

WECP Family Handbook



WESTMINSTER
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

2023 -2024

Established in 1950

Creative Learning  *Caring Community*

WESTMINSTER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

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Westminster Early Childhood Programs

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Fully licensed and approved by the
New York State Office of Child and Family Services
Buffalo Regional Office/Bureau of Early Childhood Services

Accredited by The National Association for the Education of Young Children and
QUALITYstarsNY

***Westminster Early Childhood Programs do not discriminate
on the basis of age, sex, religion, disability, race, color, national or ethnic origin***

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Our Mission Statement

Westminster Early Childhood Programs is a community where children experience:

*Creative Learning
Nurturing Relationships
Bright Futures*



Statement of Philosophy

- We believe in the individuality and uniqueness of each child.
- We believe that the early childhood years are a time of great importance, a time of great growth, development and learning.
- We believe in the importance of nurturing and educating the whole child: Emotionally, socially, intellectually, culturally, physically, and spiritually.
- We believe that children learn through play and exploration supported by warm, caring adults who have knowledge of child development, and who know how to provide a developmentally appropriate, safe, responsive environment that encourages a love of learning.
- We believe in the right of each child to play and learn in an inclusive setting to the fullest extent possible.
- We believe in providing our children with the highest quality of education possible.
- We believe in the importance of forming supportive, mutually trusting partnerships with the families of the children in our care. We believe in respecting the dignity of each family and its culture. We believe in developing close relationships with families through open communication.

2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

***PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN
TO THE SCHOOL***

Dear Parents,

We are happy to be embarking on another year at WECP. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work with your child this year as he/she grows socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually.

The entire staff has been working hard to ensure that our programs maintain the highest standards for early childhood education. If you are new at Westminster, we hope that you will become actively engaged in our program. If you are continuing at WECP, we thank you for all of your support, and invite you to continue to stay actively involved. The strength of our home-school relationship adds to your child's success.

Please take the time to read this Family Handbook. It will help you to learn about our policies and programs, and will help you to stay up to date on current information, including our calendar. After you do so, please sign the statement below, indicating that you have read the handbook and agree to abide by all policies. **Please return this letter to the school, and keep the second copy for your records.** This is a requirement of the *New York State Office of Child and Family Services (NYS OCFS)*, our regulating body.

We look forward to growing and learning with you and your child. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your cooperation.

I have read the policies described in the Westminster Early Childhood Programs Family Handbook and agree to abide by all its policies.

Signature

Date

PLEASE PRINT CHILD'S NAME

2023– 2024 SCHOOL YEAR

***PLEASE SIGN AND RETAIN IN
THIS HANDBOOK***

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Signature

Date

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Program Features of WECP

A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS – Westminster has a variety of developmentally appropriate programs designed to meet the needs of children and their families. All classes are divided by specific age groups and each group has its own set of teachers. The number of teachers depends on the age and size of the group. Westminster maintains a teacher/child ratio of 1:3 for infants, 1:5 for toddlers, 1:7 for three year olds and 1:8 for four year olds. In the All Day Program, children from different classes but the same age groups may be grouped together at the beginning of the day or at the end of the day. *Example: Toddlers and Two's classes may combine during this time frame. Three's and Four's may combine.* Infants are in their own area throughout the day. Continuity of care and relationships of the teaching staff with the children and families of their class is extremely important at Westminster.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE:

- **ALL DAY PROGRAM** - is available for children ages 8 weeks to 4 years old. It is a twelve month program, which runs from September through August. This program is open five days a week, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Two day, three day, and five day options are available.
- **MORNING PROGRAM** - is available for children ages 3 through 4 years old. This traditional early childhood program runs from September through mid-June. It is open five days a week, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Two and three day options are available for the 3 year old program.
- **UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN-** WECP collaborates with the Buffalo Public Schools to provide a Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program. This program is available to four year-olds who reside in the City of Buffalo. UPK classes are taught by a NYS certified teacher and follow the Universal Pre-Kindergarten core curriculum. The program is free for 2.5 hours for Buffalo residents from 9:00 - 11:30 AM. WECP can provide the wrap around care before 9:00 AM and/or after 11:30 AM.
- **LUNCH BUNCH PROGRAM** The Lunch Bunch Program is a September through early June program which is available for the children *who are enrolled in our 3 and 4 year old Morning Program classes.* This program serves families who wish to have their children stay for lunch. Lunch Bunch is available Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m., for an additional fee.

CHAPEL – Children from all classes benefit from this unique feature. Chapel is an interfaith, age-appropriate spiritual experience, a special celebration time when we give thanks for the many wonderful gifts in our lives.



CHIMES - In 2004, the Chimes were installed and dedicated to Dorothy B. Millard, in recognition of her loving service as WECP's director for more than 30 years. The Chimes play children's favorite songs and classic melodies on school day mornings, afternoons, and for special occasions.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES - Parents can elect to have their children participate in classes such as Yoga, Dance or Spanish. These programs are offered to children in our 3 and 4 year old classrooms for an additional fee.

Westminster Early Childhood Programs

Curriculum Framework

Westminster Early Childhood Programs uses *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos* and *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* as our framework for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. The Creative Curriculum is written by Diane Trister Dodge, Laura J. Colker, and Cate Heroman and is published through Teaching Strategies, Inc. The Creative Curriculum is theory and research-based and is widely accepted and implemented by high quality early childhood programs locally and throughout the country. This curriculum offers flexibility so that teachers can incorporate their own interests and teaching styles, and tailor it to meet the needs of the children. Following is a brief description of how teachers at WECP help children grow in all areas of development.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

We believe each child is unique. Teachers listen to children's thoughts, ideas and interests when planning activities. Children's individual needs and abilities are taken into consideration. In our daily interactions, each child is respected and valued as an individual and as a group member. Children are encouraged to take pride in their own and in other children's accomplishments. Teachers model appropriate behavior. They support children in recognizing their emotions, coping with frustrations, working cooperatively within a group, building friendships, and being respectful of other children, adults, and the environment. Teachers respond to social and emotional issues both spontaneously and by weaving them into planned activities.

PHYSICAL

We recognize the need for young children to develop their large and small muscles. We provide scheduled and spontaneous gross and fine motor opportunities. These activities take place on our outdoor playgrounds and indoor gyms. These areas have age appropriate equipment, and interactive games are planned. Activities also take place in our classrooms. Each classroom has a variety of materials and manipulatives to develop and strengthen these motor skills.

LANGUAGE

We feel that communication is an integral part of every classroom. Teachers engage children from the moment they enter the room. This begins with personal greetings, smiles, and eye contact. It progresses by encouraging receptive and expressive language skills, depending on the level of each child. Teachers listen and respond to the children's cues and questions. Language is enriched by the use of age appropriate books (including wordless, picture, story, and rhyme books) that are available and used throughout each room. When a second language or another form of communication (such as sign language) is needed, appropriate materials and books are incorporated into the curriculum.

COGNITIVE

We know that each child's brain development is enhanced by every activity. As a result, experiences are planned and materials are provided to enrich math, science, social studies, literacy, technology, health, safety, and the arts. Classrooms are arranged to stimulate cognitive development by having learning centers for blocks, dramatic play, music, art, science, reading, computers, math, and manipulatives. A variety of learning materials are provided to encourage children to think, problem solve, and experiment individually, in small and large groups. Our rooms are print rich to enhance intellectual learning.

SPIRITUAL

We teach children to respect and value each other and the adults in their lives. We show them the importance of being kind, caring and accepting of differences. We remind them, and ourselves, of the beauty in our lives: Our changing seasons, the wonder of the outdoors, vocal and instrumental music, special skills and talents, cultural celebrations, and family traditions.

Westminster Early Childhood Programs is a mission of Westminster Presbyterian Church. As a school, we welcome children of all faiths. Our staff and families are all part of our Westminster family. We celebrate our life together each week in a short, non-denominational Chapel service. Chapel signifies a belief in God and thanking God for our world.

EVALUATING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS

It is important for teachers to observe and evaluate each child so that they can determine what each child knows and how each child is developing. Teachers keep track of children's progress and plan strategies and activities to support their learning and meet their individual needs.

WECP uses The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System to accomplish this evaluation. In this system, teachers observe children, document what they see and hear, and collect samples of children's work over time. They use the Developmental Continuum to identify where children are in each area of development; then they use this information to plan for each child and their group.

We include families in our assessment process from the very beginning. At your initial conference, teachers will ask you about your child's interests, abilities and any concerns you have. As teachers get to know and gather information about your child, they will share with you what they are observing and learning at school, and they will welcome your input about what you are seeing at home. **Teachers will share written information with you at a mid-year conference about your child's progress and goals for their growth and development.** They will share updated written information with you again in May. At your request, teachers can schedule another conference with you.

REFERRALS

There are times when a teacher or parent has concerns about a child's development. The concern may be in the area of speech and language, cognition, fine and/or gross motor skills, behavior or overall development. We are fortunate to have excellent resources locally including the Early Intervention Program and the Committee on Preschool Special Education. Our staff will be able to give you the necessary contact information to assist you in making a referral for your child's evaluation.



Family Involvement

One of the components of a high-quality Early Childhood program is strong family involvement. Westminster families are integrally involved in the operation of the school through the daily contacts between teachers and parents, our Helping Parent Program, our Parent Board of Advisors, and several family events held throughout the year. Westminster is committed to strong connections between school and home, with open communication and family-friendly supportive policies.

PARENT BOARD OF ADVISORS

The Board of Advisors is composed of the school director, parents, teachers, and a member of the Church. Board Committees plan the annual Children's Fair and other fund-raising activities. They are also involved in welcoming activities, building and grounds care, family enrichment, and other parent programs. If you wish to serve on a committee please speak to Jessica Mitrovits.

HELPING PARENTS COMMITMENT

The budget and program offerings are prepared with the assumption that each family will become actively involved in the school operation. There are two parts to each family's helping parent commitment:

- Each family must work a shift at the Children's Fair.
- Each family is asked to select two ways they can participate, such as: help at school events, contribute to sprucing up the grounds on a Saturday morning, be a room parent, present a talent or idea at Chapel, or contribute food or drink items for school events, etc.

***Each family is required to work a shift at the Children's Fair and fulfill their helping parent obligation. This is a part of your annual contract and it ensures that WECP is able to run its community-oriented fundraisers and events.*

Sign-up for volunteering options occurs at the first conference. If you are unable to sign up at that time you will be contacted by the Development Associate.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Two parent/teacher conferences are offered during the year. The first conference takes place prior to your child's entry into the classroom. Parents are asked to attend this conference with their child. The primary purpose of this initial conference is to acquaint your child with the classroom, meet the teacher, exchange information concerning your child, and familiarize yourself with our program. The second conference is held during the second half of the year. The primary purpose of this conference is to share information and set goals concerning your child's growth and development. If needed, additional conferences may be set up with your child's teachers or the director.

FAMILY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Family programs and events are offered during the year, which help strengthen the bond between school and home. These programs also give parents opportunities to meet other WECP families as they enjoy fun activities together with their children. These programs include but are not limited to events such as: Fall Fest, Children's Art Show, Art Gala and Children's Fair.

BULLETIN BOARD

An informational bulletin board for parents is located on the first floor at the beginning of the Infant/Toddler wing.

NURSING MOTHERS LOUNGE

This room, on the first floor, is a comfortable, private space for nursing mothers to use.

Responsibilities of the Parents



- Parents are responsible for informing the front desk by **8:00 am** if their child will be late or absent. Please call 716-884-9438.
- Parents are required to meet the pre-enrollment guidelines established by WECP before attending. You must return the following:
 - ❑ Emergency card.
 - ❑ Child in Care Medical Statement and Proof of Immunization
 - ❑ Sunscreen Permission Form
 - ❑ Rest Agreement
 - ❑ New Child/Returning Child Conference Form
 - ❑ Photo Consent and Release
 - ❑ CACFP Forms
- Parents are responsible for conferencing with their child's teacher prior to the child's first day at school.
- Parents are responsible, in partnership with their child's teacher, for assuring a smooth and comfortable transition from home to school.
- Parents are responsible for helping their child enter the classroom. **Parents are required to sign their child in on the classroom clipboard** and to wait until teachers have conferred with them regarding their child's health.
- Parents are responsible for bringing children who are in their care into the building with them when dropping off and picking up. **No children are ever to be left in the car, in the parking lot, or on a playground while parents are dropping off or picking up WECP children.**
- Parents are **responsible for picking up** their child at the contracted time. In rare instances when this is not possible, parents are responsible for notifying the school, and for paying a late fee. **Parents are required to sign their child out on the classroom clipboard.**
- Parents are responsible for participating in our Helping Parent Program, as described in the Family Involvement section.
- Parents are responsible for helping to keep lines of communication open between home and school by communicating with their child's teacher via conferences, casual conversation, telephone, e-mail, and notes. Parents are also responsible for communicating with the director, should there be any concerns about the program.
- Parents are responsible for following all policies of the school, as outlined in the Family Handbook, including health policies, pick up policies, medication policies, playground guidelines, etc.
- Parents are responsible for maintaining a proper manner when interacting with their own children, other children and parents, staff and teachers while at WECP. This includes talking in a civilized, calm manner at all times and not engaging in hurtful physical contact. If this is not strictly adhered to, a parent and child may be asked to leave the program.

WECP Responsibilities to Families



- To develop relationships of mutual trust with the families we serve.
- To acknowledge and build upon strengths and competencies as we support families in their task of nurturing children.
- To respect the dignity of each family and its culture, language, customs, and beliefs.
- To respect families' childrearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.
- To interpret each child's progress to parents within the framework of a developmental perspective and to help families understand and appreciate the value of developmentally appropriate early childhood practices.
- To help family members improve their understanding of their children and to enhance their skills as parents.
- To participate in building support networks for families by providing them with opportunities to interact with staff, other families, community resources, and professional services.
- To give family members access to their child's classroom.
- To inform families of WECP's philosophy, policies, and personnel qualifications, and to explain why we teach as we do.
- To inform families of policy, and, when appropriate, to involve them in policy decisions.
- To involve families in all significant decisions affecting their child.
- To inform the family of accidents involving their child, of risks such as exposure to contagious diseases, that may result in infection, and of incidents that might result in emotional stress.
- To fully inform the family of any proposed research projects involving their children. Families have the opportunity to give or withhold consent to participate. WECP will not permit or participate in research that could in any way hinder the education, development, or well-being of children.
- To ensure the confidentiality of children's records, and to seek the family's consent for disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants (except in cases of abuse and neglect.)
- To maintain confidentiality and respect for the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life, except when a child's welfare is at risk.
- To refrain from becoming an advocate for one party in cases where family members are in conflict. We shall work openly, sharing our observations of the child, to help all parties involved make informed decisions.
- To be familiar with and appropriately use community resources and professional services that support families. After a referral has been made, we will follow up to ensure that services have been appropriately provided.

Adapted from NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment

WECP Responsibilities to Children



- To provide a safe, happy, healthy, nurturing, responsive environment that encourages self-esteem, individuality and respect for diversity.
- To foster and support each child's development socially, emotionally, intellectually, culturally, spiritually and physically.
- Through play and exploration, to promote children's creativity, curiosity, competence, and confidence as they become problem solvers, critical thinkers, and life-long learners.
- To help children develop warm relationships with adults and children, building a sense of caring and community.
- To base our program practices on current knowledge in the field of child development and related disciplines, and on particular knowledge of each child.
- To keep current on the knowledge base of early childhood care and education through continuing education and in-service training.
- To support the right of all children to play and learn in an inclusive program to the fullest extent possible.
- To ensure that children with disabilities have access to appropriate and convenient support services and to advocate for the resources necessary to provide the most appropriate settings for all children.
- To make decisions that maximize the potential of all children to benefit from the program.
- To be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and to follow state laws and community procedures that protect children against abuse and neglect. All staff must report any suspected child abuse or maltreatment.

*Adapted from WECP's Mission Statement and
NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment*

Grievance Procedures

If you have a concern, problem or difference of opinion regarding values or practices, we encourage you first to discuss it with the appropriate person directly. If your concern involves children or the classroom, you can talk to the teacher(s) and/or the director. If you have a financial concern or questions about your bill, you can contact the Director of Finance, Julie Brooks. If your concern is about center policy or procedures, you can meet with the director. If you feel your classroom or financial concern has not been satisfactorily addressed, please ask to meet with the director.

If you have a concern about our center following New York State statutory and regulatory requirements, you can contact the Buffalo Regional Office of Children and Family Services at (716) 847-3828.

Policy on Responsibility for Children En route to and from WECF

BUILDING ACCESS

All families with children currently enrolled at WECF have a fob that allows them to open the front door to the school. All other visitors or guests must ring the front doorbell and speak to one of our staff members in the front office before being admitted. There will be a five dollar replacement fee for lost fobs.

ARRIVAL

All-Day Program: School opens at 7:30 a.m. Children arrive at contracted time.

Morning Program: Classes begin at 9:00 a.m.

Morning Program UPK: Classes begin at 9:00 a.m.

All children who attend Westminster must be accompanied by their family (or designee) to the classroom.

Parents are required to sign their child in on the classroom clipboard and wait until teachers have conferred with them regarding their child's health.

FOR FAMILIES DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP MORE THAN ONE CHILD:

In an effort to keep all children safe by keeping different age groups separate and ensuring that younger children are not accidentally hurt by an older child, we ask that parents **drop off their oldest child first** at the door of their classroom. A teacher will have you sign the clipboard and then she will assist your child in washing his/her hands while you drop off your younger child. When picking up your children in the **afternoon, pick up your younger child first** and then pick up your older child at the door of the classroom. *[If older siblings who do not attend WECF are with families at drop off or pick up time, they must wait outside the classroom door or at the edge of the playground.]*

DEPARTURE

- **Morning Program and Morning Program UPK:** Classes end at 11:30 a.m.
- **Lunch Bunch Program:** Classes end at 1:00 p.m.
- **All-Day Program:** Children leave at contracted time. **School closes promptly at 5:30 p.m.**

When picking up your child, you must inform the child's teacher that you have arrived, and that your child is leaving. **You must sign your child out on the classroom clipboard before departing.** Remember to check the cubby area for messages, art work and other items.

Once a parent has **reunited with his/her child, it is the parent's responsibility to care for the child.** The child's well-being is the parent's sole responsibility as the parent and child go down the corridor, out the entrance, across the grounds, through the parking lot, and to the car. Children who are en route to and from WECF are the sole responsibility of their parents/family member or designee.

It is important that you **pick up your child at the contracted time.** Please see *Late Pick-up Policy*. If you are delayed past your contracted pick-up time, you need to call the office. If your child will be picked up by someone other than yourself on a regular basis, please add their name to your child's emergency card.

Any change in your child's normal pick-up routine (either time or person picking up) **MUST BE PUT IN WRITING.** We will not release your child to anyone other than you unless you specifically authorized us to do so. Written permission is always required when someone other than the designated person(s) is picking up your child. **PLEASE NOTE: If we do not know the person picking up your child, we will ask for a picture ID.**

Late Pick-Up Policy

It is important that we know what hours each child will be in the classroom. We use this information to help us make decisions about how many children we can enroll in each classroom, how many teachers we assign to the classroom, and on what schedule. Your written agreement provides us with this information. Late fees of \$15.00 per quarter hour will be applied if you do not pick up your child at your contracted time.

We understand that circumstances can cause anyone to be late occasionally, so each family is given **two late incidences** (per family) before a fee is charged. We require that you honor your pick up time and respect our employees' time. Continuous tardiness in picking up your child will result in your child being withdrawn from the center.

FAILURE TO PICK UP

If after closing time at 5:30 p.m. a child has not been picked up, staff members will make every effort to contact parents at all numbers on the emergency card and/or people designated with permission to pick up the child. If no one has been reached after two hours, Child Protective Services must be notified.

TEMPORARY REQUEST TO ADD A DAY OR HOURS FORM

WECP realizes that situations come up that affect a particular day. In this case, please fill out this form in advance. This form requires the approval of the teacher and the administration. The cost of additional hours/days, if it is handled in this way, is \$10.00 an hour.

REQUEST TO CHANGE HOURS/DAY FORM

There may be occasions when you need to exchange hours or days, and if the class has flexibility, you will be able to do so. This form is used when you are making an even exchange so that your tuition amount remains the same. If you need to change your schedule, even for a day, you need approval of the teacher and the administration.

PERMANENT REQUEST TO ADD A DAY OR HOURS FORM

This form is for requesting a permanent change in days or hours. It will require an extra cost and approval of the administration.

ADMISSION POLICY

Westminster Early Childhood Programs does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, or national/ethnic origin in their educational policies, admissions policies, or scholarship policies.

Admission is based on available space in the age-appropriate classroom. Class size is based on appropriate teacher-to-child ratios, and on square footage requirements per child, as set by the NYS OCFS and NAEYC.

Admission is based on the date of application, with some exceptions. Priority is given to children of families with siblings presently in the school, children of staff members, children of active church members, siblings of school alumni, and children of school alumni. Priority waiting lists are also based on the date of the application. When a classroom is full and a waiting list is necessary, the family at the top of the priority list is contacted first when an opening occurs. If the family is not ready to accept enrollment at that time, but still wishes to remain on the waiting list, their child's name will remain on the top of the list. Each time there is an opening in the appropriate age group, the family is contacted, until the child is enrolled, or until the family requests that the child be removed from the waiting list.

Re-Registration Policy

For families whose children are presently enrolled, and wish to re-register for the upcoming school year.

Summer and Fall registration occur in early Spring.
Financial Assistance Applications are due by **May 1**

After the re-registration period for current families ends, enrollment is opened to new families.

TRANSITIONING TO THE NEXT CLASSROOM

Infants in the program move to the next class based on their chronological age, their developmental stage, and availability in the next level room. These transitions occur by taking into consideration the needs of the individual child. All Day Program children in the one, two and three year old groups change classes and move in September of each year.

Parents are notified in August which class their child has been placed in for the upcoming school year.

All children and parents have an Incoming Conference individually with the teachers of their children's new class. This ideally takes place the week before the school year begins.

Financial Policies

- Westminster Early Childhood Programs (WECP) is a year-long program consisting of a 10-month school year and a 2-month summer program.
- By signing the financial agreement you are obligated to pay the monthly tuition fee for the entire school year.
- Placement of a child at WECP obligates that child's parents(s) and/or legal guardians to pay the entire annual tuition, which becomes due and payable throughout the school year.
- The deposit you made upon registration will be refunded at the end of your child's time at WECP providing you fulfill all signed financial agreements. This includes WECP holding your child's place in the program for any length of time. If your child leaves the program prior to your agreed completion date, your deposit will not be refunded.
- A late fee of \$25 will be applied to the current bill if not paid by the 5th business day of each month. There will be a \$35 fee for any checks or debit withdrawals returned from the bank for insufficient funds.
- Non-payment of tuition for 30 days will result in removal of your child from the WECP program unless a formal payment schedule is agreed to and followed.
- WECP accepts checks, MasterCard and Visa; WECP does not accept cash payments.

Please note that any prior tuition balance must be paid in full before your child can begin a new program year.

Financial Assistance

Westminster does not wish any child to be denied the right to come to school because of financial reasons. Tuition aid is often available upon written request to the Financial Assistance Committee. This committee meets in early spring and at other times, if necessary, during the year. Grants are determined by need, family size and income. Forms are available in the front office. To be considered for Financial Assistance, please return your completed application and all necessary forms to the business office no later than **May 1st** in order to be considered for financial assistance for the following school year. Late applications will be put on a waitlist. All information provided by the applicant is strictly confidential.

Parking

SAFETY

The safety of all children and adults is our top priority. Remember to enter and exit the driveway slowly. **Always stop at the STOP signs.** Be very cautious in the parking lot. When you are pulling in or backing out, be aware of other families walking in. When you are walking in or out, keep your children by your side.

**PLEASE DO NOT EVER LEAVE CHILDREN UNATTENDED
IN YOUR CAR OR ON THE PLAYGROUND**

PARKING PROCEDURES

Westminster's parking lot can be entered from Delaware Avenue only; the exit is onto Summer Street. The entrance and exit are **ONE-WAY** only. Our parking spaces are limited; therefore, we ask all parents to park within the lines designated for each car. When dropping off or picking up children, **please do not stay in the parking lot to talk with other parents.**

The "15 Minute Parking" area is only available for dropping off or picking up children — not for extended use.

When to Contact the School

Please notify the school (716-884-9438) when:

- Someone else is picking up your child (see *Departure*).
- Your child is ill. Please let us know the nature of the illness (see *Health Care Policies*).
- You are going on vacation **with or without** your child.
- Your child has a problem concerning school.
- You are going to be late picking up your child (see *Departure*).
- You have a family emergency.
- There is a change in the family structure.
- You have a question you wish to discuss with the teacher, the director or the business office concerning your bill.
- Any time you have concerns, questions, or feedback for teachers or the director.

Birthday/Holiday Celebrations

We want birthday/holiday celebrations at school to be simple and focus on the happy feeling of being with friends. Check with your classroom teacher before sending in any special treats or items. **Treats must be in commercial prepared packages in factory sealed containers.** Birthday party invitations must be mailed from home and not distributed through school cubbies.

Insurance

Accident-Liability Insurance is carried for each child and staff member of the school through the Westminster Presbyterian Society.

Pesticide Policy

In accordance with NYS Child Care Regulations regarding any pesticide applications, parents will be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the location, date of application, product name, and registration number.

Health Care Policies

In case of an illness, please keep your child at home. We are not licensed as a sick child center; we can only accept children when they are healthy. A child who is not well does not benefit from group care and can adversely affect the health of the other children and staff.

MEDICAL FORM/IMMUNIZATIONS

Each child will be given a Child in Care Medical Statement form (including immunization information) that must be completed by a health care provider. These forms must be fully completed and submitted **prior to enrollment**. Parents are given forms, policies, and deadlines regarding when forms must be updated and returned to school.

Immunizations:

All children must be immunized to be enrolled in WECP. Immunizations must be kept up to date. **Whenever your child receives immunizations, we need an updated immunization form.** If immunizations are not up to date, you must have a written note from your Doctor. **All children at Westminster Early Childhood Programs need to be on the New York State recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule and stay current with all necessary Immunizations.**

EMERGENCY CARDS

Two emergency cards need to be completed each year. In case of an emergency, they provide a vital link between home and school. To ensure optimal precaution, one is kept in the office and one is kept in your child's class. If you need to make any changes to your cards, be sure to notify both the classroom and front office so that we have an emergency contact to call at all times.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER INJURY OR SURGERY

Parents must present the classroom teacher and director with a doctor's note stating that the child is able to fully participate in all activities. If injury or surgery prevents full participation, limitations and accommodations need to be discussed and agreed upon between the director and the parents.

MEDICATION: Any medication to be administered at school can only be given by a **MAT** certified employee. When leaving medication at school, parents must provide WECP with the following:

1. All medication must include: Name of medication, date and restrictions, time medication is to be given, amount to be administered, date to be discontinued or the length of time and days to be given.
2. Medication Consent forms are available in the front office and must be filled in completely by the parent and the health care provider. This form must also accompany any over-the-counter (OTC) medication or topical ointments, and is **not** needed for OTC diaper creams.

EMERGENCY PLAN: Parents **must provide** an emergency plan from a health care provider if the child has asthma, allergies or other medical issues. **This plan must be renewed every 6 months and include:**

1. Medication Consent Form (OCFS 7002)
2. Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (OCFS 6209)

SUNSCREEN: If you wish to authorize us to apply sunscreen to your child, you are required to sign a consent form and send in a new bottle of sunscreen (labeled with your child's name) each year. To further protect your child from the sun, we also encourage you to send in a hat.

Policies Regarding Illness

We are a center for *healthy* children. A child who is ill can adversely affect the health of other children and staff. If your child becomes ill at school or the staff feels that he/she is not able to participate in the regular activities of the classroom, we will contact you so that the child can be picked up and cared for at home. **Please pick up your child within 45 minutes of being contacted.**

Child <u>must</u> be at home if any of these symptoms exist:	Child may return:
1. Any temperature at or above 100.5 °	24 hours after temperature returns to normal (and without the use of medication)
2. Diarrhea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stool is not contained in a diaper or the stool frequency exceeds two or more stools above normal; - stool causes soiled pants in toilet trained children; - blood or mucous in stools not associated with dietary change, medication, or hard stools; - confirmed medical diagnosis of salmonella, E. coli, or Shigella infection 	When Diarrhea has subsided for 24 hours or with physician's note clearing child of salmonella, E.coli or Shigella.
3. Vomiting	When vomiting has subsided for 24 hours
4. Ear Infection	Any time after treatment and no other symptoms have appeared
5. Rash of any kind	After diagnosed, treated and declared harmless by physician
6. Heavy coughing	When coughing subsides
7. Croup	When barking cough subsides
8. Colds when a child is having difficulty breathing or a large amount of thick mucus exists over an extended period of time, or is not acting like himself/herself.	When cold improves, mucus subsides and no other symptoms exist, or with physician's note
9. Pink Eye - Red, runny, matted eyes	After diagnosed, 24 hours after treatment and symptoms have improved
10. Listlessness	When child's energy returns to normal
11. Difficulty breathing	After normal breathing returns

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES - office should be informed immediately of the following conditions:

Child <u>must</u> be at home if the child has:	Child may return:
1. Chicken Pox	After all pox have crusted over
2. Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever	After diagnosed, treated and on antibiotics for 24 hours and after all symptoms have improved
3. Impetigo	After diagnosed and on treatment for 24 hours
4. Ringworm/Pinworm/Scabies	After diagnosed and on treatment for 24 hours
5. Lice	24 hours after treatment, and no lice eggs can be found
6. Fifth Disease	After child no longer has fever and rash has faded
7. Roseola	24 hours after fever is gone
8. Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease (Coxsackie)	After fever and blisters are gone
9. Measles	After rash completely disappears and fever is gone
10. Mumps	After all symptoms have returned to normal
11. Covid (positive)	Isolate for 5 days and return after reduced or no symptoms

If your child has been suspected of or diagnosed with a communicable disease, a doctor's note is needed to return to school.

What to Bring to School

CLOTHES TO BE WORN OR LEFT AT SCHOOL:

- A complete set of clothing in case of an accident. Clothes should be appropriate for the current season. Clothing should have zippers that work easily, buttons a child can do, and boots a child can put on or take off (if age appropriate).
- A labeled package of disposable diapers and wipes (if your child is not toilet trained). You will be asked to bring replacements when needed.
- Sneakers or other rubber soled shoes so that your child can fully participate in our program. These may be worn daily or left in school. If your child wears boots, be sure that sneakers or shoes are left at school or brought in daily. **Party shoes, sandals, crocs, clogs and open-toed shoes are not appropriate for school.** They are not safe for play in the gyms, on the playground or when learning to walk.

REST TIME:

Children in the All Day Program need time to rest and/or nap as part of their busy day at school. Children rest either in their classroom or in one of our large, open, carpeted gym areas. They rest on cots that are 4 inches from the floor. The teachers supervise resting children, helping them relax and settle down for a rest, and caring for any of their needs.

Your child will need the following items, clearly labeled, to keep at school for rest time:

- A blanket - lightweight and large enough to cover the child so that his/her toes are comfortably covered. A generous crib blanket is usually large enough. A full size sheet or blanket is too large.
- A small, soft, washable rest toy (optional).
- A canvas bag to store a blanket and rest toy.

*****Once a week, bedding is sent home to be washed by parents*****

POLICIES REGARDING THE PREVENTION OF SIDS

Infants up to one year old are placed on their backs to sleep (on a firm mattress). No pillows, stuffed toys or bumpers are allowed in the cribs, regardless of the age of the infant. ***Please note: Any infant under the age of one year old who, when placed on his/her back in the crib, can turn onto his/her tummy, will be allowed to nap in this position.*

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER: ALL CLOTHING AND/OR ITEMS BROUGHT OR KEPT AT SCHOOL MUST BE LABELED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.

What Not to Bring

- Toys or other items from home.
- Toy guns or other items which can lead to aggressive play.

Nutrition Program



Westminster adheres to the Nutrition and Food Service policies set forth by NAEYC and the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. WECP participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), administered by the U.S. government. Westminster follows all guidelines for this program, including nutrition guidelines. All breakfast and lunch menus are submitted to CACFP for approval.

Mealtime is a pleasant social time for the children, as well as a learning experience.

Due to food allergies of other children, please **do not** allow your child to come into school with any food in the morning.

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is offered to the children enrolled in our All Day Program who arrive before 8:45 a.m. Our cooks prepare a hot breakfast two mornings a week. The other three days a cold breakfast consisting of cereal, milk and fruit is provided.

LUNCH

Hot lunches are served to the children enrolled in the All Day and Lunch Bunch Programs. These lunches are prepared on-site. Children are given sufficient time for meals, based on their age and individual needs. Our menus are varied, with seasonal foods being added when available. Monthly menus are posted outside the classrooms, the office, and are available on our website.

HEALTHY SNACKS

Snacks are donated by our families and offered to the children every day. Parents are assigned to bring snack for one week at a time. Classroom teachers distribute date assignments to parents, and provide them with suggestions for nutritious snack ideas. **(Due to increasing food allergies, WECP asks that parents**

do not send in any nut or peanut butter products. For children who have serious food allergies, parents must send in snacks for their child. All food must be labeled with the child's first and last name and the date sent in.) Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory sealed containers.

FOOD ALLERGIES

We pay close attention to children's food allergies at Westminster. *All families and their health care providers are required to fill-out an "Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan."* Parents of children in the All Day program with food allergies will be asked to provide lunch alternatives that can be substituted when necessary. When sending in alternative foods, the food needs to be **ready to eat** (e.g., sandwich) or **require pre-heating only** (i.e., food from previous meal). If you have any questions please contact the director.

FOOD PREFERENCES

Food preferences for religious, cultural or medical reasons are respected and accommodated. Due to our participation in a government funded food program, *we must have a note signed by the child's health care provider that it is acceptable for the child not to have specific foods.*

INFANT NUTRITION

Westminster requires a written statement from families of infants regarding giving formula and feeding schedule instructions. WECP encourages and supports breast-feeding mothers. All infants are held while being bottle fed.

Behavior Management



We help children develop self-control and learn acceptable forms of social behavior by:

1. Helping children to find ways to calm themselves.
2. Helping children to find ways to identify emotions and to express their feelings appropriately.
3. Redirection.
4. Planning ahead to prevent problems.
5. Encouraging appropriate behavior.
6. Providing consistent, clear rules developed in conjunction with the children, when possible, and discussing the rules with them to make sure they understand.
7. Describing the situation to encourage children's evaluation of the problem rather than impose the solution.
8. Providing a relaxed, positive atmosphere where socially acceptable forms of behavior are the norm.
9. Setting limits in order to help the children feel safe and secure, while allowing children to test the limits.
10. Assuring children that we will keep them safe by preventing them from hurting themselves and others.
11. Providing models of self-control and socially acceptable behavior.
12. Providing an environment that is predictable and flexible, with an appropriate amount of space, with a good number of teachers per child, and age appropriate materials and expectations.

When discipline is required (i.e., redirection, removal from a particular area of play, time apart from another child, etc.), the teachers ensure that it relates to the child's actions and that it is handled in a timely manner so that the child is aware of the relationship between his or her actions and the consequences of those actions.

Our teachers help children find acceptable ways to resolve conflicts and problem solve by systematically building on a developmental progression. We begin by helping babies to feel secure, to begin to learn the give-and-take nature of relationships, and to control undesirable unacceptable impulses. We help babies and toddlers to problem solve by using language to help identify the problem, and building from there. Our teachers allow enough time for problem solving. They model appropriate problem solving behavior. We help the children learn to communicate with each other about problems, either non-verbally or verbally. We explore solutions. When appropriate, we encourage children to come up with a group solution to a problem. We give children choices. We recognize that every problem has constructive potential; a chance to teach problem solving skills as life-long skill that comes naturally, thus developing real tools for dealing with future problems.

Playgrounds/Outdoor Play



At WECP, we go outside to play every day, weather permitting. In the **summer**, limitations may occur if the heat index indicates that the air quality is unsafe for young children. In the **winter**, limitations may occur if the temperature (including the wind chill) is less than 25 degrees F. ***If the weather is NOT conducive to outdoor play, WECP has three indoor gym spaces and gym equipment for gross motor physical activity.

Playgrounds are restricted to classroom use only during school hours (7:30-5:30).

SCREEN TIME

At WECP, children are not exposed to television or other electronic visual media unless it is part of a planned developmentally appropriate program activity with an educational, social, physical or other learning objective that includes identifiable goals. Infants are never exposed to television or electronic media as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Withdrawal from WECP

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL

If a parent chooses to withdraw from WECP, we ask that you fill out a *Withdrawal Form* and an *Exit Interview Form*. Both forms are available in the front office. Please return the completed forms to the business office before you withdraw from the program.

ASKED TO LEAVE WECP

WECP reserves the right to ask children to leave the program for the following reasons:

1. When, over a significant period of time, the director and staff determine that the child does not appear to be benefiting from the program, or the child is seriously jeopardizing the ability of other children to benefit from the program. We shall communicate with the family and appropriate specialists to determine the child's current needs, identify the setting and services most suited to meeting these needs, and assist the family in placing the child in an appropriate setting. (This policy is consistent with the National Association for the Education of Young Children *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment*.)
2. When a parent fails to abide by school policies (including the financial policies), and/or responsibilities as outlined in this handbook

2023 -2024 SCHOOL CALENDAR

WECP's All Day Program is open Monday – Friday, September – August. The Morning Program is open Monday – Friday, September – June. Important dates and school closings are listed below.

2023

Monday, September 4
Tuesday, September 5
Thursday, September 7
Thursday, September 21
Monday-Friday September 18-22
Saturday, October 7
Monday, October 9
Monday, October 2 – Friday, October 13
Wednesday, Oct 25- Wednesday, Nov 8
Saturday, November 4
Friday, November 10
Thursday, November 23 -Friday, November 24
Monday, December 25 - Monday, January 1

School Closed- Labor Day
All Day and Morning Programs begin
UPK and Lunch Bunch begins
Back to School Night (7:00 PM)
Book Fair Week
Fall Fest (4:00-6:30 PM)
School Closed- Indigenous People's Day/Staff Development
Charleston Wrap Fundraiser
Poinsettia and Wreath Sale
Fall Clean-Up (9:00 AM)
School Closed- Veterans' Day
School Closed - Thanksgiving Holiday
School Closed – Winter Break

2024

Tuesday, January 2
Monday, January 15
Tuesday, January 16, Wednesday, January 17
Tuesday, January 23, Wednesday, January 24
February (dates TBD)
Monday, February 19
Tuesday- Friday, February 20-23
Saturday, March 9
Monday- Friday, April 1-5
Tuesday– Friday, April 8 -12
Tuesday, May 7, Wednesday, May 8
Saturday, May 4
Tuesday, May 14, Wednesday, May 15
Monday, March 4 -Friday, March 22
Saturday, May 18
Wednesday, May 22
Monday, May 27
Friday, June 14
Wednesday, June 19
Friday, June 28

School reopens
School Closed - Martin Luther King Day
Parent's Mornings (10:00-11:30 AM – Specific classes TBA)
Parent's Mornings (10:00-11:30 AM – Specific classes TBA)
School Photos
School Closed –Presidents' Day/Staff Development
UPK Programs Only Closed –Winter Recess
Art Gala
UPK Programs Only Closed –Spring Recess
Children's Art Show
Grandparent's Day (specific classes TBD)
Spring Clean-Up (9:00AM)
Grandparent's Day (specific classes TBD)
Plant Sale
Spring Children's Event
Plant Sale Pick Up
School Closed –Memorial Day
UPK program ends (morning program only) and Lunch Bunch
School Closed - Juneteenth holiday
All Day and Morning Programs End

EMERGENCY CLOSING – In the event of severe weather, driving ban or if the basic care needs of the children are in jeopardy, the decision to close or not will be made by 7 AM and will be announced through our e-news and with Remind.com.



Families are...

**One of our greatest treasures
and the embodiment of all that
is important in life.**

**Families are a refuge in good times and bad,
a warm place of peace where
acceptance reigns.**

**It matters not what you do
or where you are,
one thing you never doubt
is your family.**

**The members are always there,
arms ready to embrace with
healing hugs,
and hearts with unconditional
love to share.**

**A family is a gift that's never completely unwrapped;
it is a present for which each member is
eternally thankful.**

Anonymous

Since its beginning in 1950, WECP has been a leader in early childhood education in WNY,
giving children a strong, solid foundation in becoming caring, thinking, life-long learners.

*Where Children Learn to Play
&
Play to Learn*