



Little Stars
CHILDCARE

INSPIRING THE BRIGHT MINDS OF TOMORROW!

Little Stars Childcare Parent Handbook 2022-2023

Frogs - Room 105 – 847-885-7500 X675

Turtles – Room 106 – 847-885-7500 X 676

Tadpoles – Room 107 – 847-885-7500 X 624

Contact Information

Welcome to the Hoffman Estates Park District Little Stars Childcare, a full-day preschool program. Our program is state licensed, so you can be confident your child will benefit from superior educators, equipment, and opportunities.

The Hoffman Estates Park District is committed to giving your child the best preschool experience possible. Should you have any questions, concerns, or need additional assistance, please call me at 847-285-5561.

Thank you for participating in our Little Stars Childcare! I look forward to a great year.

Sincerely,
Natalie Wood
Early Childhood Program Manager

Program Philosophy

The Hoffman Estates Park District preschool program promotes child development which supports academic excellence. Developmentally-appropriate instruction is provided in an environment that values cultural diversity and nurtures a love of learning.

Our preschool program focuses on the development of the whole child. Our play-based curriculum incorporates a variety of learning opportunities designed to develop problem solving, creativity, self-expression, and academic skills. Children participate in a variety of activities every day, including art, music, creative movement, dramatic play, math, science, block play, group discussion and outdoor play.

Our qualified teachers combine this diverse curriculum through a healthy balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed learning which develops a child's physical, social, language, cognitive, and creative skills. Through encouragement, understanding and respect, we provide a positive, safe and nurturing atmosphere for learning.

Our program supports our community. Children learn about our community through field trips and community events. We believe that children learn best when parents and teachers work together and support each other, therefore, we encourage the active involvement of parents.

Little Stars Childcare Goals

It is the goal of HE Parks Little Stars Childcare is to help children:

- Develop a positive self-image
- Develop independence
- Develop social skills
- Learn positive interactions with classmates and teachers
- Experience sharing with others
- Learn responsibility for one's own actions
- Develop listening skills and learn to follow basic instructions
- Develop large motor skills through exercise, creative movement, and other physical activities
- Develop small gross motor skills through the use of puzzles, scissors, finger-paint, crayons, etc.
- Develop problem solving skills using puzzles, matching games, sorting materials
- Experience creativity and self-expression through art, music, poetry, literature, and puppets

Licensing

The HE Parks preschool program is licensed by the State of Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). The program must re-apply every 3 years. Health, safety and teacher qualifications are maintained and DCFS has unannounced visited to each site to observe the program and review all files.

Teachers

All head teachers are DCFS qualified. Assistant teachers all have a high school diploma and at least one-year experience in an early childhood setting.

All staff is trained in first aid and CPR. Preschool staff members are under the administration of the park district's full-time program manager. All preschool staff members are required to continue their education with additional participation in early childhood conferences, workshops, and training sessions.

Developmentally Appropriate Instruction

Play is the primary vehicle of learning for the young child. Play allows the child to experiment, explore and manipulate his/her environment, while developing imagination and creativity. Engaging in symbolic play allows a young child to express his or her thoughts and ideas, practice and rehearse new roles, and test out newly acquired knowledge and skill.

Young children construct knowledge based on their real-life experiences; they learn by doing. Children increase their own knowledge of the world through repeated interactions with people and materials. Our classrooms are designed to encourage children's active exploration with adults, other children and materials.

A typical daily classroom routine includes a mix of direct instruction and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Children will work individually, in small groups, and as part of a large group. The use of worksheets and drill instructional practices is avoided, with instruction being integrated across traditional subject areas in order to provide a meaningful framework for learning.

Curriculum

The Hoffman Estates Park District follows the Creative Curriculum. The Creative Curriculum guides the preschool program in providing developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom. Developmentally appropriate practice, in simple terms, is teaching in a way that matches the way children develop and learn. In order to plan curriculum that guides children's learning, the teaching staff must be aware of how children grow and develop and understand and appreciate all the differences each child brings to the class.

Our curriculum is organized into nine areas of development learning. The first four are major areas of child development: social/emotional development, physical development, cognitive development, and language development. The other five areas are learning skills that are covered within our program: literacy, mathematics, science & technology, social stories & the arts. Development in one area affects and is influenced by development in all areas.

Curriculum Goals & Objectives

Social-Emotional Goals

1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors
2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships
3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations

Physical Goals

4. Demonstrates traveling skills
5. Demonstrates balancing skills
6. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination

Language Goals

8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language
9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs
10. Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills

Cognitive Goals

11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning
12. Remembers and connects experiences
13. Uses classification skills
14. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present

Literacy Goals

15. Demonstrates phonological awareness
16. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
17. Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses
18. Comprehends and responds to books and other texts
19. Demonstrates emergent writing skills

Mathematic Goals

20. Uses number concepts and operations
21. Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
22. Compares and measures
23. Demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Science & Technology Goals

24. Uses scientific inquiry skills
25. Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things
26. Demonstrates knowledge of the physical properties of objects and materials
27. Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment
28. Uses tools and other technology to perform tasks

Social Studies Goals

29. Demonstrates knowledge about self
30. Shows basic understanding of people and how they live
31. Explores changes related to familiar people or places
32. Demonstrates simple geographic knowledge

The Arts

33. Explores the visual arts
34. Explores musical concepts and expression
35. Explores dance and movement concepts
36. Explores drama through action and language

English Language Acquisition

37. Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English
38. Demonstrate progress in speaking English

Illinois Early Learning Standards

Our curriculum also follows the Early Learning Standards established by the State of Illinois. Our curriculum teaches children to:

Language & Literacy Development

1. Recognize their own names
2. Recognize letters
3. Communicate their needs and thoughts in words, to develop their spoken language, and to expand their vocabulary
4. Develop letter-sound matches
5. Listen with understanding and respond to directions and conversations
6. Understand the purpose of print and become familiar with books

Math Development

7. Sort and match
8. Recognize patterns
9. Identify and name shapes and colors
10. Recognize numbers
11. Count objects using number sequences
12. Incorporate estimating and measuring activities into play

Social Studies Development

13. Identify community workers and the services they provide
14. Cooperate and work well with others
15. Recognizes similarities and differences in people
16. Accept a variety of cultural practices and celebrations

Science Development

17. Appreciate science through hands-on activities
18. Make observations and draw conclusions
19. Use scientific tools such as thermometers, balance scales, and magnifying glasses for investigation
20. Use common weather related vocabulary
21. Understand basic safety practices
22. Be aware of health & nutrition through healthy-eating and proper handwashing routines.

Artistic Development

1. Explore various art forms
2. Expand their fine motor skills through use of scissors, crayons and glue
3. Develop an appreciation for music

Physical Development

4. Develop large muscle skills through balancing, running, and jumping
5. Develop fine motor skills through use of scissors, crayons, puzzles, and beads

Social-Emotional Development

6. Develop self-control and comfort away from a parent
7. Manage transitions and begin to adapt to changes in routine
8. Engage in cooperative group play
9. Share materials and experiences and take turns
10. Develop relationships with other students and adults
11. Show initiative and independence in actions
12. Exhibit eagerness and curiosity as learners

Daily Schedule

When your child enters his/her classroom, s/he is given the freedom to explore the various learning activities and interest centers that have been prepared before his/her arrival. The children will have experiences in art, science, math, books, songs & movement, drama, and language.

The curriculum is play-based within the interest centers. Activities are planned on specific topics and themes. Each day there is always something new and different set up at the various centers.

The Little Stars Childcare hours of operation are 7:00am-6:00pm. Their day will include:

Learning Centers Exploration
Breakfast
Circle Time
Dedicated Preschool Time
Gym or Playground
Lunch
Music and stories
Nap Time
Afternoon Snack

Nap Time

Every day after lunch we have a two-hour nap/rest time. We require that each child lie quietly on his/her cot for the first hour of this time. If a child has not fallen asleep after 1 hour, he/she is allowed to do a quiet activity while on their cot. Please send a child-sized blanket with your child. We provide sheets. Sheets and cots are cleaned weekly.

Meals

A nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack are served each day. Catered meals meet all DCFS requirements. A child requiring a special diet due to medical reasons, allergic reactions or religious beliefs must provide the teachers with written instruction from a parent, clergy or doctor. Any special foods supplied by the parent must be labeled with the child's name, date and identity of the food. Children are encouraged to have pleasant conversation with their peers and teachers as they enjoy a relaxed, enjoyable lunch time. A monthly menu is posted for meals and a copy is sent home.

Parent Partnership

We are committed to creating a strong parent=teacher relationship through open communication regarding your child's development at school.

Daily Reports

We use an app called HiMama to communicate your child's daily report each day. This daily report states all the activities your child participated in through the day, all meals given and the amount eaten of each meal, the length of your child's nap if they chose to take one, and all pictures and videos taken throughout the day will also be on that daily report. At the time a registration an email will be sent to you from HiMama giving step by step instructions on how to create your account. If you have any questions about the process, reach out to the program manager.

Assessment Reports

Parents will receive reports through the school year regarding their child's progress in school. Assessment reports will be distributed in September, January, and May. Discussion about the January assessment reports will take place during the parent-teacher conferences. The assessment reports are aligned with the curriculum's goals & objectives. Assessments help the teaching staff to identify children's interests and needs, while also allowing them to modify curriculum and adapt their teaching practices.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher Conferences will be held once a year in January. We strongly encourage parents to attend conferences to learn about their child's progress. Feel free to discuss any concerns with a preschool teacher anytime throughout the year.

Program Evaluations

Evaluations of the Little Stars Childcare will be emailed to parents in December and in May. All responses will remain anonymous. Please take the opportunity to complete the evaluations; your input is very important in continuing to provide a successful preschool program for the community.

Teacher-Child Orientation

An enrollment orientation will take place before your child begins. This orientation will help your child feel comfortable by visiting the classroom and meeting the teachers.

Separation

Adjusting to a new environment may be a longer process for some children. During the adjustment period your child may be increasingly clingy, teary, or upset. Symptoms of separation anxiety will disappear once the child

feels more comfortable with the teachers, the classroom and the other children. A few steps to assist in the separation process:

- Be positive about the program.
- Plan to attend orientation visits.
- Bring a picture of the family for the child to keep at school.
- Always say good-bye to your child instead of sneaking away.
- Feel free to call and check in on your child at any time.

Policies & Procedures

Arrival and Pick-Up

Parents will be given a key fob to gain access to the Little Stars Childcare entrance. Please use this entryway to drop your child off at their classroom as well as pick them up. Parents are currently not allowed to enter classrooms due to our DCFS COVID guideline. Have your child take off their outdoor shoes and place them onto the shoe mat located outside their classroom door. The teachers will help assist your child in hanging up their backpack and coat in their cubby. They will also assist with putting their indoor shoes on if they should need help.

There is a doorbell located outside of the classroom. Please either ring the doorbell or knock on the door so one of the teachers knows you are there.

Late Pick-up Policy

Our program closes at 6:00pm. If you know you will be later than 6:00pm, please call the park district so we can reassure your child that you are on your way. In the event that you have not arrived by 6:00pm, the following policy goes into effect:

- A three-minute grace period is given. A \$1/minute late fee is assessed for every minute of tardiness after the 3 minute grace period. The fee must be paid before your child can attend preschool the next day.
- If the parent has not arrived or contacted the center after 20 minutes of closing, staff will begin calling parent' work, cell, and home phone numbers in an effort to reach a parent. If, after calling the available numbers, a parent cannot be reached, staff will call the emergency contacts listed on the Pink-Up Authorization form. If by 6:30pm, parent or another authorized person has not been reached for pick-up, staff will notify the Program Manager. By 7:00pm, if no one can be reached, the Program Manager will contact the Hoffman Estates Police. Parents will be required to sign-off on the late Pick-Up Policy with the enrollment forms.

Absences

Please notify us if your child will be absent. Full tuition is due when a child is absent. Pro-rations cannot be made for vacation or illness. You can call the LSC classrooms at 847-885-7500 x 675 (Room 105 – Frogs), x 676 (Room 106 – Turtles), x 624 (Room 107 – Tadpoles) or email the program manager (nwood@heparks.org).

Bathroom Use

Children need to be fully toilet-trained before the first day of preschool. Please do not send your child to class in diapers or pull-ups, only regular underwear. Dress children in clothes that are easy to maneuver since staff

is restricted in assisting children with personal hygiene. Teachers will not enter the bathroom with children. Teachers will check on the students often.

Birthdays

If you would like to bring a goodie bag for your child's birthday, please make sure it is food free.

Clothing & Toys

We do many art projects using paint, glue, glitter, and other materials. Please dress your child in clothes that can get messy. We provide smocks to cover your child's clothing; however, accidents do happen. Indoor and outdoor activities are also planned. Children should wear gym shoes or comfortable shoes. Please make sure the children bring their coats & other warm clothes for outdoor time. All clothing items should be clearly labeled. Each child will also be required to have a full change of clothes kept at the program, including socks and underwear.

The Little Stars Childcare is full of age-appropriate learning materials and toys for the children. We ask that children do not bring toys from home to school. Toys may only be brought to school if it is "show and tell" day. These toys should be labeled with the child's name and placed in his/her cubby at arrival. Toy weapons or violent action figures should not be brought to school.

Gross Motor Play

The students will participate in gross motor activities twice per day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. There are two different sites that will be utilized; the playground and the gym. Our first choice is always the playground located outside the classrooms. In the case of bad weather, the students will use the gym space instead.

The playground is inspected daily by each classroom and the inspection is documented. Anything that needs to be fixed or replaced. This will be done as soon as possible.

Discipline/Guidance Policy

Discipline should be administered as guidance that helps children develop appropriate social skills, gain control and assume responsibility for their own actions. It is understood that young children are not born with these skills and it is the adult's responsibility to coach/guide a child in the development of these skills.

To prevent discipline problems in the classroom, staff maintains consistent classroom routines and provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities for the children. Each classroom will also establish written classroom rules that will be visible to the staff, children and parents.

No one discipline method works for all children. A variety of methods used are:

- Providing guidance for children in a positive manner by acknowledgement of appropriate behavior.
- Behaviors such as cooperating, helping, negotiating, and problem solving are encouraged.
- Redirecting a child to a different activity or area of the classroom.
- Facilitating conflict resolution with the children to work out their differences.
- Removing the child from the action.

Parents will be informed of problems involving their children if the behavior was consistent throughout the day or a safety concern. If behavior persists, a meeting with the program manager, teacher and parent will be held.

Donations and Fundraisers

The He Parks Little Stars Childcare sponsors various fundraisers through the year. All funds raised are used to improve the program. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Field Trips

We will begin going on field trips periodically throughout the school year. Chaperones will be asked to attend each field trip to help the teachers while out in the public.

Messages for Teachers

Messages can be left for the Little Stars Childcare teachers by calling 847-885-7500 X 675 (Room 105-Frogs), X 676 (Room 106 – Turtles), and X 624 (Room 107 – Tadpoles). Or you may message them on the HiMama app and one of the teachers will respond as soon as able.

Board of Commissioners

As a governing body, the park district has seven elected commissioners who represent the recreational needs of the community. Park commissioners serve 4-year terms and are not paid. Park commissioners work as a board to interpret the park and recreational needs of the community, formulate short and long term plans, set policies, and inform the public of the purpose, worth, and extent of the district's services, parks, and facilities.

Northwest Special Recreation Association (NWSRA)

The Hoffman Estates Park District participates in a cooperative agreement among 16 park districts which forms NWSRA. The NWSRA team of full-time therapeutic recreation professionals and trained part-time staff provide fun, quality, and year-round recreational opportunities to individuals is provided by NWSRA to those individuals who wish to participate in their home park district program. When registering, the parent should inform the park district of any accommodation needed for their child, in order to successfully participate in the program. The park district staff will then contact NWSRA for assistance with the accommodation.

If a teacher believes that a child requires assistance with activities because of behavior or physical challenges, or requires assistance to better adapt to the classroom environment, the park district program manager will obtain written permission to conduct an observation from the parent. If NWSRA believes that additional staff would benefit your child, the NWSRA staff member and HE Parks program manager will meet with parents to discuss such issues. The additional staff will work one-on-one with your child, while interacting with all children in the program.

Integrated Pest Management Program

Illinois state law Public Act 95-0058 requires licensed child care centers to develop and implement an integrated pest management (IPM) program. IPM uses the most appropriate practice to achieve control of pests while avoiding adverse effect on people and the environment. Quality Pest Management is our pest management provider.

Public Act 95-0058 requires written notification prior to the application of pesticides. Should you wish to receive written notification prior to the specific application of pesticides you must register. To register to receive written notification 48 hours prior to pesticide applications, please submit your name and address for notification by mail or email to nwood@hepark.org.

Medication

Any child requiring any type of medication, including epi-pens, must have a signed medication release form on file with the teacher. These forms are available upon request. Medication cannot be administered without the release form. If your child is taking medication, please send the medication in its original container with the prescription label attached which includes: child's name, dosage, & expiration date. Medication will be kept in a locked cabinet in your child's classroom. Tylenol or other over the counter medication will not be administered at school. If your child has a fever, please do not send them to school if medication was given before arriving.

Confidentiality of Children's Records

Information pertaining to the admission, progress, health or discharge of an individual child shall be confidential and limited to facility staff designated by the program manager, unless the parent of the child granted written permission.

Emergencies & Severe Weather

In case of serious illness, accident, or injury of a child while attending the program, parents will be notified immediately. If all means of locating the parent have been unsuccessful, the HE parks staff will contact emergency services for transportation to the nearest hospital

In minor illness or accidents, if parents cannot be contacted, the child will be kept in a safe and quiet area until the parents are reached.

In family emergencies, please contact the program manager at 847-285-5561.

Fire and Tornado Drills

DCFS requires monthly fire drills. An unannounced practice fire drill will be conducted each month in the classroom. The nearest tornado shelter is in the fitness locker rooms. Tornado drills are practiced twice per year.

Severe Weather

Little Stars Childcare will never close due to inclement weather unless the park district facility is closed.

Registration

A \$50 per child registration fee is required with registration. Two weekly tuition payments are due at the time of registration (the first week's tuition + the last week's tuition deposit). Children must be 3 years-old & fully potty-trained in order to enroll in the Little Stars Childcare.

Birth Certificates

A copy of your child's birth certificate is required at registration. Official birth certificates are issued by the county clerk in the county in which your child was born. Hospital certificate will not be accepted.

Contact information for some local county clerks are listed below.

Cook County Clerk

Lake County Clerk

847-818-2850

847-360-3610

Dupage County Clerk

Kane County Clerk

630-682-7035

630-232-5950

Registration & Emergency Forms

All registration and emergency forms must be completed prior to your child's first day.

1. Enrollment Form & Tuition Payment
2. Permission & Waiver Form
3. Emergency Card
4. Preschool Information Sheet
5. Pick-Up Authorization
6. Discipline Policy
7. Physical Exam (*completed by the doctor)
8. DCFS License Summary Sign-Off
9. Copy of Official Birth Certificate issued by county clerk
10. HiMama Permission Form

Tuition Payment

A weekly EFT payment will be withdrawn from a credit or debit card each Thursday to cover the following week's child care service. A \$10 late fee will be charged for any decline payment.

Holiday Credit

Tuition is based on the yearly cost of the program. The weekly fee is a breakdown of this yearly cost. Therefore, no tuition credits are made when the school is closed on holidays. The Little Stars Childcare program is open year-round. School will not be open the following days:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day & Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve & Christmas
- New Years Eve & New Years Day
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July

*If any of these holidays fall on a weekend day, the LSC will be closed on the closest weekday as the observed holiday.

Vacation Credit

During the school year (September 1 – August 31) every child may choose two weeks of vacation at which time no tuition is charged. A vacation week must be the entire week: Monday-Friday. Children must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 weeks prior to requesting their first vacation week. Please complete the Vacation Form with

a minimum of one week's notice. Single days missed due to illness or vacation will not be refunded; full payment must be made.

Refunds & Withdrawals

If circumstances dictate that you will be leaving the program, please notify us by completing a Withdrawal Form. We require a two-week notification if you intend to withdraw from the program. Refunds cannot be granted for days missed due to illness or vacation.