures. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary actions, including possible suspension or expulsion from the facility.

### **Doors, Windows, and Gates**

The front door will be kept closed and locked at all times to ensure the safety of our students, staff, and administration – EXCEPT for our specified drop off/pick up times. All other external doors must be kept closed and locked except when staff are supervising access. All fence gates must be kept closed and secured at all times.

### **FAMILY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM & ANNUAL PARENT MEETING**

MLLC is a cooperative and its successful operation and programming requires the participation of each family. From the very beginning of MLLC, parent interest, involvement, and support have guided our programs and operations.

The Learning Center's Annual Parent Meeting and Family Participation Program allows this philosophy to continue and for our entire community to benefit from the abundant talents and interests of our families. The program also enhances each child's experience in the Learning Center by creating a "village" of support that includes many caring adults and allows for everyone to participate in our important work.

Whether sharing knowledge in the classroom, serving on a committee or as a board member, or helping keep the learning center clean and in good repair, parent involvement is an essential element of the Learning Center.

At least one parent/guardian/family representative must attend the **Annual Parent Meeting** in September. Important policy and operational information is covered during the meeting.

**As part of your enrollment agreement and to support the work of the Learning Center, each family is required to volunteer at least 25 hours or pay an equivalent amount.**

- Each family is required to contribute a minimum of 25 volunteer hours each program year (June 1 - May 31). Volunteer Log Sheets will be provided and completed sheets will be requested in mid-December and mid-May.
- All participants must turn in their final participation log by the last day of the program year or will be charged the \$500 fee for not participating in the volunteer program.
- Volunteer hours not completed by May 31 will be invoiced at \$20/per hour with payment expected June 15.
- Members who do not have the time or who are unable to participate in one of the options above may pay a “buyout” fee of \$500 to be released from these responsibilities.

**Volunteer opportunities will be provided, and expectations communicated** throughout the summer and the program year. Below are examples of family participation that fully support the Learning Center and your children. We welcome your ideas and skills!

- Serve as an active member of the Board of Directors or the Fundraising Committee. *Note that the Board is currently recruiting members - from both LC families and the community at large. The Fundraising Committee always welcomes new members.*
- Actively participate in and support our fundraising events – for the Learning Center as a whole and to meet individual classroom goals. *Fundraising events have included the Ski-a-thon, Run for It and the Holiday Tree & Wreath Sale. Bring your new ideas and energy!*
- Contribute your specialty or passion to our academic programming (e.g., garden program, math specialist, reading assistant). *These must be coordinated with the Director and Classroom Guide to support our learning goals.*
- Coordinate, create, organize field trips and special events. *These must be coordinated with the Director and Classroom Guide to support our learning goals.*
- Contribute to weekly classroom cleaning and hand-towel laundry. *All classrooms and bathrooms must be thoroughly cleaned each weekend.*
- Commit to sidewalk snow removal for a weekday throughout the winter months. *This must be completed before 8:15 a.m. on Learning Center operating days.*
- Set-up and tear down MLLC special events. *Major events include our Holiday Celebration, International Potluck, and the End-of-Year Program & Picnic.*
- Help maintain and repair our facility. *We need a cadre of fixer-uppers who will keep us running smoothly, perform minor repairs and assist with classroom improvements!*
- Be a substitute on-call. *Sickness and life sometimes wreak havoc with our staffing. Be there to fill in.*
- Help our Guides with special projects and preparing materials. Copy, laminate, collate, gather... *Coordinate with any Guide and the Director. Because... Many hands make light work!*
- Additionally, each family is strongly encouraged to register for the **Kroger Community Rewards** program if you shop in Elkins. *Recruit friends and family to do the same.*

While the **Family Participation Program** helps keep program fees down, more importantly, the program provides a unique learning experience for our children. It cultivates a real sense of community and gives parents the opportunity to work with staff or classroom materials and meet other parents while making a very real contribution to the Learning Center. When children see the adults in their lives active in their education, it shapes their perception of the importance of education and strengthens their learning experiences.

## **CHILD DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY**

At the Learning Center, the term guidance is used for several reasons. It is a positive term and implies working with the children to develop internal control of their behavior. Our goal is to encourage children to become creative, independent, responsible, and socially mature human beings. This involves learning to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences of such choices. Guidance takes several forms within our center:

- **Environment:** A place designed for children. Each room is age-appropriate in furniture size, large and small manipulatives, and supplies required for hands-on experiences.
- **Logical Rules:** Such as keeping our hands to ourselves and taking care of the learning environment. These are discussed with the children, as well as why such rules are needed.
- **Curriculum:** Is developmentally appropriate, based on the children's interest and level of readiness.
- **Positive Behavior:** We reinforce the behaviors we wish to see repeated.
- **Redirection:** Often, interesting a child in another activity can eliminate the potential difficulty. We might ask a child to help us or send a child to a different area to work.
- **Affirmative Reminder:** Telling the children what we want them to do, rather than using "no" or "don't."
- **Renewal Time:** Occasionally, as a last resort, a child needs to be removed from the situation for a brief break. This allows the child time to calm down and consider an alternate behavior.

### **Difficult Behavior**

We will make every effort to work with the parent or guardian to ensure a cooperative approach for children having difficulties with behavior. We are here to serve and protect all our children!

The following steps may be taken regarding children who display chronic disruptive behavior, upsetting to the emotional or physical well-being of another child or an adult at the LC.

**Initial Consultation:** The director may request that the parent or guardian meet for a conference. The problem will be defined on paper. Intervention strategies will be discussed. The best solution to solving the problem will be agreed upon by the LC Director, classroom guide, and parent or guardian.

**Second Consultation:** If the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parent will again be asked to meet with the director and teaching staff involved. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem and to establish a new, or revised, approach for solving the problem. Parents may be asked to consult outside professionals or bring in behavioral specialists to help identify the problems or provide new strategies for MLLC to continue care. Our goal is to work as a team to better serve each child.

**Disenrolled:** When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made toward solving the problem, the child may be disenrolled from the center at the discretion of the LC Director.

**NOTE:** Corporal punishment will not be allowed. This is defined as the use of negative physical touching (spanking, slapping, pinching, etc.), exclusion from large motor or outdoor activities, or exclusion from any learning activity.

The Learning Center is committed to helping children develop self-discipline, good decision-making skills, and a sense of responsibility for their actions. This is accomplished by:

- Modeling respect for all individuals, ourselves, and the environment.
- Providing a safe learning environment with activities designed for the child's sensitive periods and desire for independence.
- Establishing positive guidelines for behavior that are consistent and set clear, understandable limits.
- Recognizing a child's efforts and reinforcing desirable behaviors with appropriate words and actions.

### **MLLC Anti-Bullying Policy**

A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for children to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behavior, is conduct that disrupts both a child's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its children in a safe, non-threatening environment.

The MLLC community, which includes administrators, staff, volunteers, parents, and participants, will demonstrate appropriate behavior, treat others with civility and respect, and refuse to tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

#### **Definitions:**

(A) "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any intentional gesture, or any intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, communication, transmission or threat that:

- (1) A reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of any one or more of the following:
  - (a) Physically harming a child.
  - (b) Damaging a child's property.

- (c) Placing a child in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person; or
- (d) Placing a child in reasonable fear of damage to his or her property.
- (2) Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or emotionally abusive educational environment for a child; or
- (3) Disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the Learning Center.

(B) An electronic act, communication, transmission, or threat includes but is not limited to one which is administered via telephone, wireless phone, computer, or any electronic or wireless device whatsoever and includes but is not limited to transmission of any image or voice, email or text message using any such device.

**Policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying:**

The MLLC anti-bullying policy includes representation of parents or guardians, Learning Center employees, volunteers, participants, and community members.

Notice of the policy shall appear in any publication that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for the LC.

- (1) There shall be no harassment, intimidation or bullying of any child on MLLC property, during transportation to or at a Learning Center sponsored event.
- (2) All MLLC community members will treat others with respect.
- (3) All MLLC community members will treat others' property with respect.
- (4) All incidents will be reported to the LC Director or Assistant Director.
  - (a) Staff shall report prohibited incidents of which they are aware.
  - (b) Parents or guardians of any child involved in an incident prohibited pursuant to this policy be notified.
- (5) All reported incidents will be documented by the LC Director or Assistant Director.
- (6) All reported incidents will be responded to and investigated.
- (7) Victims will be protected from additional harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and from retaliation following a report.
- (8) A disciplinary procedure for any child guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying will be enacted.
- (9) All information relating to a reported incident is considered confidential.

**Policy training and education:**

Information regarding MLLC policy against harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be incorporated into the employee training program.

- (1) Administration will provide training on the harassment, intimidation, or bullying policy to staff and volunteers who have direct contact with children; and
- (2) Staff will develop a process for educating classrooms on the harassment, intimidation or bullying policy.

Info contained in the MLLC anti-bullying policy comes from the West Virginia Legislature found at [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)

## HEALTH /SICK POLICY

You are the best judge of your child's health, and we trust you will not bring a sick child to the LC. However, if while in our care your child becomes ill, displays an unknown rash, or acts out of character your child's guide will consult the director and you may be contacted to take your child home. When called, you (or an alternate emergency person) are expected to come within the hour. This is to protect the health of your child and his/her classmates. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

The following criteria will be considered in determining if your child should stay home or will be sent home:

- Unknown rash will need to be seen by a physician. The child can return to school by the written recommendation made by the doctor. A doctor's note is required.
- Eye irritation or infection with redness, itching, and/or crusty drainage from the eye. The individual should be free from drainage for 24 hours or evaluated by a doctor.
- Fever of 100.4° or higher. The child must be fever-free for 48 hours without the aid of Tylenol or other fever-reducing medications before returning to the LC.
- Fever less than 100.4°. Individuals may be monitored but additional symptoms may warrant being at home.
- Diarrhea (more than two loose, watery stools within 24 hours at home or within 2 hours at the LC), or any vomiting. Consideration will be taken if your child is allergic to certain food/drink products or on medication. The child may return when bowel movements are normal, and no other symptoms of illness are present. The child may return to the LC 24 hours after the last time he/she vomited, and no other symptoms of illness are present.
- Persistent cough or runny nose for an extended period. Children may return 48 hours cough free without the aid of cough suppressant, or allergy medication.
- Crying and/or irritable for a long time, or not eating or drinking normally. Anytime a child is not themselves, cannot be soothed by a guide, requires one-on-one care, is complaining about discomfort, or is not interacting with the class is reason enough to take a Wellness Day and spend time in the comfort of their own parent(s) arms.

Highly contagious conditions such as:

- Head lice: Suggested treatments available upon request. The child must be nit free to return to school.
- Chicken pox and Hand Foot Mouth: The child must be fever-free and sores scabbed over.
- Strep throat: The child must have 24 hours of antibiotics in his/her system.

### Communicable Illness

Please let us know immediately if your child has a communicable illness or disease. We are required to notify all parents of the presence of any communicable disease as listed in the WV DHHR Child Care Center Regulations (APPENDIX 78-1 B: REPORTABLE ILLNESSES), as well as the local Health Department. This list is in the Forms section of our website. A note from a physician is required to return.

## **Immunization/Medical Exemptions**

DHHR requires that, upon admittance, MLLC have on file a record of a child's immunizations or a plan for completion signed by the child's licensed health care provider. DHHR provides an exemption from immunization requirements for parents who provide a signed statement from the child's licensed healthcare provider indicating that immunization is contraindicated based on the child's medical condition. When a child has been diagnosed with a vaccine-preventable communicable disease, DHHR requires that MLLC exclude the child who has not been immunized against the disease until a licensed healthcare provider determines that a risk of disease transmission has passed.

A statement of objection to medical treatment, signed by the parent, must be on file if a child's parent objects to medical treatment on the grounds that it conflicts with the convictions of his or her religion or conscience. If a situation arises where a child is injured or may need medical attention, the parent will be contacted immediately, and staff will contact 911.

If a child becomes ill while at the Learning Center, parents will be notified and if unreachable the emergency contacts will be called.

## **Pandemics**

Our Pandemic Response Plan (available upon request) will be followed during any pandemic period. Center for Disease Control, Department of Health and/or State Child Care Licensing Rules will be followed. Response will include but is not limited to, monitoring symptoms of staff and children, practicing social distancing, following proper hygiene protocol, implementing any/new safety equipment, isolating staff and/or children infected, decreasing class sizes, and transparent communication with families and regulating agencies.

## **Medical Emergency**

In case of a medical emergency, 911 will be called and the parents will be notified. A staff member will accompany the child if they are transported to a hospital and will remain with them until the parents arrive.

## **Prescription Medication**

Staff members are not permitted to give any medications to your child. This includes both prescription and non-prescription medicines. You may come to the Learning Center and administer any necessary medications. You must also keep all medications with you; we cannot store them in the Learning Center. The only exception is an Epi-pen, which must be clearly marked with the child's name.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Our emergency plan has been developed to assist the Learning Center in protecting the health and safety of the children in its care should a disaster or emergency affect the facility, its operation, or its community. The safety of the children and staff is the primary concern of the Learning Center.

Learning Center staff will make every effort to ensure that all children are accounted for and out of harm's way during emergency situations. In the event of an emergency, staff will initiate a communication channel via mobile phones and the designated person for each child will be contacted.

### TYPES OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE

#### Shelter in Place

In the event of a weather emergency that would require staff and children to stay onsite, but in a secure location, staff and children will move to the basement.

#### Evacuation

In the event of an emergency that requires evacuation of the facility, staff will exit the building and go to either the Primary or Secondary relocation sites listed below. The Learning Center has two relocation sites in the event of an evacuation.

The addresses of the two relocation sites are:

***Primary Relocation:***

Sunrise Sanitation 51 State Highway  
Thomas, WV 26292

***Secondary Relocation:***

Thomas Community Center  
Jacob Pase Street  
Thomas, WV 2629

All staff and children will stay at the relocation site until an 'All Clear' is given or children have been released to an approved adult. During an emergency, it is required that parents communicate with the designated staff member (wearing an orange safety vest) before departing with their child/children.

#### Staff & Child Emergency Drills

All staff and children will participate in fire and emergency drills at the Learning Center as required. A record of the drills is posted on the bulletin board.

## **PEST MANAGEMENT**

An outside company for preventative pest management is contracted to monitor and, if necessary, to treat the Learning Center facility. Childcare centers are required to test for pests monthly. It is the goal of this Learning Center facility to provide a clean, comfortable environment in which children can play and learn and staff can work. It is, therefore, our policy to use integrated pest management procedures to control pests to reduce the need for pesticide applications.

If pesticides are necessary to control pests, notification will be given to every parent of an enrolled child. This notification will be provided at least 24 hours in advance of pesticide application. Employees will also be notified at least 24 hours in advance of the application of pesticides. All pesticide applications will be made by certified applicators or registered technicians in accordance with state law.

## **REPORTING PROBLEMS**

### **Confidentiality**

Learning Center employees will understand the legality and respect the confidentiality of written, verbal and observed information. Information received from parents/legal guardians on enrollment forms is available to the administrative staff and Guides who work directly with their child. Parents / legal guardians are permitted to review their child's file upon written request made to the Director. All records are stored in a locked cabinet and are disposed of in a secure manner 3 years after withdrawal.

If a staff member wishes to audio record a conversation with another staff or the Director, they shall request advance (24-hour) written permission. Additionally, if a Guide or Director wishes to record a conversation with a parent or other visitor, they shall inform that person in writing 24 hours prior to the start of the conversation. Please note, if a person declines to be audio recorded, the requester cannot legally proceed with the recording and must cease and desist. Failure to do so is illegal according to state and federal law.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

The Learning Center is required to report any suspected incident of child abuse or neglect to the Child Protective Services or to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-352-6513). Staff are required to, and parents and any other adults are advised to, report any incidence of child abuse or neglect to the Center Director immediately either verbally or by written notification.

Child abuse and neglect is defined as follows: Physical injury, mental or emotional injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, the sale or attempted sale or negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a parent, guardian, or custodian responsible for the child's welfare, under circumstances which harm or threaten the health and welfare of the child.

### **Grievance Procedure**

Communication between the staff and parents/guardians is especially important. If a problem should arise, we will aim towards resolution between the two parties. The Learning Center Director should be informed immediately. If any party feels this step is not sufficient, the MLLC Board President should be contacted in writing. A meeting with an MLLC Board member, Director and all involved persons will be scheduled within 10 days. As our goal is to have open communication and quick resolution, please communicate any concerns you may have immediately. We will work together to come to an understanding that is beneficial to you, our staff, and most importantly your child.

Parents can access the Child Care Center Licensing Regulations at any time. A copy can be accessed online at <https://dhhr.wv.gov/bfa/ece/policies/Pages/default.aspx> Parents have the right to report to the Secretary of the WV DHHR any complaints related to compliance of WV State Licensing Regulations.

### **Harassment**

The Learning Center does not tolerate harassment of any kind. The Learning Center Director or MLLC Board President is to be notified immediately of any harassment involving children, parents, or staff.

## **RELEASE OF LIABILITY POLICY**

I, as the parent/legal guardian of a child at the Learning Center, do hereby acknowledge and assume the risk of my child's participation in all activities in association with Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative. I voluntarily assume all risk of loss, damage, illness or injury, including death, which may occur while my child is participating in any Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative activity or event or during such times as my child is under the supervision of any Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative volunteer, employee or agent. I agree to hold harmless and release Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative and its volunteers, employees, and agents in any location where activities are conducted. I understand that Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative does not provide health, accident, dental, disability or other insurance to pay for expenses that may be incurred as a result of any injury sustained. I agree to assume responsibility for all expenses that may be incurred or arise from any injury to my child while participating with Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative.

- Please indicate that you have read and agree to the Release of Liability Policy on the Policy Contract and Handbook Acknowledgement form.

## **IMAGE USE POLICY**

Throughout our programs we capture photographs and videos of MLLC participants. These images may be used in displays, on our website, for publications, in advertisements, or on MLLC's Facebook page. MLLC participants will not be identified by their full name in publications.

- Please indicate if you DO or DO NOT give permission for images to be used on the Policy Contract and Handbook Acknowledgement form.

## **PARENT DIRECTORY**

To facilitate communication between our LC community, we create a directory that is distributed only to parents. Inclusion in the directory is optional.

Parent/Guardian and child/children names are included. Contact information preferences - such as phone number, email address, mailing address - are requested from each family.

- Please provide any contact information that you would like to be shared on the Policy Contract and Handbook Acknowledgement form.