



JEFFERSON'S EARLY LEARNING CENTER
Opening Doors

PARENT HANDBOOK

April 2025

Welcome Families



Jefferson's Early Learning Center, LLC

643 Reedy Rd.

Conway, AR 72034

501-908-4130

www.jeffersonsearlylearning.org

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to Jefferson's Early Learning Center, where we're excited to partner with your family on your early childhood education journey! I'm Dr. Keisha Jefferson (Dr. J). After 27 years of experience in education—from Pre-K to post-secondary instruction and leadership—I'm thrilled to return to my passion, Early Childhood Education.

I believe in a holistic approach to Pre-K instruction, focusing on each child's overall development. Along with my dedicated team, we are committed to giving families exceptional support and a clear path to lifelong success, meeting children at their levels.

Our center is designed to be a nurturing and stimulating space where children can freely explore, learn, and grow. We aim to foster a love of learning and model Christ-like behaviors to help children engage with the world around them. Creating a safe and inclusive environment is a fundamental priority for us. We promote kindness, respect, and empathy, working to foster a sense of belonging for everyone. Together, we can create a positive atmosphere where children can truly thrive.

Communication between families and the center is vital, and we encourage you to actively participate in your child's educational journey. We are dedicated to keeping you informed about curriculum topics and upcoming events. Please be encouraged to reach out to us!

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Keisha Jefferson (Dr. J)

Dr. Keisha Jefferson (Dr. J)
Owner/Director

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Welcome to our Family!

Culture

Who we are

Believers - We believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Professional - We are skilled and hold ourselves to high standards.

Safe - We are safe and secure and hope to spread that to others.

Responsive - We take great pride in listening and providing effective solutions.

The Founders

Jefferson's Early Learning Center, LLC is owned by Reginal and Keisha Jefferson, both of whom are actively involved in the center. Keisha (Dr. J) is involved in the daily operations and management of the center. Both determine all governing policies, procedures, and guidelines for the Center.

Dr. J has spent decades in education and has allowed herself to follow God's lead in this new endeavor. The Opening Doors motto has deep roots in the founding of this center. It's easy to live with what's comfortable or easy, but that sometimes isn't the final part of our story. Opening this center is a step of faith and a following of what's been in the making longer than she knew! As retirement commenced, the legwork began in opening her very own center. This is an opportunity for her to continue in a field she loves and yet one that she can support and promote others to walk through trials and begin...Opening Doors!

Mission

To provide hands-on learning that elicits individual curiosity and supports the child while building a foundation for life-long learning.

Vision

To deliver the best care and education for the children entrusted to us daily.

Our Motto

Opening Doors embodies our commitment to ensuring every child is heard and empowered. We will equip them with the skills and confidence to "open doors" through their lives!

School Information

Your Child's First Day

We welcome you and your family to our center. For some children, the transition is hard and they will cry the first few times. A few tips to remember are: let them tour their new school in advance, talk about the fun experiences and the school family they will gain, and try a brief goodbye. Delaying departure is hard for both the child and the parent as it reinforces everyone's feelings of fear. Most importantly, please call the administration to check on your child's progress, we welcome that!

Hours of Operation

Jefferson's Early Learning Center is open from 7:00 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday. We know after a long day, your child is as eager to be greeted by you. Unfortunately, due to the cost of wages, a late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged if your child is not picked up by 5:30 pm.

Holidays & Closures

Jefferson's Early Learning Center will be closed in observance of the following holidays, teacher professional development days, and breaks.

- New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, Wednesday before and the Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day & the day AFTER Christmas, Noon closure on New Year's Eve.
- A fall & spring break
- Parent Conference Days

Depending on when the holiday falls, we may close early or close for additional days so that all families can have that needed connection time! If an observed holiday falls on a Saturday, we will close the Friday before the holiday. If an observed holiday falls on a Sunday, we will close the Monday after the holiday. In addition to this handbook, you will receive a calendar for planning purposes.

Tuition should be included for these days during the year. Remember, your tuition covers a "spot" in our family and not the "day" attended by either entity.

Parent Involvement

We are dedicated to giving children a quality day and want to share their learning and experiences with you. You are encouraged to attend parent conferences and fun events we will host during the year. You are your child's biggest cheerleader and they love demonstrating their learning and creations.

Inclement Weather Policy

Jefferson's Early Learning Center will follow the closure schedule of Conway Public School District during major weather events. If we have staffing and can move about safely, we will make an independent decision regarding closures for minimal weather events. Please watch local news channels, our parent app, and our Facebook page.

Alcohol, Drugs/Drugs/E-Cigarettes Etc.

Jefferson's Early Learning Center is a **NO TOLERANCE CAMPUS**.

Communication

We use several methods to communicate between the Center and your family. A few ways to stay informed are:

- Talk with your child's teacher at drop-off and pick-up times.
- Read posted weekly lesson plans and daily schedules.
- Read special event notices posted on or near the Parent Bulletin Board.
- Enjoy the photos, children's work, and other documentation of children's activities. These are posted in your child's room and throughout the center.
- Check your child's cubby and folder for notices.
- Facebook
- Parent app
- Visit the Center!

Weekly News

At Jefferson's Early Learning Center, we will work with weekly themes that encourage creativity through language development, STEAM experiences, learning centers, gross motor development and small group instruction. Families will receive an email bulletin that includes the current theme and activities you can do at home with your child to extend learning and have fun!

Parent Portal (ProCare)

We are fortunate to use the ProCare system for many areas of our center, and parent sign in/out, communication, and being informed of your child's classroom experiences are just a few of the tools. Each parent/guardian will have an individual pin used to sign children in/out of the center. Please keep your pin private as others that drop off or pick up your child will have their pin.

Confidentiality

All information about children and families is considered confidential. Team members and volunteers will maintain the confidentiality of each family and each child's educational records.

Enrollment

Discrimination

We accept all eligible children until our maximum enrollment is reached. No one is denied enrollment due to special medical, health, or developmental needs. We will work with all special service providers to ensure that each child has what they need to reach their full potential.

Enrollment Procedures & Supply List

Each family will be given access to the parent handbook upon enrollment. The application packet must be thoroughly completed for enrollment to begin. The Department of Human Services requires that each child have the most current and up-to-date copy of immunization records in their file. All forms and records must be submitted before the first day of attendance unless otherwise discussed with the director.

- Enrollment paperwork
- Immunization Records
- Enrollment/supply fee
- First-week tuition
- Rest time blanket
- Change of clothes (labeled)

Referrals

Good news and experiences travel fast! We welcome you to share the good news about our center with other families. If a referral you make enrolls with us, you will receive a 10% discount on tuition for one month. The discount will be credited the month following the enrollment.

Payment & Fee Schedule

Tuition is due every Friday by 5:30 pm. A late fee will be applied at noon on Monday. All payments must be received by Tuesday noon or services will be terminated and not reinstated until payment is made. Future instances of non-payment will result in permanent termination.

Families that participate in the state voucher program are responsible for paying the appropriate fees. Registration fees for all children are non-refundable once paid.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| ● Late penalty will be applied at noon Tuesday | \$ 25 |
| ● Return check fee must be paid by cash/money order | \$ 25 |
| ● Registration fee due upon enrollment | \$100 per child |
| ● Supply fee due every January & June | \$ 50 per child |
| ● Debit Card fee (at each transaction) | \$ 5 per transaction |
| ● ACH Transaction Fee (weekly if paying with this method) | \$1.50 weekly |

Attendance & Absences

We believe that daily attendance is important for several reasons, including research noting that preschoolers who miss more than 10% of the school year arrive in kindergarten with lower readiness levels. As importantly, with your child here, there are even more opportunities for positive social and emotional outcomes, improved language, literacy, and early math skills.

If your child arrives later than usual or is out for the day, please call or message the center before 9:00 a.m. This will ensure proper staffing and meal preparation. We can not accept children after 9:00 if you have not made contact with the center.

If your child is out due to a medical condition or a substantial life change like a job loss, please speak with Dr. Jefferson directly. We will attempt to work with families as serious needs arise.

Vacation

Everyone loves a good vacation and children/families are no different. We want to reward our families for traveling on this journey with us and offer a vacation plan. After **one (1) year of enrollment** with Jefferson's Early Learning Center, families will be allowed a yearly week-long absence without tuition being charged. Eligibility begins on the first-anniversary date. For example, if your start date is July 13, 2025, your eligibility will begin July 13, 2026. This is not a week that can be carried over (does not accrue) after the year, but each year allows one week. The week also can not be divided, it must be a Monday-Friday period for use. Lastly, a written request for the vacation week must be received at least five (5) days before the non-payment allowance. All other payments are due each week, regardless of attendance. **(Due to Federal/State guidelines VOUCHERED students do not qualify for this)**

Toys & Personal Items

We discourage toys being brought to school, other than a cuddler for rest time. If rest time items become hard for your child to part from, we will ask that you keep them at home. Jefferson's Early Learning Center is not responsible for lost, broken, or stolen toys / personal belongings.

Withdrawal/Dismissal

Withdrawal Policy

If your child will be withdrawing from the center, **we require a two-week written notice**. This allows us to help your child prepare for the upcoming new experience. Also, we can notify another family who may be on our waiting list for a place in our program. Vacation week cannot be used after notice of withdrawal has been given. If a child has been absent for 10 consecutive days without contact, he/she will be dropped from the program and the parent will be notified in writing. Readmission will incur a new registration and all fees attached to that process. The Center reserves the right to dismiss a child for reasons of non-cooperation, late payment fees, or for the inability of the child or parent to adjust to the program, as determined by the board.

Dismissal of Children

We want all children to learn and experience friendships, and because of this, it is the right of Jefferson's Early Learning Center to dismiss any child or refuse services if necessary. We are structured toward learning and this structure allows exploration and freedom but also requires socialization. We never plan to dismiss a child and conversations will be conducted before the decision is made. If behaviors are deemed dangerous and/or unsafe for those around your child, we will seek outside support.

Daily Items

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

A parent/guardian or approved adult must sign your child in/out daily. We will use the ProCare app for electronic signature using a unique code for each adult of the child. If there are changes to pick-up,

please complete that in writing for the teacher before arrival, or stop by the office and we can help you with the form.

Supervision of Children

We want to ensure that children are safe entering, attending, and exiting Jefferson's Early Learning Center. Please help us with this by maintaining a close distance with your child while on campus as there are many potential dangers within a building. They should NOT run ahead of you to their classroom nor should they run out of the front door without you. We want to keep them safe at all times. For licensing and more importantly safety, children must be supervised at ALL times.

Nutrition

Adequate nutrition is imperative for optimal growth and this remains true at home as well as in a school or program. The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides guidelines for food preparation and service. Meals are available to all enrolled children without regard to race, color, national origin, handicap, sex or age.

We serve breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack to all children who are present during the times of service. Our schedule is as follows with adjustments being minimal (minutes).

- Breakfast 7:45-8:10
- Lunch 11:10
- PM Snack 2:10

Meals will NOT be served at any other times so please ensure an on time, unrushed arrival so that your child can fellowship with the classroom family! Food from home is NOT allowed to be brought to the center, including a child "finishing up" a snack at arrival. For the comfort of all of the team, please have your child finish their meal/snack/drink before entering the building.

Food Allergies

We are required by DHS and the Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide all of the required meals to children throughout the day. This subsequently means that there is no restriction of your child's diet while at the Center based on a child's dislikes or presumed allergies. We DO allow food substitutions based on medical or religious reasons (see below).

Any child requiring a special diet MUST fill out our form regarding food allergies/intolerance and submit it with a doctor's note. The doctor's note must include a detailed explanation of the allergy and the needs of the child.

- If your child is allergic to milk, you MUST provide a milk substitute as we can not substitute water or juice.
- If specific foods must be avoided, it must be listed on the form and the doctor's note, signed.
- Parents must then provide the appropriate substitute for that food (we can assist you with understanding the nutritional requirements)

Menus will be posted in the classroom and online for your viewing convenience.

Clothing

Every child will need a spare set of seasonal clothes, labeled and in a gallon bag in their cubby. We will experiment, play in the sand, eat messy foods, and explore possible "soiling" adventures. Watch your cubby for soiled clothing. Please label your clothing, jackets, gloves, and other personal items.

Jefferson's Early Learning Center is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen personal items. Children must be fully dressed (clothes and shoes) when entering the center.

Outside Play

Outdoor play is an extension of our learning opportunities, expanded to the outside classroom. Children will spend at least an hour outside each day, weather permitting. In the summertime when heat indexes are predicted to be above 90 degrees, and during winter months with cold temperatures, the length of outside time will be adjusted per the weather.

- If children are healthy enough to be at the center, they are healthy enough to go outside.
- Please dress your child appropriately for the weather and outdoor time.
- Sneakers with socks or other similar shoes are best for running, climbing, and enjoying the outdoors.
- At enrollment, **parents sign a consent form for sunscreen to be used as needed.**

Rest Time

The state of Arkansas requires that each child have a scheduled rest time. Although we will encourage all children to rest, they may choose not to. If your child does not nap over an extended period, we will provide a quiet activity for them to do as learning takes on many forms!

Your child will have a mat assigned to him/her. For your child's comfort, please provide a light blanket labeled with his/her name. Small pillows and stuffed toys are welcome but must be labeled with your child's name and able to fit in the cubby.

Celebrations

We love celebrating at the center! We will have several parties throughout the year to celebrate holidays and events. For special days, like your child's birthday, you can send treats on that day but PLEASE check with your child's teacher regarding any food allergies so that other children may participate.

Remember:

- We have a PEANUT FREE ENVIRONMENT. We will not serve anything with peanuts.
- All foods/snacks must be store-bought (Arkansas Law)
- No balloons delivered etc.

Behavior Guidance Policy

Every family disciplines differently. Keeping this in mind, we encourage allowing Jefferson's Early Learning Center to be the first public introduction to respectfulness, caring, and positive reinforcement of the world outside your home. We will strive to direct your child to excel and help promote a positive and enjoyable learning experience. A well-planned schedule, curriculum, classroom arrangement, and well-trained team members significantly reduce instances of inappropriate behavior. We will utilize the methods of the Conscious Discipline Model in our Center. Most of the day, your child will be able to make his/her own decisions about which center to visit, how to express themselves and be offered guidance to learn about their world without time to misbehave. However, when children do make mistakes in behavior, we use the following guidance techniques.

- Tell the child what they CAN do.
- Give choices whenever possible.
- Support children in learning to solve their problems, work out conflicts, and learn how to play with friends.
- Redirect a child to another activity.
- Physical punishment and threats are never used by our staff AND we do not allow on-site abusive language or physical parental discipline.

When a pattern of inappropriate behavior continues, parents are required to meet with the team member and/or director. The goal will be to work together to find a solution to the problem behavior and resolve

the difficulty. We allow outside professional consultation, screenings, or evaluations when necessary to help the child meet their needs and help them succeed.

Potty Training

Potty training is a very delicate time. We train with a consistent schedule. As the training progresses, we encourage communication of your methods used at home. Please communicate your style of training so we can be consistent, and all have a positive experience. Please have plenty of disposable training pants and extra clothes available. If your child happens to not advance as quickly as others in potty training, we will continue to encourage your child. We cannot rinse or wash soiled clothing and will send them home with your child at the end of the day when applicable.

At Jefferson's Early Learning Center, we assist children with their toilet training efforts. "Assist" means that we will talk your child through changing him/herself if an accident occurs. The teacher or assistant teacher will talk your child through taking off the wet/soiled clothing (this includes unbuttoning pants if needed), cleaning themselves, and dressing themselves in clean dry clothes (we can assist with buttoning/snapping clothing as needed). We will also provide a bag for the dirty clothes and make you aware that your child had an accident and that dirty clothes are in the backpack.

If any student is struggling with a potty training routine after normal procedures have been put into place, a conference will be held and a toilet learning plan will be implemented. If there is a health-related reason for a child not being able to control his/her bowels or bladder, a health plan will be developed with input from the parent/guardian and physician.

Experiences

Our goal at Jefferson's Early Learning Center is to prepare students for Kindergarten readiness. We want to join with parents in modeling, teaching, and observing the children to understand where they are in his/her development.

Screening & Monitoring

A screening is a brief research-based tool used to identify children at risk of developmental delays.

Screenings do NOT diagnose delays or disability or determine eligibility for services. Screening is one of the best methods to plan future instruction for our teachers as they will monitor learning during the year. We will be reaching out after the first few weeks of your child's attendance to visit about the screener. For ongoing monitoring, we will use research-based materials to follow your child's growth. You will be able to view progress over time for your child, which is such an exciting journey!

Curriculum

At Jefferson's Early Learning Center, we will use the Frog Street Curriculum. Frog Street is an interactive hands-on program that provides lessons that are fun and easy to use. The focus of the curriculum is on intentional, age-appropriate instruction aligned to the state standards. The choice of Frog Street includes that it is state-approved and research-based content. This curriculum in our environment will help to develop a strong foundation in faith, with academic skills, and support us with its integration of Conscious Discipline for social-emotional development.

Health & Safety

Health Policy

The Arkansas State Licensing Board requires that we keep the official current immunization record up-to-date and on file. Your child will be isolated from the other children and sent home if **ANY** of the symptoms below are displayed. Children must be free of these symptoms for **24 HOURS** before returning to the center-- no exceptions. This is a State Regulation stated in the Arkansas Minimum Licensing Handbook.

- Fever of 100 or more taken axillary.
- Diarrhea (3 or more times)
- Vomits (2 times)
- Undiagnosed Rash or Contagious Rash
- Pink Eye
- Constant Cough
- Sore Throat with fever and/or swollen glands
- Head Lice, Nits, Scabies, Ringworm, Impetigo
- Multiple Sores inside the mouth with drooling and/or Thrush

Illness & Medications

Unfortunately, sickness and illness live in centers and can spread quickly if those who are sick are around the facility. **Please DO NOT BRING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL WITH FEVER!** Jefferson's Early Learning Center is not equipped to staff a sick room full-time. If a child becomes sick at school with a fever or other concerns, parents must make arrangements to promptly pick their child up. We realize this takes planning and allow one hour from the time contacted as appropriate for the latest arrival/pick up.

Your child must be symptom and fever-free for 24 hours before returning to the center.

If your child has medication from a doctor, we encourage it to be given at home as much as possible. If the medication is needed three (3) or more times per day, the administration will dispense medication to children per the label directions. If administration is out and a teacher dispenses the medication, there will be a 2nd person to verify the dosage. Once the medication is given and logged, parents will be notified via the app. If a child requires an inhaler or EpiPen, we request one be provided at the center. **A SIGNED MEDICAL RELEASE MUST BE SIGNED BY THE PARENT**

Safety

Jefferson's Early Learning Center has been inspected by the Conway Fire Marshal's office. Students will practice monthly fire & tornado drills. The center has many exits and provides a fire exit diagram in each classroom. Designated areas are used as a tornado shelter.

We have a strict policy for who can enter the center so that we can maintain a safe environment. Only parents, guardians, or those designated on your application will be allowed to visit or pick up your child/children.

Please give the center advance notice if you will be using someone not listed on your application and provide a driver's license number. Upon entering and exiting the center, everyone is required to use the electronic keypad at the entrance. This gives an accurate attendance record of the children and ensures complete safety. If you have any problems with the keypad, please press the doorbell for assistance.

Weapons

Law enforcement officials who are trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty may have firearms or ammunition on the premises. For all other persons, firearms, hunting knives, bows and arrows, and other weapons are prohibited on the premises of Jefferson's Early Learning Center.

Injuries, Accident & Incident Reports

Minor injuries will be treated with the appropriate first aid and parents will be informed by an accident report at pick-up. If your child sustains a more serious injury, the necessary procedure (transport to doctor/hospital or ambulance called) will be taken to ensure the safety of the child. The administration will contact the parents with the circumstances as soon as possible. There will be written documentation of these accidents or incidents provided to you should this occur.

State Regulations

Through the Arkansas Department of Human Services and the Division of Children and Family Services, Jefferson's Early Learning Center complies with all codes and laws. All Staff are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse/maltreatment, and any reports are considered confidential and an allegation until an investigation is completed. Any staff member or child in attendance may be interviewed by Child Care Licensing, by the Division of Child and Family Services, and/or by law enforcement officers for investigations or to determine compliance with licensing requirements. Child interviews do not require parental notice or consent.

Also, if you suspect misconduct or concerns about Jefferson's Early Learning Center, you have the right to report any misconduct or concerns to DHS. You can find a form on the DHS website, or you can report by calling 1-800-422-6641.

Upon request, you may also request to view any of our compliance forms. We need the request to be in writing and for us to be given ample time to retrieve the documents for your review.

ARKids First

ARKids First health insurance provides coverage for more than 70,000 Arkansas children who otherwise might have been uninsured. The information that you provide on the simple application form determines the level of coverage for which your child is eligible. Feel free to follow the website, <http://www.arkidsfirst.com>, or visit with administration for more contact information.

Jefferson's Early Learning Center Performance Reviews are available upon request.

Created: March 15, 2025