

LITTLE SEEDS

HANDBOOK

2022-23

HISTORY

Little Seeds Preschool was established in the fall of 1983 by several parents seeking an alternative to the preschool programs offered in Columbus. Those involved wanted a small individual-oriented school that was neither entirely academic nor totally a social experience.

The school, which met at First United Methodist Church, and which received its name from the first group of students, has expanded from a small class of four year olds to classes for three, four, and five year olds. This fall, we celebrate our 35th year of existence and begin our fourth year at Community Church of Columbus. Little Seeds is governed by a board made up of church members and parents. The director and the director of early childhood education at Community Church of Columbus are permanent members. Others include Charity Keffaber, Lori Goode, Emily Brown, Megan Eaton, Heather Riegler, and Sarah Hashman.

Since its establishment, Little Seeds has emphasized the philosophy of Maria Montessori, i.e., a prepared environment from which the young child, by using his/her natural curiosity, can absorb knowledge by engaging all five senses. The school is designed to create an environment in which each child can develop at his/her own pace. In the words of Ms. Montessori, “We are here to offer to this life . . . the means necessary for its development; having done that we must await this development with respect.”

In addition to the spiritual dimension, Little Seeds provides a balance between academic, social, and practical life experiences. With an educated staff and a child centered philosophy, we offer a developmentally appropriate educational curriculum where sensory learning is experimental and exploratory. Academic areas which receive attention are language, mathematics, science, art, music, and movement. To enhance the social development of the child and the quality of the program, the classes are small, eight to ten students. Each class is similar to a small family.

The child is also given many “hands-on” experiences—jam making, butter making, woodworking, weaving, sewing, painting, cooking, cleaning, etc. There are fieldtrips to the farm, dairy, greenhouse, historical points of interests, police station, fire station, sawmill, orchard, pumpkin patch, etc. Occasionally, there are evening activities. All these experiences foster the child’s own creativity, make him/her aware of his/her own abilities and this beautiful world, and help him/her understand and respect his/her own world and the world of others.

MISSION STATEMENT

At Little Seeds Preschool, we are dedicated to provide a Christ-centered, caring, loving, individualized, safe and relaxed environment for ALL children. We passionately believe that this environment will help children grow in three very important areas.

1) Spiritually

Because the environment is Christ-centered, each child will know that God unconditionally loves him/her. Each child will also be loved unconditionally by the teachers and will have opportunities to model God's love to his/her peers. The environment will stimulate a child's thinking about God. Each child will come to recognize and appreciate God as the giver of all good things. The seeds for the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will be planted. Each daily session will open with prayer, and scripture memorization will be a vital part of our curriculum.

2) Intellectually

The environment will have structure, yet be relaxed, to enhance intellectual growth and to prepare each child for more formal education. Each child will be accepted for who he/she is with much God-given potential. Each will be allowed to unfold at his/her own pace. The atmosphere will encourage the use of a child's five senses to explore, observe, investigate, and react to all the things God has provided.

3) Socially

Each child will be expected to respect himself/herself, peers, and teachers. A few simple rules will be clearly delineated at the beginning of the school; compliance will be required of all children. When conflicts occur among children, those involved will take a pro-active part in the solution, with minimum intervention by the teacher. If a child's health or safety is in question, the teacher will intervene immediately.

ACCEPTANCE

No child will be refused admission on the basis of race, religion, or nationality. Each child is accepted conditionally, and we, the staff make every effort to help him/her adjust. The parents will be informed immediately if the child is having difficulty. After the end of the first month, the staff may advise that a child wait another year before entering preschool. We accept children with special needs, and each applicant will be evaluated individually. If these children require more professional training than our staff has, the parents will be informed immediately and the proper referral made. Because of our small staff and their training, the number of special needs children accepted will be limited.

Because we are a school with small classes, spaces are filled quickly. Enrollment is conducted in January for the following fall. To be eligible for the three year old class in the fall, a child must have turned three before 1 August, **and the child must be potty trained.** Those children with birthdays in March, April, May, June, and July may be developmentally evaluated before they are admitted to the program. Currently enrolled Little Seeds and their siblings are given preference. Children of active church members are then given preference. Active church membership consists of regular attendance and sharing time, talents, and financial resources with the Community Church of Columbus (CCC) congregation. After these, enrollment is then opened to the general public. Information on enrollment is available in early January at the Little Seeds office and on the CCC web site, www.cccolumbus.org. Click on this site, then look for shared ministries where one will find Little Seeds.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR FOR LITTLE SEEDS CHILDREN

- respect and love for himself/herself.
 - respect for his/her peers and teachers.
 - only walking inside the building.
 - speaking with his/her inside voice while in the classroom.
 - completion of what he/she begins.
 - putting things back on the shelf in a neat and orderly fashion.
 - respect and care for the activities and equipment used.
 - when accidents occur, helping to clean up after himself/herself.
- If a child is disruptive, after two warnings, he/she will be isolated from the group.

ILLNESS

Sick children need more special attention than we can give them at school. Please do not send your child to school if he/she has a temperature of over 100 degrees, feels nauseated or has vomited, has had diarrhea within the past 12 hours, has an uncommon rash, has red, swollen, draining eyes, or complains of a sore throat. If your child is sick, after 7 a.m., **call or text your child's teacher or the director. Do not call the church.** If your child has a lingering health problem, e.g. chronic cough, persistent rash, etc., the staff may ask for a note from your child's pediatrician before permitting him/her to return to school.

If your child has undergone a stressful and/or traumatic situation at home, we ask that you inform us so we can be more understanding and be ready to discuss the matter if the subject arises. Please inform us by a written note attached to your child's bag or by a telephone call.

CHILDREN WITH ALLERGIES

Children with allergies will receive special attention as their needs demand, especially those with food allergies. Parents will be asked to provide gluten free products if their child has a gluten intolerance. The suitable snack list will be modified to reflect nut allergies, and parents will be reminded in each newsletter of these allergies. For fieldtrips, children with allergies will be asked to provide their own sack lunches. At least one parent who has a child with food allergies will be required to attend every fieldtrip, and he/she will be responsible for all children with food allergies.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

Please, please dress your child comfortably in everyday play clothes for lots of floor activity, the playground, art projects, cooking, etc. **Simple tennis shoes or jogging shoes are required!** To send your child to school wearing sandals, thongs, Sunday shoes, crocs, or boots jeopardizes his/her safety. For fieldtrips, please dress your child comfortably and according to the weather. We try to go outside every day unless the temperature is below 25 degrees; long pants are best for these days. Please send mittens, cap, and coat, labeled with your child's name. We have purchased a unisex outfit for summer and winter to use if a child should have an accident at school or on a fieldtrip. If your child comes home wearing clothes you do not recognize, please wash them and return them the next school day.

LITTLE SEEDS BAG

Your child's Little Seeds bag should be brought to school each day. A substitute bag can be used for those occasional times when the bag is lost at home or forgotten. The replacement cost for a new bag is \$10.00. Only one bag per student will be issued. The bag can be reused the following school year. A safety pin attached to your child's bag should remain on the bag. Any messages to/from the teacher should be attached using this pin.

ITEMS BROUGHT FOR SHARING

The purpose of sharing time is to increase your child's self-confidence and improve his/her verbal skills as he/she communicates to his/her classmates. We will be studying a sound weekly which will appear in the monthly newsletter. It is very important for your child to bring an item from home beginning with the sound we are studying. He/she should be able to describe the item so that his/her classmates can guess the item. It should be a simple object beginning with the single phonetic sound, e.g. pig for "p," cat for "c," juice for "j." Avoid items that begin with blends, e.g. phone, knife, etc.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an integral part of the program at Little Seeds. Often they are planned according to a unit or theme we have been studying, to overcome a common fear, to emphasize the continuity of our community and its history, but sometimes, they are scheduled for fun and fresh air. Due to parents' requests, field trips are optional. A field trip may be scheduled on a day that is not your child's regular school day. If your child is too tired, if you feel that the trip is too long, or if your child shows little enthusiasm for the scheduled event, please feel free to keep him/her at home. A blanket permission slip for the entire year was completed at enrollment or during the summer in-home visit. You will be clearly informed of the field trips in the monthly newsletter so you can volunteer and plan accordingly.

Parent Volunteers

Parents are expected to come along for at least three of these trips. Selection of parents to accompany us on field trips and to volunteer in the classroom is based on the following guidelines:

- 1) promptness of the return of sign-up sheet sent home in newsletter
- 2) the number of times that the parent has previously volunteered in and outside the classroom in any capacity
- 3) the reaction of the child to have the parent attend scheduled activity and his/her ability to share the parent with other children
- 4) the ability of the parent to care for two and three other children

To qualify as a volunteer in the classroom and as a driver on fieldtrips, you must submit to us your form for a background check and insurance declaration sheet.

Sign-up Procedure

Because of the number of children that we are transporting along with car seats, our concern for the safety of each child, the limited number of parking spaces at the site of our host, and the logistics of shuffling children from car to car, **we cannot allow parents to go on fieldtrips who did not follow the sign-up procedure**. Only parents who have followed the sign-up procedure, i.e., returned sign-up sheet attached to the newsletter, will be selected to accompany us on field trips.

Notification will be given in a news update sent home listing those selected. If your name does not appear on the news update and you have followed the procedure, we will keep you in mind for last minute substitutions due to illness, etc. Only those directly contacted and confirmed by the director or teacher will accompany the group. No other additions will be made. If at the end of the year, you have not accompanied us on a fieldtrip, we may assign you to chaperone.

Responsibilities of the Parents

Field trips are to be educational, and since we are concerned about the safety and well-being of each child, the parents who go on field trips have specific responsibilities.

- 1) When the parent agrees to accompany us on a field trip, he/she should come to school prepared to drive and arrive at the designated time. Because of the size of our school, we try to take as few vehicles as possible to facilitate parking; therefore, there may be times when the parent is placed with another parent in a car/van. Due to last minute changes, final determination of drivers will be made the day of the trip. Please be flexible and patient with us. We often need more parental hands than drivers.

- 2) A parent is responsible not only for his/her child, but for the others assigned to him/her. We try to limit this number to two or three children.
- 3) Field trips usually provide the child with a new experience. Since the teachers cannot interact with each child, parents must assume this responsibility for the group of children under his/her supervision—asking questions, pointing out interesting things, and making sure that the children have the opportunity to see, feel, touch, taste, and hear whenever applicable.
- 4) The parent is to take care of every assigned child's needs—opening lunches, distributing snacks, going to the bathroom, washing hands, etc.
- 5) This is a special time for you to be with your child. You are to make arrangements for younger siblings. These trips are usually scheduled in the morning, and we try to return to school by 12 noon or 1 P.M.

We try very hard to reschedule field trips that have to be canceled due to inclement weather, but sometimes this is not possible because of prior programming.

Field Trip Policy for Drop/Off and Pick/Up (when the entire school is involved)

Drivers and riders will have been notified earlier in the newsletter update. The following policy has been adopted to insure the SAFETY of each child and to avoid confusion on these hectic days. Please notify your child care provider of this policy:

*****Drivers for Field Trip**

Drivers will park in designated two or three car lanes on the north side of the children's wing. See map following.

For the safety of all, **no** movement of drivers' vehicles (before or after the field trip) will occur until drop off/pick up of the children is completed. The time commitment to help drive on a field trip or to be a rider will include the extra time needed before and after the trip as you wait for the drop off/pick up to be completed. Please plan accordingly.

Upon arrival, drivers will pick up a map, a list of children in his/her group, and a flag. Drivers will then load car seats in vehicles and wait for further field trip instructions from the teacher.

*****Parents Going on the Trip but not Driving**

These parents will park in the north lot near the row of houses on the day of the field trip, leave their child in the gathering area and may be asked to supervise children in the safe space, take children to the bathroom, and help load car seats into vehicles.

*****Parents Dropping Off and Picking Up Children**

Enter the church parking lot as you would on a regular school day. Have your child sitting to the right of the driver in the back seat. A teacher will load/unload your child to/from the car seat.

Unless you are a chaperone, do not leave your car or walk your child to or from the gathering area.

Separate Session Field Trips

For field trips that we arrange for each session to go separately and the ones which will take only a portion of class time, we will abide by the same above guidelines.

WEATHER

In case of questionable weather (ice, snow, etc.), we will follow the decision made by the public school system. If the public schools close, we will close; if there is a two hour delay, morning classes will **begin at 10:15 A.M. and be dismissed at 12 noon.**

Afternoon classes will begin at 12:15 P.M. and will be dismissed at 2:15 P.M. If the public school system announces that schools will be dismissed before our afternoon classes begin, the afternoon classes will not meet. If the early dismissal announcement is made after our afternoon classes have begun, we will dismiss at the same time as the public schools, (usually 1 P.M.). BCSC will notify you of cancellations and dismissal if you

request this information. To sign up for the E-Alert, go to www.bcsc.k12.in.us. When Columbus is under a severe weather alert (thunderstorm or tornado), we will take our children to a hallway in the center of the building. We remain there until the warning/watch is lifted and then continue with our regular routine.

BIRTHDAYS

We celebrate all birthdays and half-birthdays for those children whose birthdays are in the summer months. The dates of these celebrations will appear each month in the monthly newsletter. Please record the date. We will try to send reminders home the week of the birthday celebration. The birthday celebration date **may not exactly match** your child's birthday. Parents provide the snacks that day (for his/her class only), and the celebration will take place mid-morning or mid-afternoon. You must select an item from the snack selection list provided in the information packet. **Pay particular attention to food allergies.** You may wish to donate a book to our library to commemorate your child's birthday. We have the strong library that we have because of the books donated by parents.

SNACKS

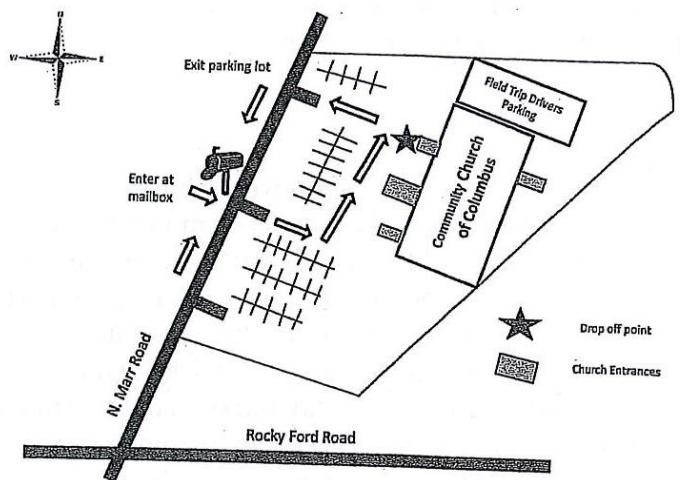
You will also be asked to provide snacks on your child's special "ME" day (for his/her class only). The celebration date will be determined by your child's teacher. This information about the "ME" celebrations will come home in September newsletter. Again snacks must be from our snack selection list in packet. On the all school field trips, you will be asked to provide an item for lunch, e.g. grapes, bananas, milk, or cookies. Our daily snacks are provided by the gift cards purchased by parents and collected during in-home visits.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR PRESCHOOL

Please talk to your child about school, a special place just for him/her to learn and play with friends. We do anticipate meeting you outside at 8:40 A.M. and at 11:40 A.M. and getting your child out of the car. Then at the end of the school period, we will place your child in your car at 11:15 A.M. and at 2:15 P.M. **Please do not leave your vehicle unattended while waiting in line** to drop off or pick up your child.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

A teacher will load/unload your child to/from the car seat. Have your child sitting to the right of the driver in the back seat. See map below.



Please be prompt in bringing and picking up your child. Children are not to be dropped off early, since this is a preparation time for teachers.

LATE ARRIVALS/EARLY PICK-UPS

We do not wait in the safe space for late arrivals. The doors to the children's wing will be locked, so if your child is late, please go to the back entrance of the children's wing, near room 408 and knock on the door. Assist your child in getting his/her coat hung in the cubbies and bring him/her into the classroom. If you are late in picking up your child, he/she will be waiting inside with us. Please tell us in advance, preferably in a written note attached to your child's bag, if someone other than you or your regular baby sitter will be picking up your child. We will not allow your child to go home with someone other than your sitter without your permission. We may ask for identification if we are unfamiliar with the person picking up your child.

If you need to pick up your child early, i.e. doctor or dental visit, please enter the church through the main church doors and make your way to the entrance to the children's wing near room 408. Knock on the door and we will assist you.

COMMUNICATIONS

NEWSLETTER

We will be sending home a detailed newsletter the **first week of each month**, attached to your child's bag. This is our way of letting you know the scripture memorization and Bible stories, our activities, units, sounds to be studied, field trips, etc. Sometimes the words of songs that we will be learning and articles on parenting and nutrition will be sent home with the newsletter. Please read all very carefully and pass the latter material on to your friends.

We suggest that you transfer the important dates and field trips from our calendar to your family calendar where all your family activities are listed. A list of needed items for the month will appear in the monthly newsletter. Please send these items in on the designated "collection day" noted in the newsletter with your child's name on all items. **Please return the sign up sheet for volunteering immediately**, attaching it to your child's bag.

NEWSLETTER UPDATE

From this information, a newsletter update is compiled listing parents selected for various activities. If your name does not appear, you will not be driving or helping with scheduled activities unless there has been a cancellation, and you were notified of the change by the director or teacher. The monthly newsletter update should reach you the **second week of the month**.

WEBSITE

The Little Seeds Handbook, monthly newsletters, and the school calendar are available at <https://www.cccolumbus.org/little-seeds-preschool/>.

TEACHER/PARENT CONFERENCES

Teacher/Parent conferences are scheduled twice yearly, in the fall and in the spring. Before you come, be prepared to discuss questions and concerns with your child's teacher. **Please** make arrangements for your Little Seed and siblings to be with a sitter or friend. **They are not to come for the conference.** If you miss your teacher/parent conference, a block of time in the late afternoon or early evening will be designated to make these up. Parents will be seen on a first come basis.

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

- 1) Notes **should** be attached to the **outside** of the child's Little Seeds bag using the safety pin attached for this purpose. **Please do not remove pins from bags.** This method serves as a means of communication between you and your child's teacher and is the most efficient way for the staff to be informed. We do not always have time to check inside the bags for messages.
- 2) Sometimes, you may receive a hand-written note from your child's teacher if he/she has had problems at school that day. When your child has difficulty or if there is another problem, please feel free to call your child's teacher immediately to clarify the matter. Please call her at home. Telephone numbers are on the first page of the handbook. If you are not satisfied with the results, you may call the director.
- 3) We often send flyers home of an educational/parenting nature provided by social and government agencies. We do not send home information promoting for-profit organizations. Our roster of parents should **not** be used for such promotionals, e.g. Tupperware, Discovery Toys, Longaberger Baskets, Pampered Chef, etc.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Our school year runs from the end of August until mid-May. We add additional days by having school on days that the public school is not in session and during spring break. If we are in session when your older children are not in school, you have the option of keeping your Little Seed at home. We will try to keep our schedule free of special activities on these days.

PAYMENT OF TUITION

Monthly tuition for the three year old morning class is \$115.00 (yearly--\$1,035.00) for the older three year old afternoon class, tuition is \$120.00 (\$1,080.00--yearly); for the four year old class, tuition is \$155.00 (\$1,395.00--yearly); and for the five year old class, tuition is \$165.00 (\$1,485.00--yearly). Installment cards have been included in your packet to serve as a reminder to you and to facilitate bookkeeping.

The appropriate card must be included with your check when you make your payment, but **do not staple** it to your check. Fees are due by the **fifth** of each month. If payment is not received by the tenth of the month, a late fee of \$5.00 will be added to your balance. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, the director will meet with you to discuss the options available. You are expected to pay tuition every month even when your child is absent for weeks or months.

Please mail the check and card to the church. Please do not give checks and cards to teachers or place them in your child's bag. When you mail them, please designate Little Seeds on the envelope. If you wish to contribute to the Little Seeds scholarship fund during the year, please write a separate check and designate for scholarships. If your financial situation changes during the course of the year, do not hesitate to speak to the director. Scholarships may be available.

LIBRARY

Because of the generosity of our parents, our preschool has accumulated a fine library of children's books. Beginning in the fall, children will be allowed to check out books weekly. We ask that they be returned the following week so your child can borrow another one. Book selection was based on recommendations from children's librarians, professional child development experts, and the Association for the Education of Young Children. The books in our library cover a wide variety of topics and cultural experiences. If you have concern about the material treated, we ask that you read the book first before reading it to your child. We also have a very strong professional library from which you can borrow. Please come in and check out this service or ask one of the teachers for a book or article.

Ames and Ilg, Your Three Year Old: Friend or Enemy? Your Four Year Old; Wild and Wonderful; Your Five Year Old: Sunny and Serene.

Barna, Raising Spiritual Champions.

Cloninger, A Place Called Simplicity: The Quiet Beauty of Simple Living.

Cloud and Townsend, Boundaries with Kids.

F. Dobson, How to Discipline with Love.

J. Dobson, Dare to Discipline; How to Build Self-Esteem in Your Child: Hide or Seek; Children at Risk; The Strong-Willed Child.

Elkind, The Hurried Child; Sympathetic Understanding of the Child.
Faber and Mazlish, Siblings without Rivalry.
Focus on the Family, 801 Questions Kids Ask about God
Glanz, Care Packages for the Home: Dozens of Ways to Regenerate Spirit Where You Live.
Hart, Stress and Your Child: Know the Signs and Prevent the Harm.
Laney, Hidden Gifts of the Introverted Child.
Lewis, How to Build Values in Your Child.
Lou, Last Child in the Woods, Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder.
Highly recommended
Maurice, Let Me Hear Your Voice: A Family's Triumph Over Autism.
Minear and Proctor, Kids Who Have Too Much.
Neifert, Dr. Mom's Prescription for Preschoolers.
Oppenheim et al., Choosing Books for Kids.
Rich, MegaSkills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond.
Rosenfeld and Wise, The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap.
Rubinstein, The Growing Years.
Sanders, Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World.
Shuttleworth, Exploring Nature With Your Child.
Stafford, Too Young To Ignore. Highly recommended
Trelease, The Read Aloud Handbook.
Trent, et al., Teaching Kids about God.
Turecki, The Difficult Child.
Upoff and Gilmore, Summer Children: Ready or Not for School.
Ziglar, Raising Positive Kids in a Negative World.

CDs available from Focus on the Family:

Fundamentals of Child Discipline
Parenting with Love and Grace
The Three R's of Parenting
Help for Busy Mothers
Developing Your Child's Character
When Love Isn't Enough (attachment disorder)

We also have an active file of articles available upon request on a variety of subjects:
death, sibling rivalry, separation, ADHD, nutrition with recipes, behavioral problems, etc.