



Family Handbook



Miracle Grow

LEARNING ACADEMY

Where God's Tiny Miracles Grow and Thrive



Table of Contents

<i>Welcome to Miracle Grow Learning Academy</i>	1
Our Mission.....	1
Our Vision	1
Our Educational Philosophy	1
Our Core Values	1
Our Core Values:	2
<i>Program Overview</i>	2
About Our Center	2
Ages Served	2
Hours of Operation	2
Days Closed and Holidays	3
Licensing and Compliance.....	3
Licensed Capacity and Ratios	3
Faith-Informed and Inclusive Environment.....	3
<i>Family Orientation and Enrollment</i>	4
Enrollment Process.....	4
Required Enrollment Documentation	4
Orientation	4
Transitioning Into Care	5
Non-Discrimination Policy.....	5
Registration and Deposits	5
Updating Family Information	5
<i>Working With and Communicating With Families</i>	6
Our Partnership With Families.....	6
Daily Communication	6
Family-Teacher Conferences	6
Family Engagement and Participation.....	6
Connecting Families to Community Resources	6
Parent Rights	7

Grievance Procedure.....	7
<i>Tuition, Fees, and Attendance.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Tuition Rates and Payment Schedule	7
Registration Fee and Deposit.....	8
Tuition During Absences and Closures.....	8
Late Tuition and Non-Payment	8
Vacation Policy.....	8
Child Care Assistance (CCAP).....	8
Late Pick-Up Fees.....	9
Attendance Expectations	9
Termination of Care	9
<i>Our Educational Program.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Health and Safety.....</i>	<i>10</i>
Commitment to Health and Safety	10
Health Requirements	11
Health Care Summary and Immunizations.....	11
Illness and Exclusion Policy.....	11
Medication Administration	11
Health Care Plans and Special Diets	12
Handwashing and Hygiene.....	12
Diapering and Toileting	12
Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting.....	12
Pediatric First Aid and Injuries.....	13
Insurance Coverage	13
<i>Guidance and Discipline.....</i>	<i>13</i>
Our Approach to Guidance	13
Positive Guidance Strategies	13
Prohibited Practices	14
Positive Guidance Strategies	14
Prohibited Practices	14
Suspension and Expulsion Policy	15
Program Fit Policy	15
<i>Emergency Preparedness and Safety Procedures.....</i>	<i>15</i>
Emergency Preparedness Plan	15

Emergency Drills	15
Emergency Closings	16
Evacuation and Shelter Procedures.....	16
Medical Emergencies	16
Accident and Incident Reporting.....	16
Missing Child Procedures	16
Building Security and Visitor Procedures	17
<i>Nutrition and Meal Service</i>	<i>17</i>
Nutrition Program.....	17
Meals and Snacks Provided.....	17
Meal Times	17
Family-Style Dining.....	18
Food Allergies and Special Diets	18
Food from Home.....	18
Birthday Celebrations.....	18
Cooking Activities.....	19
Water and Toothbrushing.....	19
USDA Non-Discrimination Statement	19
<i>Attendance, Arrival, and Departure</i>	<i>19</i>
Attendance Expectations	19
Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures	19
Authorized Pick-Up and Release of Children.....	20
Late Arrival and Early Pick-Up.....	20
Late Pick-Up Safety Procedures	20
Building Access and Security.....	20
Visitors.....	21
Parking Lot Safety.....	21
<i>Confidentiality, Records, and Mandated Reporting</i>	<i>21</i>
Confidentiality of Records.....	21
Child Records	22
Release of Information.....	22

Data Privacy and Photography	22
Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment	22
Risk Reduction and Child Protection	22
<i>Family Resources</i>	23
Child Care and Family Support	23
Early Childhood Education and Development	23
Health and Wellness Resources	23
Additional Community Resources	23
<i>Acknowledgment of Receipt</i>	24

Welcome to Miracle Grow Learning Academy

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Educational Philosophy

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

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

Our Core Values

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

Our Core Values:

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

Program Overview

About Our Center

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

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

Ages Served

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

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

Hours of Operation

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

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

Days Closed and Holidays

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

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

Families will receive an annual calendar outlining closures. Tuition is not reduced for holidays, professional development days, or scheduled closures.

Licensing and Compliance

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

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

Licensed Capacity and Ratios

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

Faith-Informed and Inclusive Environment

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

All activities are developmentally appropriate and respectful of family beliefs.

Family Orientation and Enrollment

Enrollment Process

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

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

Required Enrollment Documentation

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

- Enrollment Form
- Emergency Contact Form
- Tuition Agreement
- Health Care Summary (completed by a licensed health care provider within 30 days of the child's start date)
- Immunization Record (required prior to the first day of care)
- Health Care Plan (if applicable and required before care begins)
- Medication Administration Authorization (if applicable)
- Orientation Form
- Getting to Know Your Family Form and Individual Learning Plan (completed with teaching staff within 10 days of enrollment)
- Required permissions for activities, media, and transportation

Incomplete documentation may delay a child's start date.

Orientation

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

- Daily routines and schedules
- Health and safety procedures
- Communication practices
- Guidance and discipline philosophy

- Family responsibilities and expectations

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

Transitioning Into Care

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

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

Non-Discrimination Policy

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

Registration and Deposits

A non-refundable **\$100 registration fee per child** is due at the time of enrollment.

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

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

Updating Family Information

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

Changes to authorized escorts must be made in person and documented by administration.

Working With and Communicating with Families

Our Partnership with Families

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

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

Daily Communication

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

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

Family-Teacher Conferences

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

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

Family Engagement and Participation

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

Connecting Families to Community Resources

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

Referrals are made collaboratively and with family consent.

Parent Rights

Families have the right to:

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

Grievance Procedure

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

1. Families are encouraged to first discuss concerns with their child's classroom teacher.
2. If the concern is not resolved, families should contact the Site Supervisor, who will review the concern and schedule a meeting within two (2) business days.
3. If concerns remain unresolved, families may contact the Owner/Director.
4. Families always have the right to contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Care Licensing Division.

All grievances are documented and handled confidentially. No child will be negatively affected as a result of a family bringing forward a concern.

Tuition, Fees, and Attendance

Tuition Rates and Payment Schedule

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

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

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

Registration Fee and Deposit

A non-refundable **\$100 registration fee per child** is due at the time of enrollment.

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

Tuition During Absences and Closures

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

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

Late Tuition and Non-Payment

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

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

Vacation Policy

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

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

Child Care Assistance (CCAP)

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

Families receiving CCAP are responsible for:

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

Family co-pays are due biweekly on Wednesdays.

Failure to pay required co-pays on time may result in late fees, suspension of care, or disenrollment.

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

Late Pick-Up Fees

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

Late pick-up fees must be paid before the child may return to care. Tuition will not be adjusted or refunded due to late pick-up-related absences.

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

Attendance Expectations

Families are encouraged to notify the center if their child will be absent.

To support learning routines and classroom structure, children are expected to arrive by **9:30 a.m.**, unless prior arrangements have been made with administration due to appointments or special circumstances.

Termination of Care

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

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

Our Educational Program

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

We use the research-based **Funny Daffer** curriculum framework, which is implemented through hands-on experiences, intentional teaching, and responsive interactions. Learning experiences are guided by children's interests, developmental needs, and observations.

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

Children participate in outdoor play daily, weather permitting, and are provided time for rest or quiet activities as part of the daily routine. Our goal is to support children's curiosity, confidence, and love of learning in a safe and nurturing environment.

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

Health and Safety

Commitment to Health and Safety

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

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

Health Requirements

Health Care Summary and Immunizations

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

Children without current health or immunization documentation may be excluded from care until documentation is received. Families are responsible for providing updated records as immunizations are administered.

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

Illness and Exclusion Policy

To protect the health of all children and staff, children must be excluded from care if they are ill or unable to participate comfortably in program activities.

A child will be excluded if they exhibit symptoms including, but not limited to:

- Vomiting two or more times in one day
- Three or more loose stools in one day
- Fever of **100°F (axillary) or higher** before fever-reducing medication
- Contagious conjunctivitis or eye discharge
- Undiagnosed rash or rash associated with a contagious illness
- Signs of significant respiratory distress
- Lethargy or behavior indicating illness
- Any condition requiring care beyond what staff can safely provide

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

If a child becomes ill while at the center, families will be contacted and must pick up their child within **one (1) hour**.

Medication Administration

Medication will be administered only when absolutely necessary and only with **written parental authorization**.

All medications must:

- Be in the original container
- Be clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage, and instructions

- Be stored securely and out of children's reach

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

Medication administration is documented according to DHS requirements.

Health Care Plans and Special Diets

Children with medical conditions, allergies, or special dietary needs must have a completed **Health Care Plan** on file before attending care.

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

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

Handwashing and Hygiene

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

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

Diapering and Toileting

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

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

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

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

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

Pediatric First Aid and Injuries

All staff are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR. In the event of an injury, staff will provide appropriate first aid and complete an incident report.

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

In the event of a medical emergency, **911 will be called first**, followed by parent notification.

Insurance Coverage

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

Guidance and Discipline

Our Approach to Guidance

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

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

Positive Guidance Strategies

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

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

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

Prohibited Practices

The following practices are **strictly prohibited**:

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

Physical restraint is used **only when necessary to protect a child or others from immediate harm** and is documented according to DHS requirements. Families will be notified when this occurs.

Positive Guidance Strategies

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

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

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

Prohibited Practices

The following practices are **strictly prohibited**:

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

Physical restraint is used **only when necessary to protect a child or others from immediate harm** and is documented according to DHS requirements. Families will be notified when this occurs.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to **reducing and preventing the use of suspension or expulsion** whenever possible. These measures are used only when a child's behavior presents a serious safety concern or significantly disrupts the learning environment despite consistent intervention and family collaboration.

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

- Documentation of behaviors and interventions
- Collaboration with families to develop a behavior support plan
- Referral to appropriate support services when applicable
- Ongoing communication and review of progress

Immediate suspension or expulsion may occur if a child's behavior poses an imminent risk to the safety of the child, other children, or staff.

Program Fit Policy

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

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

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Procedures

Emergency Preparedness Plan

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains a written Emergency Preparedness Plan that is reviewed regularly and updated as needed. Staff receive training on emergency procedures during orientation and through ongoing professional development.

Emergency procedures are posted in classrooms and common areas and are practiced through regular drills.

Emergency Drills

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

- Fire drills
- Tornado or severe weather drills
- Lockdown or shelter-in-place drills

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

Emergency Closings

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies, the Owner/Director will determine whether the center will close or modify operations based on safety conditions.

Families will be notified of emergency closings or early dismissals through established communication channels as soon as possible. If an emergency occurs during the day, families may be asked to pick up their child early.

Evacuation and Shelter Procedures

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

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

Medical Emergencies

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

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

Accident and Incident Reporting

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

Missing Child Procedures

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

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

Building Security and Visitor Procedures

The center maintains controlled access to the building. All visitors must check in with administration and sign the visitor log.

Families are encouraged not to allow unknown individuals into the building and to report any concerns to staff immediately.

Nutrition and Meal Service

Nutrition Program

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

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

Meals and Snacks Provided

The center provides the following meals daily:

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Afternoon snack

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

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

Meal Times

- **Breakfast:** Served between **8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.**
- **Lunch:** Served at approximately **11:30 a.m.**

- **Afternoon Snack:** Served after nap, typically between **2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.**

If a child arrives late and misses breakfast, an alternate option such as cereal, fruit, and milk may be provided when available.

Family-Style Dining

Meals are served **family-style** for toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children whenever developmentally appropriate. Family-style dining encourages:

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

Staff model healthy eating behaviors and support children as needed.

Food Allergies and Special Diets

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

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

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

Food from Home

The center provides all meals and snacks necessary to meet USDA nutrition requirements. Outside food and beverages are generally **not permitted**, unless pre-approved by administration.

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

Birthday Celebrations

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

Families are encouraged to consider alternative celebrations such as:

- A special classroom activity
- A favorite book read aloud

- A craft or cooking project

Cooking Activities

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

Families will be informed of cooking activities that involve common allergens.

Water and Toothbrushing

Drinking water is offered regularly throughout the day and is always available to children.

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

USDA Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations, **Miracle Grow Learning Academy** does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal for prior civil rights activity.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The full USDA Civil Rights Non-Discrimination Statement is available upon request.

Attendance, Arrival, and Departure

Attendance Expectations

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

To support the learning environment and classroom routines, children are expected to arrive **by 9:30 a.m.**, unless prior arrangements have been made with administration due to appointments or special circumstances.

Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures

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

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

Children may **not** enter the building or classroom independently.

Authorized Pick-Up and Release of Children

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

Authorized pick-up persons must:

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

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

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

Late Arrival and Early Pick-Up

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

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

Late Pick-Up Safety Procedures

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

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

Building Access and Security

The center maintains controlled access to the building to ensure the safety of children and staff.

Families are encouraged:

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

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

Visitors

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains an open-door policy for families. Parents and guardians are welcome to visit at any time during operating hours.

All visitors must:

- Check in with administration
- Sign the visitor log
- Follow all safety and supervision procedures

Parking Lot Safety

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

- Never leave children unattended in vehicles
- Follow posted parking and traffic guidelines
- Use appropriate car seats, boosters, and seat belts
- Avoid idling vehicles when possible

Staff are mandated reporters and are required to report safety concerns when necessary.

Confidentiality, Records, and Mandated Reporting

Confidentiality of Records

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

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

Child Records

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

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

Release of Information

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

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

Data Privacy and Photography

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

Children are never identified by full name in public materials.

Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment

All staff at Miracle Grow Learning Academy are **mandated reporters** under Minnesota law and are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

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

Mandated reporting policies and procedures are available upon request.

Risk Reduction and Child Protection

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

Family Resources

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

Child Care and Family Support

- **Think Small (formerly Resources for Child Caring)**
Provides assistance with child care searches, scholarships, parent education, and support services.
- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**
Helps eligible families afford quality child care through county-administered subsidies.
- **Parent Aware**
Offers tools and information to help families find high-quality child care and early education programs.

Early Childhood Education and Development

- **Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)**
Offers parent education and early childhood programs for families with children from birth to kindergarten.
- **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)**
Provides evaluation and services for children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- **Help Me Grow**
Supports families with concerns about a child's development, behavior, or mental health (birth to age five).

Health and Wellness Resources

- **WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Program)**
Provides nutrition support and food benefits for eligible families.
- **Minnesota Dental Association – Give Kids a Smile**
Offers dental services to underserved children.

Additional Community Resources

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

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

Acknowledgment of Receipt

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

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