Family Handbook

Miracle Grow

LEARNING ACADEMY

Where God's Tiny Miracles Grow and Thrive



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Welcome to Miracle Grow Learning Academy

Welcome to **Miracle Grow Learning Academy**! We are honored that you have chosen us to partner with you in your child's early learning journey. Our program is designed to provide a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where children can grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

At Miracle Grow Learning Academy, we believe children learn best when they feel safe, loved, and valued. Our team is committed to building strong relationships with children and families while supporting each child's unique development.

Our Mission

At **Miracle Grow Learning Academy**, our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, inclusive, and affordable learning environment where every child feels valued and supported. We accomplish this by building strong relationships with families, centering each child's individual needs, using intentional and developmentally appropriate curriculum, and consistently following safety protocols and best practices.

Our Vision

We envision a thriving community where children develop emotional awareness, confidence in their abilities, and a meaningful connection to nature, learning, and one another. Our goal is for children to grow into compassionate, curious, and capable learners who feel a strong sense of belonging.

Our Educational Philosophy

Our educational philosophy is rooted in play-based, hands-on learning experiences supported by thoughtful structure and guidance. We believe children learn best when they are encouraged to explore, ask questions, and actively engage with their environment.

We are committed to nurturing each child's unique strengths while promoting curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, and independence. By embracing diversity and partnering closely with families, we create a supportive learning community where children build confidence and develop the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to thrive.

Our Core Values

Our core values guide how we care for children, partner with families, and support one another each day. These values are intentionally modeled by our staff and reinforced through daily routines, classroom experiences, and interactions.

- **Integrity** – We tell the truth
- **Kindness** – We use gentle hands and words
- **Curiosity** – We love to learn
- **Optimism** – We keep trying
- **Belonging** – Everyone belongs here
- **Responsibility** – We take care of our space
- **Joy** – Learning is fun
- **Respect** – We listen and care
- **Collaboration** – We work together
- **Growth** – We practice and grow
- **Service** – We help others

Program Overview

About Our Center

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is a privately owned early childhood program serving families in the Twin Cities community. We provide high-quality child development services in a nurturing, safe, and inclusive environment where children can grow and thrive.

Our program is designed to support the whole child academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually while fostering strong partnerships with families and the broader community.

Address: 1536 Minnehaha Ave W, Saint Paul, MN 55104 (inside Knox International Center) · **Phone:** 651-645-1225 · **Email:** admin@miraclegrowlearningacademy.com

Ages Served

Miracle Grow Learning Academy serves children ages 2 years and 9 months through 12 years, in accordance with Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements.

Children are placed in classrooms based on age, developmental needs, group size, and staffing ratios. Classroom groupings may include preschool and school-age children, depending on enrollment, space availability, and licensing capacity.

Hours of Operation

Miracle Grow Learning Academy operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., year-round.

Families are encouraged to maintain consistent drop-off and pick-up routines to support their child's sense of security and daily rhythm.

Days Closed and Holidays

The center is closed on designated holidays, professional development days, and during emergency closures when necessary. Planned closures include, but are not limited to:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day (Staff Training Day)
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
- Winter Break (December 24 – January 3)
- Designated staff development days

Families will receive an annual calendar outlining closures. Tuition is not reduced for holidays, professional development days, or scheduled closures. When a holiday falls on a weekend, the center may close on the nearest weekday; closure dates will be confirmed on the annual calendar.

Licensing and Compliance

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Care Licensing Division, and operates in compliance with all state licensing rules and regulations. Our license number is 1121092.

Licensing information, inspection reports, and required postings are displayed at the center and are available to families upon request. Families also have the right to contact DHS directly with questions or concerns:

Minnesota Department of Human Services – Child Care Licensing Division
PO Box 64242, St. Paul, MN 55164-0242 · Phone: (651) 431-6500

Licensed Capacity and Ratios

Our licensed capacity and classroom group sizes are determined by DHS regulations and are posted on the Family Communication Board. Staff maintain required child-to-teacher ratios at all times to ensure the safety and well-being of every child.

Age Group	Age Range	Staff-to-Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size	Licensed Capacity
Preschool	33 months to kindergarten	1:10	20	24
School-Age	Kindergarten through 12 years	1:15	30	16

To maintain ratios and group sizes, children may occasionally spend time in another classroom, and age groups may be combined during opening and closing hours or other low-attendance times, always within DHS licensing requirements.

Faith-Informed and Inclusive Environment

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is a faith-informed program that emphasizes kindness, service, respect, and community. We welcome families of all backgrounds and cultures and are committed to creating an environment where every child feels safe, valued, and included. All activities are developmentally appropriate and respectful of family beliefs.

Family Orientation and Enrollment

Enrollment Process

Families interested in enrolling their child at Miracle Grow Learning Academy are required to complete an enrollment process prior to their child's first day of attendance. Enrollment is based on space availability and the completion of all required forms and fees.

Enrollment begins with a meeting or conversation with a member of the administrative team to review program policies, expectations, and required documentation.

Required Enrollment Documentation

Before a child may begin care, families must complete and submit all required enrollment paperwork, including but not limited to:

- Enrollment Form
- Emergency Contact Form
- Tuition Agreement
- Health Care Summary (completed by a licensed health care provider within 30 days of the child's start date)
- Immunization Record (required prior to the first day of care)
- Health Care Plan (if applicable and required before care begins)
- Medication Administration Authorization (if applicable)
- Orientation Form
- Getting to Know Your Family Form and Individual Learning Plan (completed with teaching staff within 10 days of enrollment)
- Required permissions for activities, media, and transportation, including field trips and walks, sunscreen and insect repellent, and posting of allergy/special diet information
- CACFP enrollment form and income eligibility form (food program)

Incomplete documentation may delay a child's start date.

Orientation

All families are required to participate in a family orientation prior to their child's first day. Orientation includes a review of:

- Daily routines and schedules
- Health and safety procedures
- Communication practices
- Guidance and discipline philosophy
- Family responsibilities and expectations
- Rest time routines and your child's routines at home

Orientation helps ensure a smooth transition into care and establishes a strong partnership between families and staff.

Transitioning Into Care

We understand that starting childcare is a significant transition for both children and families. Teachers work closely with families to support each child's adjustment through consistent routines, clear communication, and individualized support.

Families are encouraged to share information about their child's routines, preferences, and needs to help support a positive transition.

Saying goodbye. For some children, separating from a parent can be challenging, and this is developmentally normal. A consistent goodbye routine helps — arriving at about the same time each day, a special hug or wave, and following through with a simple statement such as "One hug and then it's time to say goodbye." Our teachers are happy to help with drop-off, and families are always welcome to call and check in during the day.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides services without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, or economic status. All children within our licensed age range are welcome to apply for enrollment.

Registration and Deposits

Registration fees and deposits are described in the **Registration Fee and Deposit** section under Tuition, Fees, and Attendance. For families receiving Child Care Assistance (CCAP), enrollment is confirmed once the center receives a current, active authorization.

Updating Family Information

Families are responsible for keeping all contact information current, including addresses, phone numbers, emergency contacts, employment information, and authorized pick-up persons. At least two working emergency phone numbers must be on file at all times.

Changes to authorized escorts must be made in person or in the Playground app and documented by administration.

Working With and Communicating With Families

Our Partnership With Families

At Miracle Grow Learning Academy, we believe families are a child's first and most important teachers. We value open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration as we work together to support each child's growth and development.

Families are encouraged to share questions, concerns, and insights about their child at any time. Strong partnerships help us create consistency between home and school.

Daily Communication

We provide ongoing communication about children's daily experiences, including activities, meals, rest, and overall well-being. Communication may take place through verbal conversations, written notes, and/or our communication platform, Playground.

Families of younger children may receive daily reports outlining key parts of their child's day. Families are always welcome to reach out to staff or administration with questions.

Newsletters, Postings, and the Family Communication Board

Classroom schedules, menus, field trips, special events, and reminders are shared through Playground and posted on the Family Communication Board. The board also displays our license and inspection reports, licensing and owner contact information, our grievance procedure, and our mission. Information about community resources and events is posted near the sign-in area.

Contacting the Center

Families are welcome to call during the day to check on their child. If staff do not answer right away, they are likely busy caring for children — please leave a message and someone will return your call. For urgent matters:

- Center: 651-645-1225
- Site Supervisor: Vanessa Urzua, 651-336-9200
- Owner/Director: Brandy Henry, 470-257-8469

Family-Teacher Conferences

Family-teacher conferences are offered at least annually and as needed to discuss children's development, progress, and goals. Additional conferences may be requested by families or staff at any time.

Conferences provide an opportunity to review observations, assessments, and strategies for supporting children both at home and in the classroom.

Child Assessment

We use an authentic, observation-based assessment approach to understand each child's learning and development. Teachers observe, record, and document what children do throughout the day, and use this information to plan activities, communicate with families, identify children who may benefit from additional support, and evaluate our program. Assessment results are shared with families at quarterly conferences.

Families may review their child's assessment portfolio at any time and may discuss any concerns about how the curriculum or assessment is meeting their child's needs.

Family Engagement and Participation

Families are encouraged to participate in classroom activities, events, and program celebrations when possible. Family involvement strengthens children's sense of belonging and helps build a connected school community.

Each year we invite family input to help improve our program, policies, and procedures. Our policies are reviewed annually by administration and lead teaching staff.

Connecting Families to Community Resources

When appropriate, Miracle Grow Learning Academy partners with families to help connect them to community resources, including early intervention services, family education programs, and additional support services.

Referrals are made collaboratively and with family consent.

Parent Rights

Families have the right to:

- Access their child at all times while in care
- Review their child's records
- Observe the program
- Receive information about licensing and inspections
- Express concerns without fear of retaliation

Grievance Procedure

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to addressing family concerns respectfully and promptly.

1. Families are encouraged to first discuss concerns with their child's classroom teacher.
2. If the concern is not resolved, families should contact the Site Supervisor (Vanessa Urzua, 651-336-9200), who will review the concern and schedule a meeting within two (2) business days.
3. If concerns remain unresolved, families may contact the Owner/Director, Brandy Henry, 470-257-8469.
4. Families always have the right to contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Care Licensing Division, at (651) 431-6500 or PO Box 64242, St. Paul, MN 55164-0242.

All grievances are documented, including the date, time, people involved, and resolution, and handled confidentially among only those with a need to know. No child will be negatively affected as a result of a family bringing forward a concern. The names and phone numbers of the Director and controlling individuals are available upon request.

Tuition, Fees, and Attendance

Tuition Rates and Payment Schedule

Tuition at Miracle Grow Learning Academy is pre-paid and due according to the payment schedule outlined in each family's enrollment agreement.

Weekly tuition payments are due by 6:00 p.m. on Thursday for the upcoming week. **Monthly tuition payments** are due by the last business day of the month for the following month.

Payments are processed electronically. If a scheduled payment date falls on a holiday or weekend, payments will be processed on the prior business day.

Tuition rate changes. Tuition rates are reviewed annually to reflect the cost of materials and staff wages. Rate changes generally take effect in October, and families will receive written notice in advance.

What Tuition Includes

We strive not to charge families extra fees. Tuition includes meals and snacks, curriculum materials and activities, field trips, sunscreen, diapers, and wipes. Families may provide an alternate brand of an included item, but tuition will not be adjusted.

Registration Fee and Deposit

A non-refundable **$150 registration fee per child** is due at the time of enrollment. If a child withdraws and later re-enrolls, a new registration fee is due at that time.

To reserve or hold a child's space more than two (2) weeks in advance, a deposit equal to **50% of the monthly tuition rate** is required. This deposit secures the child's enrollment and is applied toward the child's first month of care.

For families receiving Child Care Assistance (CCAP), enrollment is confirmed once the center receives a current, active authorization. Families are responsible for any required co-pays or tuition balances not covered by CCAP.

Tuition During Absences and Closures

Tuition is due regardless of a child's attendance. Because staffing is based on enrollment, no tuition reductions or refunds are provided for absences due to illness, vacation, holidays, professional development days, or emergency closures.

Tuition is also due during scheduled program closures, including holidays and winter break.

Late Tuition and Non-Payment

Late tuition payments may result in a late fee of **$20 per day**. Tuition balances that remain unpaid for more than two (2) weeks may result in disenrollment.

Children may not attend the program if tuition accounts are not current.

Returned Payments

Returned checks or failed electronic payments will result in a **$50 NSF fee**, and future payments may be required by cashier's check, money order, or another guaranteed method.

Vacation Policy

Children enrolled for six (6) consecutive months may take up to two (2) weeks of vacation per calendar year, during which tuition for those weeks may be waived.

Vacation requests must be submitted in writing at least two (2) weeks in advance and approved by administration. Unearned vacation time or extended absences may require re-registration or result in the loss of the child's space.

Child Care Assistance (CCAP)

Miracle Grow Learning Academy accepts Child Care Assistance (CCAP). Children may not attend until the center receives a current and active authorization.

Families receiving CCAP are responsible for:

- Maintaining an active authorization
- Communicating directly with their county worker regarding renewals or changes
- Paying all required family co-pays and balances not covered by CCAP

Family co-pays are due biweekly on Wednesdays. Failure to pay required co-pays on time may result in late fees, suspension of care, or disenrollment. Unpaid co-pay balances are reported to the county.

If there is a lapse in authorization or if a child exceeds the number of allowable absent days under CCAP, families are responsible for paying tuition at the private pay rate until authorization is reinstated.

Late Pick-Up Fees

A late pick-up fee of **$15 per child for every 15-minute increment** will be charged if a child remains in care after closing time.

Late pick-up fees must be paid before the child may return to care. Tuition will not be adjusted or refunded due to late pick-up-related absences. See **Late Pick-Up Safety Procedures** for what happens if a child is not picked up.

Termination of Care

A minimum of two (2) weeks written notice is required prior to a child's last day of attendance. If proper notice is not provided, families are responsible for tuition for the final two weeks, regardless of attendance.

Miracle Grow Learning Academy reserves the right to terminate care in accordance with program policies, licensing regulations, and the best interests of the program community.

Our Educational Program

Miracle Grow Learning Academy uses a child-centered, play-based approach to learning that supports the whole child. Our curriculum is designed to nurture children's growth across all developmental domains, including social-emotional, cognitive, physical, language and literacy, mathematics, science, creativity, and approaches to learning.

We use the research-based 123 Learn curriculum framework, which is implemented through hands-on experiences, intentional teaching, and responsive interactions. Learning experiences are guided by children's interests, developmental needs, and observations, and are aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards.

Classrooms are thoughtfully arranged into learning areas that encourage exploration, independence, creativity, and collaboration. Daily schedules provide a balance of active play, structured learning, meals, rest, and outdoor time.

A detailed description of our curriculum, classroom learning areas, educational goals, and daily routines is available in our Program Plan and Curriculum Guide, which families may review at any time upon request.

Daily Schedule and Routines

Each classroom's daily schedule is posted on the Family Communication Board and balances child-initiated and teacher-guided activities. The schedule includes time for:

- Meals and snacks
- Handwashing and toileting
- Large-group and small-group activities
- Free-choice play in learning areas
- Gross motor play (indoor and/or outdoor)
- Story time
- Rest or quiet time
- Arrival and departure routines

Rest and Quiet Time

Rest time is set aside each day, generally after lunch (about 12:30 p.m.) until approximately 2:30 p.m., so children can rest their bodies and recharge. In accordance with Minnesota Rules, part 9503.0050:

- Children are encouraged to rest on their cot for 30 minutes. A child who has napped, or rested quietly for 30 minutes, is not required to stay on a cot and is offered quiet activities instead.
- Rest takes place in a quiet area separated from active play. Cots are placed directly on the floor, are not stacked while in use, and have a clear aisle on at least one side.
- Each child has separate bedding, which is washed weekly and whenever soiled or wet.
- Children's faces are never covered, and there is always enough light to see every child clearly.

Teachers give advance notice before rest time (for example, a five-minute reminder, dimming lights, quiet music, or a story). School-age children and children who no longer nap are offered quiet activities.

Outdoor Play

Children participate in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Children will not go outside during heavy rain, lightning, or severe weather, and teachers use the Child Care Weather Watch chart to decide whether

it is safe to go out on extremely hot or cold days. If a family does not want their child to go outside, a note from the child's health care provider is required.

Field Trips, Walks, and Transportation

Field trips and neighborhood walks are part of our learning experiences. The following procedures are in place:

- A field trip and transportation permission form is signed at enrollment and kept in the child's file.
- Families are notified in advance of each field trip, including the date, location, departure and return times, transportation, and whether a meal will be served.
- Staff check park and play areas for hazards before children enter.
- Staff bring emergency contact information, an attendance list, a first aid kit, any required medications, and a phone on every outing.
- Any transportation provided by the center or a contracted provider follows DHS transportation and child passenger safety requirements.

School-Age Program

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides before- and after-school care for school-age children. Transportation arrangements are coordinated with each family and may include school bus service or an outside transportation provider. Families must confirm their child's transportation plan with MGLA before care begins and notify both the school and MGLA of any changes.

Children arriving by bus or another transportation provider must be received by an MGLA staff member. School-age children may not enter the building independently from the bus. Staff will support the transition into the program and ensure each child's arrival is recorded.

Full-day care may be available on school release days and during summer, based on enrollment, staffing, and space. Families must request school release care at least one week in advance and receive confirmation of availability. Care is offered during MGLA's regular operating hours, except on scheduled program closures. Summer programming includes play, creative activities, outdoor exploration, and opportunities for social learning.

During after-school care, children are offered a designated time and space to work on homework or participate in quiet activities. Staff provide encouragement and assistance as available; families remain responsible for reviewing assignments and ensuring homework is completed.

Families must promptly notify MGLA if their child will not attend as scheduled, including when the child is absent from school or will be picked up directly from school.

Children With Special Needs

Children with special educational, mental health, and health needs are welcome in our program. We work with families and any special education providers to make sure children receive needed services or reasonable accommodations, and an Individual Child Care Plan is developed with families, teachers, and specialists.

When a child already has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), we will meet with the family (and the school district, with permission) to review the plan and determine how our program will support the child.

Referrals for Developmental Concerns

If families or teachers have concerns about a child's development, health, behavior, or mental health, we will meet to discuss referral options such as the child's health care provider, the school district (Early Childhood Special Education or Help Me Grow), or a community agency. Teachers and families develop a follow-up plan together, and administration will help connect the family with resources. Written parental permission is required before sharing information.

Health and Safety

Commitment to Health and Safety

The health and safety of children in our care is our highest priority. Miracle Grow Learning Academy follows all Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing regulations and best practices related to health, safety, supervision, and sanitation.

Staff are trained to maintain a clean, safe, and supportive environment and to respond appropriately to health or safety concerns.

Supervision

All children are supervised by sight and sound at all times, including while resting and using the bathroom, and staff maintain required ratios throughout the day.

Health Requirements

Health Care Summary and Immunizations

A completed Health Care Summary (signed by a licensed health care provider) must be on file within 30 days of a child's start date. A current immunization record is required before a child may begin care.

Children without current health or immunization documentation may be excluded from care until documentation is received. Families are responsible for providing updated records as immunizations are administered. If a required immunization has not been given, families must provide a medical exemption signed by a health care provider or a notarized exemption as allowed by Minnesota law. During an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, children who are not immunized may be excluded as directed by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Health records are kept on file and reviewed periodically to ensure compliance.

Illness and Exclusion Policy

To protect the health of all children and staff, children must be excluded from care if they are ill or unable to participate comfortably in program activities. In accordance with DHS licensing rules, a child will be excluded if they:

1. Have a reportable illness or condition that the Minnesota Department of Health has determined to be contagious, and a physician has determined has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the health risk to others
2. Have chicken pox, until the child is no longer infectious or the lesions are crusted over
3. Have vomited two or more times since arrival that day
4. Have had three or more abnormally loose stools since arrival that day
5. Have contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye
6. Have a bacterial infection such as strep throat or impetigo and have not completed 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
7. Have unexplained lethargy
8. Have lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others
9. Have a temperature of 100°F (axillary) or higher of undiagnosed origin, before fever-reducing medication is given
10. Have an undiagnosed rash or a rash associated with a contagious illness
11. Have significant respiratory distress

12. Are not able to participate in program activities with reasonable comfort
13. Require more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children

Children diagnosed with a contagious illness may return to care only after meeting DHS return-to-care guidelines or with written clearance from a health care provider.

If a child becomes ill while at the center, the child will be separated from other children and supervised at all times, and families will be contacted and must pick up their child within one (1) hour.

When a contagious illness is reported in the program, we will notify families of possible exposure through Playground and a posted notice. Children who are new to group care may get sick more often during the first few weeks as their immune systems adjust, so we encourage families to have a back-up care plan.

Medication Administration

Medication will be administered only when absolutely necessary and only with written parental authorization. If medication can be given at home, we prefer that it be given at home.

All medications must:

- Be in the original container
- Be clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage, and instructions, along with the date and the prescriber's name for prescription medications
- Be stored securely and out of children's reach — please do not leave medications in backpacks or cubbies

Non-prescription medications that require weight-based dosing must have written authorization from a health care provider.

Medication administration is documented according to DHS requirements.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

With written parental permission, staff may apply sunscreen and insect repellent. Families may provide a preferred brand labeled with the child's name.

Health Care Plans and Special Diets

Children with medical conditions (such as asthma, seizures, or severe allergies), allergies, or special dietary needs must have a completed Health Care Plan on file before attending care.

Health Care Plans must be completed by a licensed health care provider and reviewed with staff. Children requiring a plan may not attend until the plan is received and implemented.

Allergy and special diet information is posted in classrooms as permitted to ensure staff awareness and child safety.

Handwashing and Hygiene

Proper handwashing is practiced by children and staff throughout the day, including before meals, after toileting or diapering, after outdoor play, and after contact with bodily fluids.

Hygiene practices are taught in developmentally appropriate ways to help children build lifelong healthy habits.

Diapering and Toileting

Diapering and toileting procedures follow DHS sanitation and safety guidelines. Staff use gloves, proper disposal methods, and disinfecting procedures to prevent the spread of germs.

Children are supported in toileting and potty training based on readiness and family collaboration.

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

The center follows a regular cleaning and sanitizing schedule for classrooms, toys, equipment, restrooms, and common areas.

Cleaning products are approved for use in child care settings and are stored securely. Bedding and linens are cleaned weekly or when soiled.

Pediatric First Aid and Injuries

All staff are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR, including infant and child CPR and obstructed airway procedures, within 90 days of starting work. In the event of an injury, staff will provide appropriate first aid and complete an incident report.

Families will be notified of any injury involving their child. If medical attention is required, families may be asked to pick up their child.

Insurance Coverage

Miracle Grow Learning Academy carries general liability insurance and accident insurance for enrolled children while participating in center activities. A family's personal insurance is considered primary, with the center's accident insurance secondary.

Guidance and Discipline

Our Approach to Guidance

At Miracle Grow Learning Academy, we believe that children learn best in an environment that is safe, respectful, and supportive. Guidance and discipline are viewed as opportunities to teach children self-regulation, problem-solving, and positive social skills.

Our approach to guidance is rooted in our core values of kindness, respect, belonging, responsibility, and growth. We focus on helping children understand expectations, develop empathy, and make positive choices.

Positive Guidance Strategies

Staff use developmentally appropriate, positive guidance strategies that may include:

- Modeling appropriate behavior
- Setting clear and consistent expectations
- Redirection to appropriate activities
- Offering choices and problem-solving support
- Supporting children in naming and managing emotions
- Encouraging cooperation and conflict resolution

Guidance strategies are individualized to meet the developmental needs of each child and are communicated respectfully.

Prohibited Practices

The following practices are strictly prohibited:

- Corporal punishment, including spanking or hitting
- Verbal humiliation, shaming, or threats
- Withholding food, rest, or basic needs as punishment, including food, light, warmth, clothing, or medical care
- Mechanical restraints or confinement
- Punishment related to toileting accidents

Physical restraint is used only when necessary to protect a child or others from immediate harm and is documented according to DHS requirements. Families will be notified when this occurs and given a written copy explaining why it was necessary.

Persistent Unacceptable Behavior

When a child's behavior requires an increased amount of staff time, staff will observe and document the behavior and the actions taken, help the child understand the expectation, and support the child in finding more positive ways to behave. Families will receive a written or verbal consultation, and the behavior and staff response will be documented. If the behavior continues, a conference will be held with the family to develop a written plan to support the child.

Separation From the Group

A child will not be separated from the group unless less intrusive guidance has been tried and has not worked. When separation is used:

- The child stays in the classroom within sight and hearing of staff, and returns to the group as soon as they regain control.
- Each separation is documented with the child's name, date, time, and the other guidance methods tried first.
- If a child is separated three or more times in one day, the family will be notified.
- If a child is separated five or more times in one week, or eight or more times in two weeks, a meeting will be held with the family to develop a plan to address the behavior (Minnesota Rules, part 9503.0055).

Weapons and Threats

Children may not bring weapons or dangerous objects to the center, including toy guns, knives, or toys that look like weapons. Because children and staff need to feel safe, threats of violence by any child or adult toward another child, family member, or staff member will not be tolerated. Families and staff will meet to discuss appropriate next steps if this policy is violated.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to reducing and preventing the use of suspension or expulsion whenever possible. These measures are used only when a child's behavior presents a serious safety concern or significantly disrupts the learning environment despite consistent intervention and family collaboration. Exclusion may also be considered when a parent or family member threatens a child, family, or staff member, or when a family does not participate in the referral process or behavior support plan.

Before suspension or expulsion is considered, the following steps will occur:

- Documentation of behaviors and interventions
- Collaboration with families to develop a behavior support plan that includes the child's strengths, goals, and positive support strategies
- Referral to appropriate support services when applicable, including consultation with an early childhood coach or mental health consultant
- Ongoing communication and review of progress

Immediate suspension or expulsion may occur if a child's behavior poses an imminent risk to the safety of the child, other children, or staff. When exclusion is necessary, we will help the family access services and identify an alternative placement.

Program Fit Policy

Miracle Grow Learning Academy recognizes that not every program is the right fit for every child or family. The center reserves the right to discontinue care if it is determined that the program is unable to meet a child's needs while maintaining the safety and well-being of the group.

Decisions regarding program fit are made thoughtfully, communicated clearly, and documented appropriately. Families will be provided with notice whenever possible and supported through the transition process.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Procedures

Emergency Preparedness Plan

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains a written Emergency Preparedness Plan that is reviewed regularly and updated as needed. Staff receive training on emergency procedures during orientation and through ongoing professional development, including use of fire extinguishers, lockdown procedures, how to shut off utilities, and the location of emergency equipment.

Emergency procedures are posted in classrooms and common areas and are practiced through regular drills. Primary and secondary evacuation routes are marked in each room.

Emergency Drills

The center conducts emergency drills in accordance with Minnesota DHS licensing requirements, including:

- Fire drills
- Tornado or severe weather drills (monthly, April through September)
- Lockdown or shelter-in-place drills

Drills are documented with the date and time and conducted in a developmentally appropriate manner to minimize stress for children.

Emergency Closings

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies, the Owner/Director will determine whether the center will close or modify operations based on safety conditions, such as extreme cold or wind chill, hazardous road conditions, local school district closures, loss of heat, water, or power, or staffing shortages.

Families will be notified of emergency closings or early dismissals through Playground as soon as possible. If an emergency occurs during the day, families may be asked to pick up their child early; staff will remain with children until every child is picked up, and snacks will be provided as needed.

Evacuation and Shelter Procedures

Evacuation routes and designated shelter areas are posted throughout the center. In the event of an evacuation, staff will ensure that:

- Attendance records are taken
- Emergency contact information is accessible
- Required medications and emergency supplies are taken
- Children are supervised at all times

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called immediately. Families will be contacted as soon as possible after emergency services are engaged.

Staff trained in pediatric first aid and CPR will provide care until emergency responders arrive.

Accident and Incident Reporting

All accidents and incidents involving children are documented according to DHS requirements. Families will be notified of any incident involving their child and provided with written documentation.

Missing Child Procedures

In the unlikely event that a child is missing, staff will immediately follow established procedures, which include:

- Conducting an immediate search of the premises
- Contacting administration
- Notifying parents/guardians
- Contacting local authorities and DHS as required

Nutrition and Meal Service

Nutrition Program

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides nutritious meals and snacks that meet or exceed USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. Our goal is to support children's health, growth, and learning through balanced, developmentally appropriate meals.

Menus are planned in advance and posted for families to review.

Meals and Snacks Provided

The center provides the following meals daily:

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Afternoon snack

Children who are in care for more than 10 hours may be offered an additional snack later in the day.

Milk is offered at meals, and drinking water is available to children throughout the day.

Meal Times

- **Breakfast:** Served between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.
- **Lunch:** Served at approximately 11:30 a.m.
- **Afternoon Snack:** Served after rest time, typically between 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

If a child arrives late and misses breakfast, an alternate option such as cereal, fruit, and milk may be provided when available. Please call ahead if your child will arrive after breakfast.

Family-Style Dining

Meals are served family-style for preschool and school-age children whenever developmentally appropriate. Family-style dining encourages:

- Independence and self-help skills
- Social interaction and conversation
- Positive mealtime routines

Staff model healthy eating behaviors and support children as needed.

Food Allergies and Special Diets

Families must inform the center of any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or special dietary needs. A completed Health Care Plan or written documentation is required for all allergies and special diets.

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is a peanut-safe environment and does not serve pork products.

Allergy and special diet information is shared with staff to ensure child safety.

Food from Home

The center provides all meals and snacks necessary to meet USDA nutrition requirements. Outside food and beverages are generally not permitted, unless pre-approved by administration. If a family is approved to provide an alternate meal, it must meet USDA meal pattern requirements and be labeled with the child's first and last name and the date.

For special occasions or celebrations, families may bring commercially prepared, pre-packaged items with prior approval. All food items must be labeled and allergy-aware.

Birthday Celebrations

We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays in ways that are fun and inclusive. Families may bring a commercially prepared treat for the class with prior notice and approval.

Families are encouraged to consider alternative celebrations such as:

- A special classroom activity
- A favorite book read aloud or a guest reader
- A craft or cooking project

Please check with the Site Supervisor in advance if you would like to invite guests or take photographs.

Cooking Activities

Cooking activities may be included as part of classroom learning experiences. Teachers check for allergies in advance and ensure all activities are safe and developmentally appropriate.

Families will be informed of cooking activities that involve common allergens (milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, wheat, and sesame), and these activities are noted on the lesson plan.

Water and Toothbrushing

Drinking water is offered regularly throughout the day and is always available to children in single-service cups or from drinking fountains. Personal water bottles may be used at a family's request if they can be cleaned and sanitized between uses.

Families who wish for their child to brush their teeth after meals may provide a toothbrush, toothpaste, and storage container labeled with the child's name.

USDA Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

(2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Attendance, Arrival, and Departure

Attendance Expectations

Regular attendance supports children's learning, routines, and sense of belonging. Families are encouraged to notify the center if their child will be absent for any reason.

To support the learning environment and classroom routines, children are expected to arrive by 9:30 a.m., unless prior arrangements have been made with administration due to appointments or special circumstances. Arriving on time lets children take part in community-building activities like morning circle, and helps us plan staffing and meal counts. Please let the Site Supervisor know at least one day ahead about a planned late arrival, and call if you are running late due to weather or traffic.

Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures

Miracle Grow Learning Academy's responsibility for a child begins when the child is signed in by a parent or authorized adult and ends when the child is signed out at pick-up.

Children must be signed in and out each day using the designated system. Accurate attendance records are required for licensing, safety, staffing ratios, emergency accountability, and Child Care Assistance (CCAP) purposes.

Children may not enter the building or classroom independently.

Authorized Pick-Up and Release of Children

Children will be released only to parents/guardians or individuals listed as authorized escorts on the child's Emergency Contact Form.

Authorized pick-up persons must:

- Be listed in writing on the child's file
- Present a valid photo ID when requested
- Sign the child out at pick-up

Changes to authorized escorts must be made in person. Phone calls or text messages authorizing pick-up changes will not be accepted.

If a court order restricts custody or visitation, documentation must be provided and kept on file.

Impaired or Unsafe Pick-Up

If a parent or authorized adult appears to be intoxicated or otherwise unable to safely care for a child, staff will encourage them not to leave with the child and will offer to call another emergency contact or a ride. As mandated reporters, staff must report to the appropriate authorities when a child is taken from the program by someone who is intoxicated or incapacitated.

If a person who is the subject of a maltreatment report attempts to pick up a child, staff will follow the direction of law enforcement or the agency that received the report, will not release the child to that person, and will contact the parent or another authorized adult.

Late Arrival and Early Pick-Up

If a child will arrive late due to an appointment or special circumstance, families must notify the center in advance. Repeated late arrivals may disrupt classroom routines and learning experiences.

Families are welcome to pick up their child at any time during operating hours; however, early pick-ups should be communicated to staff when possible.

Late Pick-Up Safety Procedures

If a child remains in care after closing time, late pick-up fees apply as outlined in the Tuition and Fees section.

If a parent or emergency contact cannot be reached or does not arrive within 30 minutes of closing, the center may contact appropriate authorities to ensure the child's safety.

Clothing and What to Bring

Please dress your child for active, sometimes messy play — we paint, explore, and play outside year-round except in extreme weather. Please:

- Keep a complete change of clothing at the center at all times, updated each season
- Send weather-appropriate outdoor gear (coats, hats, mittens, boots in winter)
- Choose closed-toe shoes such as sneakers; flip-flops and sandals are not safe for play
- Avoid clothing with drawstrings
- Label all belongings with your child's name

Personal Belongings

Toys, food, and money should stay at home. Children share our classroom materials as part of learning together. Teachers may occasionally invite children to bring items such as photos, books, or a comfort item — please talk with your child's teacher if your child needs a special item for security.

Animals at the Center

Because of the risk of injury, allergies, or illness, pets are not allowed in the program except contained fish or insects, or certified service or therapy animals. Any visiting animals must be in good health, and families will be notified in advance.

Building Access, Security, and Visitors

The center maintains controlled access to the building to ensure the safety of children and staff. Families are encouraged:

- Not to allow unknown individuals into the building
- Not to share access codes or entry devices
- To report lost access credentials immediately

If you see someone unfamiliar in the building, please notify a staff member right away.

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains an open-door policy for families. Parents and guardians are welcome to visit at any time during operating hours. All visitors must check in with administration, sign the visitor log, and follow all safety and supervision procedures.

Parking Lot Safety

Safety is a top priority during drop-off and pick-up times. Families are asked to:

- Never leave children or siblings unattended in vehicles
- Follow posted parking and traffic guidelines

- Use appropriate car seats, boosters, and seat belts
- Avoid idling vehicles when possible
- Lock vehicles and keep valuables out of sight
- Share these procedures with grandparents, relatives, or friends who pick up

Staff are mandated reporters and are required to report safety concerns when necessary. If you need help finding a car seat resource, please ask the Site Supervisor.

Confidentiality, Records, and Mandated Reporting

Confidentiality of Records

Miracle Grow Learning Academy respects the privacy of children and families. All child and family records are kept confidential and shared only with authorized individuals or agencies as permitted by law.

Information about children and families is discussed only as necessary to support the child's care, safety, and development.

Child Records

The center maintains records for each enrolled child, including enrollment forms, emergency contacts, health records, and required permissions.

Families have the right to review their child's records upon request. Records are maintained in accordance with Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements.

Release of Information

Written parental authorization is required before any child or family information is released to outside agencies or individuals, unless disclosure is required by law.

Families may revoke authorization for the release of information at any time by submitting a written request.

Data Privacy, Photography, and Research

Photographs or videos of children may be taken for classroom documentation, educational purposes, or program-related communication. Written parental permission is obtained prior to the use of any images for public or promotional purposes.

Children are never identified by full name in public materials. A separate written permission will be obtained before each occasion of research, experimental procedure, or public relations activity involving your child. Families may add or revoke any permission at any time.

Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment

All staff at Miracle Grow Learning Academy are mandated reporters under Minnesota law and are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect, following the DHS Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Policy.

Reports are made to the appropriate authorities in accordance with DHS guidelines. Families are not notified prior to a report being made when notification could compromise a child's safety.

Mandated reporting policies and procedures are available upon request.

Risk Reduction and Child Protection

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains a written Risk Reduction and Child Protection Plan designed to prevent abuse, neglect, and maltreatment. Staff receive training on child protection policies during orientation and ongoing professional development.

Our Team

All teachers and assistants meet or exceed the qualifications required by Minnesota DHS licensing rules. We select staff based on their education, early childhood experience, and love for children. Everyone who works with children must pass a DHS background study, complete ongoing professional development, and be trained in pediatric first aid and CPR within 90 days of hire.

We assign teaching staff to specific groups and keep children with their primary teacher as consistently as possible, so children enjoy stable relationships and predictable routines.

Program Documents Available to Families

Our Child Care Program Plan, Policies and Procedures, Emergency Preparedness Plan, Risk Reduction Plan, Mandated Reporting Policy, and Family Handbook are available for review at any time — just ask a staff member or administration.

Family Resources

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to supporting families beyond the classroom. The following community resources may be helpful to families seeking additional support, education, or services. This list is not exhaustive, and families are welcome to request assistance in connecting with other resources as needed.

Child Care and Family Support

- **Think Small** – Provides assistance with child care searches, scholarships, parent education, and support services.
- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** – Helps eligible families afford quality child care through county-administered subsidies.
- **Parent Aware** – Offers tools and information to help families find high-quality child care and early education programs.
- **Child Care Aware of Minnesota** – Helps families find child care and understand their care options.
- **Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)** – Helps families with children meet basic needs while working toward financial stability.

Early Childhood Education and Development

- **Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)** – Offers parent education and early childhood programs for families with children from birth to kindergarten.
- **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)** – Provides evaluation and services for children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- **Help Me Grow** – Supports families with concerns about a child's development, behavior, or mental health (birth to age five).
- **Early Childhood Screening** – Free screening through your school district, required in Minnesota before kindergarten, to identify any concerns early (ages 3 to kindergarten).

Health and Wellness Resources

- **WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Program)** – Provides nutrition support and food benefits for eligible families.
- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)** – Provides food benefits based on household income and expenses.
- **Minnesota Dental Association – Give Kids a Smile** – Offers dental services to underserved children.

Additional Community Resources

- **Head Start** – Supports school readiness for children from low-income families through education, health, and family services.
- **Wilder Foundation** – Provides counseling, family support programs, and community services.

Families may request contact information or assistance connecting to any of these resources by speaking with administration.

Acknowledgment of Receipt

By enrolling my child at Miracle Grow Learning Academy, I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Family Handbook. I agree to follow the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

I understand that Miracle Grow Learning Academy reserves the right to update policies as needed to remain in compliance with licensing regulations and best practices. Families will be notified of significant changes.

Child's Name

Parent/Guardian Name (print)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date