

St James Early Learning Center

NEWSLETTER

January 2025

CENTER HAPPENINGS

Wednesday, Wednesday, Wednesday

Wednesday will continue to be congested in the parking lot between 4:30-5:00. Wednesdays are youth group days. Youth group is held from 3:30-5:00 during the school year.

Sign In & Out

YOU MUST SIGN IN AND OUT DAILY! This is for accountability in case we must evacuate the center. If you do not know where your classroom sign-in and out sheet is located, please ask, and we will show you where to find it. Please be as accurate as possible for the PPU (projected pick up), we know that things come up, but it helps us staff the classroom correctly.

Fee Agreements

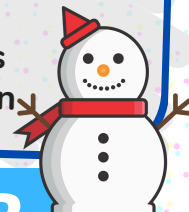
Every family just completed new fee agreements, please know that we use the times on those contracts to staff the center and classrooms correctly.

Outside time

Our goal is to go outside daily. If it feels like over 25 degrees, we will make our best effort to go outside for at least 15 minutes to run. Please make sure your child has appropriate outdoor clothing. Hats, gloves or mittens, and a heavy coat. You may leave these items in their cubbies for those questionable days. If it snows, bring snow clothes and boots, we are all for going and playing in the snow!

What's In This Month's Issue?

- Center Happenings
- Wish Tree- Thank you's
- Inclement Weather
- Important Dates
- Parent Survey Responses & 2025 Updates
- Sick Policy
- Parked Cars
- 2025 Tuition



WISH TREE

Many, many thanks to all the families that participated in our wish tree. Classrooms and the children have enjoyed lots of new materials! You know they will be well loved and used! Thank you!



INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event that we experience inclement weather, we will notify families through Lillio (HiMama) via text message or email. We will also post on social media, WGAL, and the St James Church website, under Early Learning. We do our very best to keep the center open, but there are many contributing factors to our decision if a delay or closure is necessary. Staff & family safety is our number one concern.

School Age Families:

If the school district closes for snow and becomes a remote learning day, we will **NOT** have all-day care available for the school-age program.

Important Dates

- Jan. 1 | Happy New Year! Center CLOSED
- Jan. 20 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Feb. 2 | Groundhog Day
- Feb. 14 | Valentine's Day
- Feb. 17 | Center CLOSE- Presidents Day-Staff in-service day





Parent Survey Responses & 2025 Updates

We appreciate everyone taking the time to complete our parent survey back in September. I wanted to follow up with some responses to some of the statements and remarks given to us.

We had many strengths, listing how caring and committed our staff are, the classroom environment having a homey feeling, the number of activities that are seen throughout the day, chapel time (preschool & PreK), meals provided, and the relationships families have built with classroom teachers or other teachers in the program. As with any successful program, there should be areas in which to work, and we are always open to feedback more than just through our annual surveys. Some areas that were mentioned and worth mentioning are:

Staff turnover- In the Early Learning Field, this has always been something employers have had to face. Low wages and classroom burnout are the main reasons. In the 4 years I have been here, staff turnover has been low, which is wonderful. We have people in and out of the classroom, as we do participate in the ACTI program and Gettysburg College Psychology department. Students can come to observe and have hands-on experience while being supervised by staff.

Clearly Defined Discipline policy- This policy, as well as many others, is being reviewed and a new parent handbook is being developed. The new Discipline policy should be out by the end of February.

Communication during pick up- This has been expressed to all the staff about having better communication with parents during drop off and pick up and passing information to floating staff if they are in the classroom to relieve the regular schedule teacher. The classroom teacher regularly adds notes, photos, and documentation to your child's day on Lillio (HiMama). Many teachers will send messages if there are other concerns throughout the day. We know that this does not replace verbal communication, however information is getting to you. Please remember that we do have floaters that go into many different rooms, and we combine with other classrooms in the afternoon as staff have finished their scheduled shifts.

Curriculum & Play- Our curriculum is a play-based curriculum. There is valuable social and emotional development that takes place during play. Children learn to take turns, work through social problems, imitate others, learn new skills from others, and balance their needs as well as others. During their "play," structured activities are planned, both during "center time" or during free play time. Classroom teachers rotate the materials in the classroom to reflect children's needs, interests, and abilities. Classroom teachers are given planning time each week to prepare lesson plans and materials for their upcoming lessons. Teachers observe and document the skills that your children can and cannot do and implement a playful way to incorporate them into the classroom so that they can practice and master them over time.

Family Involvement & Family Events- Our program has an open-door policy; you are welcome to come into your child's classroom at any time. We would love to see more parents able to visit classroom activities. We just need to know when you are coming 😊. Family Events- we have scheduled new family events for the program with minimal participation leading to cancelations. We are trying to think of new ideas and ways to meet the needs of many of our families and community.



Parent Survey Responses & 2025 Updates Continued

PreK Program- “PreK is not a real PreK program,” you are correct, but it is not at the same time. Our PreK program is still part of our childcare program and is called PreK because of the age of the children who are enrolled in the classroom. Play is still a big part of their curriculum. I attend our county’s Ready to Learn Committee meeting, where I meet with local school districts around the county to see what they want from our PreK children before they enter their classrooms. Their # one request is self-help skills and self-regulation: putting on their coats, going to the bathroom and able to wipe their own bottoms, sneezing – covering their mouths and using a tissue to wipe their noses, tie their shoes, opening a carton of milk, knowing how follow a two or three step direction, knowing how to raise their hand and wait patiently to be called on, waiting in line and keeping their hands to themselves without touching the person in front of or behind of them.

We have also been working with Adam’s County First 10 and trying to bridge that gap to reach some of the prerequisites they are looking for within the Gettysburg School District. We have met with the district’s reading specialist to learn better ways to introduce letters and letter sounds to the PreK children. We are including fine motor development, practicing using scissors and cutting in specific ways, and learning to hold and write letters. “Homework” is sent home weekly to work with your child on the letters that were introduced during the week.

Staff qualifications & Training- all our staff must maintain a minimum of 12 hours of training annually. These trainings reflect language development, social-emotional development, positive interactions, curriculum, developmental screenings, inclusion, diversity, assessment, and age-appropriate standards. Many of our staff have college degrees with an associate’s degree or higher, a CDA, or years of experience working in the early learning field. All staff are trained in CPR and First Aide, which need to be renewed every 2 years. During our in-service days, we often have trainers come in to conduct in-person training on areas where we are seeing the most change within the program.

Vacation Week- These are not listed in the parent handbook. They are approved from year to year. For 2025, there will be NO vacation credits available.

10-Hour-Daily Enrollment- Weekly tuition is based on a ten-hour daily enrollment per-child. Additional fees will apply.

Assessments & Conference- With our new assessment tool, Teaching Strategies Gold, you will be getting a report on your child’s development 3 times a year. We will still conduct two in-person conferences in the spring and fall. We will be adding a take-home assessment for the end of February. You may ask for a conference at any time, not just during our scheduled times.





Sick Policy



It is that time of year when illness is on the rise. We do our best to clean and disinfect our classroom and the toys and materials used among the children daily. However, if and when your children get sick, we ask that you honor the 24-hour policy. If you see a doctor and receive a doctor's note, children may return if they are not experiencing continued symptoms and can participate in the daily classroom routine.

Fevers: Temperatures over 100.4 is our center policy cut-off. Children will be sent home if temperatures are at or above. Children may return to school when the child's temperature has been normal for a full 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.

Vomiting: May return 24 hours after symptoms are gone and can eat regularly provided foods, including the consumption of milk.

Diarrhea: May return to school 24 hours after all symptoms are gone. Bowel movement must be contained inside the diaper, or the child can make it to the bathroom.

Antibiotics- children should be on an antibiotic for a full 24 hours before returning to the center. This helps prevent the spread of illness and allows you to see if your child experiences any reactions to the medication.

We understand the importance of having your children with us, and we want them to enjoy being in school and participating in the daily routine. We want all of our children and staff to remain as healthy as possible. We ask you to follow this policy to keep our staff as healthy as possible, so we can continue to care for everyone's children.



Parked Running cars

Please park and **turn off** your car during drop off and pickup. It is very dangerous to leave your car running with an older child in the car while you go and pick up your child/ren. We don't want to see an unfortunate accident occur. Please turn your car off before dropping off or picking up your child.



2025 Rates

	4 – 5 Days		3 Days		2 Days	
Infant	\$268.00		\$201.00		\$139.00	
Young Toddler	\$263.00		\$197.25		\$136.75	
Older Toddler	\$258.00		\$193.50		\$134.25	
Preschool & Pre-K	\$248.00		\$186.00		\$129.00	
School Agers						
School Year (Flat weekly rate)	Before School	\$92.00	After School	\$97.00	Before & After	\$168.00
Summer-School Age Care						
		\$248.00		\$186.00		\$129.00

