

The Learning Tree: Preschool and Parents' Morning Out

A Mission of O'Fallon First United Methodist Church

Staff Policy Handbook

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1. Preamble

The Learning Tree (*LT*) Board, in conjunction with the O’Fallon First United Methodist Church (*OFFUMC*) Staff Parish Relations Committee (*SPRC*), establishes this personnel policy to ensure uniform application of employment practices. Policies herein apply to all LT personnel as described in subsequent sections.

This handbook applies to all paid employees of the LT Preschool and Parents’ Morning Out of O’Fallon First United Methodist Church, unless otherwise noted.

Employee: Any paid LT staff member, regardless of number of hours worked per week

Employer: O’Fallon First United Methodist Church, 504 E. Highway 50, O’Fallon, IL 62269

Definition of LT employees

- A. Full Time Scheduled Staff: Staff who work 35 or more hours per week, on average, and who are employed for more than nine months per year, solely within the LT or in conjunction with a position held through OFFUMC. Hours are averaged over a 52-week period.
- B. Part Time Scheduled Staff: Staff who work fewer than 35 hours per week. Hours are averaged over a 52-week period.
- C. On Call Employee: Staff paid for the number of hours worked weekly at a determined rate.
- D. Salaried Employees: Staff paid a set amount weekly as determined by the annual salary.
- E. Contract and Stipend Workers: Staff contracted for a specific purpose.

2. Employee supervision

- A. The LT Director, in conjunction with the LT Board, decides all staffing requirements and qualifications.
- B. The LT Director and selected LT Board members interview applicants for staff positions.
- C. The LT Director and the LT Board approve all staff hiring and placement.
- D. The LT Director is the direct supervisor of all LT staff.
- E. The LT Director supervises all staff in consultation with the LT Board.
- F. There is a 6-month probation period (*unless otherwise specified*) for all new employees, after which the LT Director and the LT Board must agree on permanent employment for said designation to occur.
- G. Staff compensation is set by the LT Director and the LT Board on a yearly basis.
- H. The LT Director is directly supervised by the Senior Pastor.

3. General Policies

A. Non-Discrimination Policy

The Learning Tree recognizes its employees as one of its greatest assets and are committed to providing equal employment opportunity to all qualified persons,

consistent with applicable federal, state, and local equal employment opportunity laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, gender, age, handicap and/or disability, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, color, or national origin. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, compensation, benefits, and all other terms and conditions of employment.

B. Confidentiality

- a. Records of all children are confidential and only staff, LT Board, and referral agencies may have access. A file may not leave the director's office without approval. An employee may be dismissed for discussing children outside of the school, staff, or referral agencies.
- b. The personnel record contains information pertinent to employment. Generally, the file contains such things as an application, resume, tax forms, and performance appraisals/development plans. The file is confidential and is the property of the LT. If a staff member would like to see his/her file, he/she should contact the LT Director.

C. Solicitation

In order to avoid interruption of work and to protect employees from unnecessary annoyance, solicitation and/or distribution of literature on LT premises is limited as follows:

- a. Non-employees of LT have no right to distribute materials or solicit our employees on LT property at any time.
- b. Employee-to-employee solicitation, distribution or acceptance of literature by employees during work hours is prohibited.
- c. This policy includes solicitation and distribution of literature for all purposes, such as lotteries, raffles, charitable or political organizations, and the like. The LT Director must make any exceptions to this policy.

D. Non-Smoking Campus

In keeping with the intent to provide a safe and healthful environment, smoking by employees is prohibited on OFFUMC property, to include the parking lot, and at LT events.

E. Substance Abuse Control

- a. The LT is committed to providing a healthful and safe workplace for everyone. Consistent with that commitment, the LT promotes a drug- and alcohol-free work environment. Some problems related to drugs and alcohol are more than one person can handle. Therefore, employees are encouraged to talk with the LT Director should they need help.
- b. Employees must report to work in the mental and physical condition necessary to perform their jobs in a satisfactory manner. The legal use of prescribed medications and over the counter medications is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job effectively and safely.

- c. The use, possession, sale, or transfer of illegal drugs or alcohol are prohibited on OFFUMC premises, while using LT or OFFUMC vehicles, or while employees are taking part in any LT or OFFUMC business.
- d. An employee must notify the LT within five days of any arrest for drug or alcohol-related activity.
- e. If any supervisor has reason to suspect:
 - 1) An employee may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while at work; or
 - 2) Job performance is being adversely affected by the possible abuse of drugs or alcohol; or
 - 3) An employee is keeping illegal drugs or alcohol on his/her person or on OFFUMC property; then
 The LT director may ask an employee to:
 - 1) Open the area for inspection; and/or
 - 2) Consent to be tested; and/or
 - 3) Leave the premises.
- f. If an employee is found to be in possession of illegal drugs or alcohol, refuses to consent to testing or to leave the premises if requested, or tests positive for illegal substances, said employee may be disciplined up to and including termination of employment.

F. Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

OFFUMC has a Policy Statement on Misconduct of a Sexual Nature (attached). This policy applies to LT employees. A copy of the policy will be made available to each employee at the time of his/her hire. In the event of an allegation of misconduct, an accused employee may be placed on administrative leave while the Board investigates.

G. Jury Duty

LT employees are supported in reporting for jury duty as required by law and will be granted full pay for a day of jury duty, less any per diem amounts paid by the court.

H. Weather Days (Snow, etc.)

- a. If O’Fallon District 90 schools are closed for inclement weather, LT will also be closed.
- b. If LT programs are closed, the day will not be paid day for hourly employees.
- c. If the school is open and the hourly employee is unable to come in, then the day will be unpaid. Standard notification procedures apply.
- d. If the salaried employee is unable to come in, then it is expected that the day will be made up as “comp time.” Standard notification procedures apply.

I. Child Care Tuition Reduction

Full Time and Part Time Scheduled LT Staff (as defined above) who have a child registered/attending with LT programs will be given a 33% discount if the adult is not teaching in the child’s age group.

If a staff member is working in the same PMO classroom as their child, they will not be charged the daily rate as their child will be in their own care.

If a staff member is working in the same Preschool classroom as their child, they will be charged the yearly registration fee, snack fee and tuition at a rate of 10% of the regular tuition rate. This discount is limited to one child per staff member. If staff member has additional children, additional enrollment would qualify for 33% discount.

J. EMERGENCY DISCLAIMER

In case of emergency (such as disaster, pandemic, etc.), policies are subject to change as needed. Any changes to same shall be communicated as necessary.

4. Employee Conduct and Relations

LT employees are expected to display exemplary conduct at all times, but especially when at the LT or any school-related events. Employees must at all times maintain a professional, friendly, and calm demeanor in keeping with the policies and beliefs of the LT and its sponsor, OFFUMC.

A. Open Door Policy

An Open Door philosophy is an essential part of maintaining strong communication and a positive work environment. Employees' ideas, questions, suggestions, problems, or concerns are always welcomed, and employees are encouraged to share input with co-workers and supervisors.

B. Employee Qualifications

In addition to those specified in the position descriptions, the following criteria must be met:

- a. Employees must undergo and successfully complete a criminal background check at a facility designated by LT. LT Board has discretion to deny employment due to the results of the background check. Background checks must be re-accomplished every two years for LT employees. Expenses of background checks will be borne by the LT.
- b. Employees must successfully complete continuing education and/or training during each 12-month period. Specific education and training requirements as outlined in the employee's job description will be identified by the LT Director, in consultation with the LT Board. Failure to complete the training requirements in allotted time frame will be discussed by the employee and the LT Director; continued failures to complete these requirements may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- c. Employees must successfully complete basic First Aid and CPR training within the first two (2) months of employment. This training must be maintained current through routine re-certification.
- d. Full and Part-Time Scheduled Employees must successfully complete DCFS mandated reporter training within the first two (2) months of employment and every three (3) years thereafter.
- e. Employees must sign an acknowledgment that they understand their role as Christian leaders at OFFUMC, that they agree to support the church's plan and purpose and

that they will conduct themselves according to specified expectations. (See attached.)

- f. LT Director and Lead Teachers shall meet all DCFS Licensing Standards and requirements.

C. Administrative Procedures

- a. Employees must ensure LT administrative office always has the most current employee address, phone number(s), and emergency contact information.
- b. Standard classroom supplies will be maintained and available through the LT administrative office. Specialty supplies or materials must be requested in writing, with the approval of the employee's supervisor. Approved supplies will be acquired and delivered to employees in a timely manner by administrative personnel.
- c. Alternatively, employees may, with prior approval from the LT Director, voluntarily purchase needed supplies and materials. Employee must provide copies of all relevant receipts no later than three (3) business days after purchase, along with appropriate form requesting reimbursement, to the appropriate administrative staff member. Employees cannot be required to use personal funds to purchase needed school supplies.
- d. Employees will provide to administrative personnel all bulk copying requests and originals; copying will be performed in a timely manner by administrative personnel.
- e. Employees are responsible for maintaining, completing, and turning in bi-weekly time sheets to the designated administrative staff member.

D. Medical and Emergency Procedures

- a. LT employees may be required to administer routine, prescribed medications to LT students following specific doctor's orders. Medication will be stored in a secure location within the classroom out of reach of students and will be clearly labeled with students' names and dosage instructions.
- b. LT employees will provide basic first aid in response to simple, non-life-threatening injuries such as minor cuts and scrapes, sprains, or sunburns. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified of any first aid measures applied.
- c. Should a student become ill at school, employee must consult with LT Director or designee, at which time the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick the child up from school. Student will be removed from the classroom setting and will remain under the supervision of a designated LT employee until parent(s) or guardian(s) arrive.
- d. Employees will consult with LT Director or designee in a timely manner to assess the need for emergency medical attention in the event a student incurs an injury or shows signs of a serious medical condition or illness. In the event emergency medical attention is required, first responders will be contacted first, followed immediately by the child's parents or guardians.
- e. Employees who become ill or injured during school hours must report their condition to LT Director or designee, who will make arrangements for employee's prompt departure (and replacement, if needed). A signed note from a medical professional

will be required for any employee who is ill or injured for more than three (3) consecutive scheduled work days.

- f. Abuse Prevention: All Learning Tree staff are legally mandated reporters of abuse and neglect. At some point staff may need to act as child advocates, reporting situations dangerous to the children in our care.
 1. If a teacher is questioning whether or not abuse may be present, he/she should record a pattern of suspicion. Document observations and conversations. Provide copies of documentation to the director.
 2. Any reports to DCFS should be made through the director and in conversation with the Senior Pastor. If a teacher feels the director is acting against his/her obligation as a mandated reporter, the teacher may file a grievance as outlined in the employee handbook. Likewise, if the teacher feels a child's life is in immediate danger and/or the child is being abused, he/she should call the abuse prevention hotline or 911.

E. Social Media Policy

The following guidelines apply to all social networking media, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and personal web pages, for all employees of the LT.

- a. LT employees are personally responsible for the content that they publish online. An employee should be mindful that what is published on a social media network, such as Facebook or Twitter, is viewed not only by the intended recipient but by all persons who have access to that individual's account.
- b. An employee's online behavior should reflect the same, if not greater, standards of honesty, respect and consideration than used face to face. Online communications are in writing and not subject to a "he said, she said" defense.
- c. Employees need to remember their association and responsibility with the LT in online social environments. He/she must ensure his/her profile and related content is consistent with the Christian Leadership Covenant (see attached).
- d. Employee concerns regarding policies and / or practices of LT should not be aired publicly on social networking sites.
- e. No last names, addresses, or phone numbers may appear in online postings, unless expressly approved by those involved.
- f. When contributing online, employees must never post confidential student information.
- g. Employees may only take photos of children and fellow staff with prior consent. These photos may only be used for school purposes and may not be shared without consent.

F. Technology

- a. Use of Learning Tree computers and internet access is limited to school purposes. Personal work, web surfing, emailing, social media, etc. may not be done on Learning Tree devices.

- b. Personal Electronic Devices brought to school may not be used to conduct personal business during school hours. Staff should carefully monitor their electronic devices to ensure inappropriate material is not accessed on school premises.

G. Grievance Resolution

- a. Informal
Should serious differences arise between the LT and an employee, or between employees, they will be addressed in conference with affected parties and the LT Director.
- b. First Level
If a verbal resolution cannot be reached, the affected parties will prepare written statements within ten (10) days of the initial conversation. The statements will be reviewed by the LT Board Chair, who will prepare a written statement of the decision which, when agreed upon, will be signed by both parties.
- c. Second Level
If agreement has not been reached at the First Level, all affected parties will submit (within 10 days of the previous decision) a written appeal to the LT Board for consideration. Within fourteen (14) days of the appeal, a written statement of the decision will be prepared by the LT Board and signed by the employee, the LT Director, and the LT Board, with SPRC input as needed. This decision will be considered final.

H. Employee Expectations / Counseling / Termination

- a. Expectations: An individual job description outlining employee responsibilities will be provided by the LT Director at the employees time of hire. Any specific deviations from this policy handbook will be outlined in the individual job descriptions. Duties above and beyond that of the individual job description will be communicated by the LT Director.
- b. Warnings: Should an employee's performance not comply with those in the written job description and/or in this staff handbook, a warning procedure will be initiated.
 - i. Verbal warning: On an employee's first offense/non-compliance, he/she will be issued a verbal warning from the LT Director along with corrective counseling.
 - ii. Written warning: Upon a second issue of non-performance/compliance, an employee will be issued a written warning by the LT Director and will receive corrective counseling. This warning must be signed by both the LT Director and employee and will be stored in the employee's personnel record.
 - iii. Multiple written warnings: Three (3) written warnings are grounds for suspension or termination, to be determined by the LT Board.
- c. Corrective Counseling: On occasion it may be necessary to discuss specific areas of an employee's performance or conduct that are below the expected standards. These discussions are designed to help the employee correct whatever problem may exist. Notification of counseling shall be made in writing and placed in the employee's personnel file.
- d. Termination

- i. Depending on the seriousness of an offense, a termination without any prior corrective counseling may be necessary. Types of conduct that may result in termination include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Direct refusal to comply with legitimate request from a supervisor.
 - 2) Flagrant discourtesy to a child, parent, or employee. This includes, but is not limited to, fighting, using obscene or abusive language, or threatening an employee, parent, or child.
 - 3) Immoral, indecent, or illegal conduct reflecting negatively on the LT or OFFUMC or violating the rights of the employees or children.
 - 4) Reckless conduct resulting in injury or harm.
 - 5) Falsification of LT records, such as employee records, timekeeping records, activity reports, etc.
 - 6) Misuse or unauthorized removal of company, employee, or child records, or confidential information of any nature.
 - 7) Unauthorized use, blatant misuse, destruction, removal, or embezzlement of property or money belonging to the LT, OFFUMC, its employees, or the children.
 - 8) Possession, sale, distribution, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs while on work time or OFFUMC property.
 - 9) Possession or storing of firearms, weapons, ammunition, or explosives on OFFUMC property.
 - 10) Violation of the LT harassment policy.
- ii. The LT Board shall approve any terminations. Terminations are effective immediately.

I. Annual Evaluation, Policy and Job Description Review

- a. Performance evaluation may be completed up to twice per year with each employee by his/her supervisor. If requested by either the employee or the supervisor, the LT Director and/or a member of the LT Board may attend the performance evaluation meeting as well.
- b. During the evaluation, a review of the employee's job description will be conducted by the supervisor, and any needed changes will be noted. The Staff Policy Handbook will also be reviewed. Any questions regarding with the policy can be discussed at this time.

J. Employee Renewal

An employee is hired and retained as long as he/she is in good standing and enrollment for the school year necessitates. In the event of enrollment driven employee reduction, the LT director and the LT Board will determine retention based on seniority, job performance, and qualification. Annual retention will be determined not less than two weeks prior to the start of the school year.

K. Resignation

An employee shall submit his/her resignation in writing to the LT Director not less than two (2) weeks in advance of the requested date of voluntary termination.

5. Considerations for Full-time Scheduled Staff

- A. Full-time Scheduled Staff are those employees working at least 35 hours per week during a 12-month period. Full-time Scheduled Staff may accumulate their hours solely from work with the LT or in conjunction with a position with OFFUMC. Full-time Scheduled Staff qualify for paid holidays, pension, and a health insurance stipend.
- B. Normal LT hours are 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- C. Some positions operate outside of “normal school hours” as prescribed by the specific job descriptions.
- D. Work is possible for hourly employees beyond the above hours, or prescribed hours per position, as deemed necessary by the LT Director.
- E. Health/Pension
 - a. Health insurance is not currently available to our employees. Full-time (35+ hrs.) Scheduled Staff receive a health insurance stipend as set annually by the SPRC.
 - b. Participation in the Pension Program of the United Methodist Church is available to employees through the General Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church after first day of the month coinciding with or next following the date the employee meets all of the eligibility requirements:
 - i. Works a minimum 20 hours a week or more;
 - ii. Works 12 months a year;
 - iii. Is 21 years of age or older; and
 - iv. Has at least one year of service with the employer.
- F. Policy for time off
 - a. The employee shall contact (text, email, or call) the LT Director when the need to take time off arises. Time off will not be considered approved until employee receives a written response from the LT Director or his/her designee.
 - b. LT employees do not accumulate paid Sick/Personal/Vacation days.
 - c. Scheduling is subject to the approval of the LT Director, considering such factors as personnel needs of the school, seniority of the employees, and seasons of the year (Christmas, Easter, etc.).
 - d. Sick/Personal/Vacation absences of Full-Time Scheduled Staff are not to exceed seven (7) days per school year. Additional requests for time off will be considered on a case by case basis by the LT Director. The Director may approve or deny the request, require the submission of a doctor’s excuse, and/or issue a written warning.
 - e. Hours of employee absence are not paid.
 - f. In the event that a substitute cannot be obtained, staff remaining on duty and/or volunteers will cooperatively share the workload of an absent employee, unless otherwise designated on the employee job description.

- g. The LT Preschool observes seven (7) holidays per year. All full-time scheduled staff are eligible for paid time off on these days.
- h. The holidays are:
 - i. Martin Luther King’s birthday
 - ii. President’s Day
 - iii. Memorial Day
 - iv. July 4th
 - v. Labor Day
 - vi. Thanksgiving Day
 - vii. The day after Thanksgiving
- i. If the holiday falls on Saturday, the previous day will be observed, if the holiday falls on Sunday, the first business day following the holiday will be observed.
- j. Compensation and holidays for Full-Time Scheduled Staff working in dual capacity with OFFUMC will be coordinated with OFFUMC SPRC and/or the Senior Pastor.
- k. Full-Time Scheduled Staff paid on an hourly basis will accurately record hours worked on time sheets provided. A record for all employees’ work hours will be kept by the LT bookkeeper.

6. Considerations for Part-Time Scheduled Staff

- A. Part-time Scheduled Staff are those employees working fewer than 35 hours per week during a 12-month period. Part-time Scheduled do not qualify for paid holidays.
- B. Normal school hours are 8:30 a.m.— 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- C. Some positions operate outside of “normal school hours” as prescribed by the specific job descriptions.
- D. Work is possible for hourly employees beyond the above hours, or prescribed hours per position, as deemed necessary by the LT Director.
- E. Health / Pension
 - a. Health insurance is not currently available to our employees. Part-time (< 35 hrs./week) are ineligible to receive a health insurance stipend as set annually by the SPRC.
 - b. Participation in the Pension Program of the United Methodist Church is available to employees through the General Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church after first day of the month coinciding with or next following the date the employee meets all of the eligibility requirements:
 - c. works a minimum 20 hours a week or more;
 - ii. works 12 months a year;
 - iii. is 21 years of age or older; and
 - iv. has at least one year of service with the employer.
- F. Policy for time off

- a. The employee shall contact (text, email, or call) the LT Director when the need to take time off arises. Time off will not be considered approved until employee receives a written response from the LT Director or his/her designee.
- b. LT employees do not accumulate paid Sick/Personal/Vacation days.
- c. Scheduling is subject to the approval of the LT Director, considering such factors as personnel needs of the school, seniority of the employees, and seasons of the year (Christmas, Easter, etc.).
- d. The number of allowed Sick/Personal/Vacation absences is based on frequency of employment. Five day/week employees are not to exceed seven (7) absences per school year. Three day/week employees are not to exceed five (5) absences per school year. Two day/week employees are not to exceed three (3) absences per school year.
- e. Additional requests for time off will be considered on a case by case basis by the LT Director. The director may approve or deny the request, require the submission of a doctor's excuse, and/or issue a written warning.
- f. Hours of employee absence are not paid.
- g. In the event that a substitute cannot be obtained, staff remaining on duty and/or volunteers will cooperatively share the workload of an absent employee, unless otherwise designated on the employee job description.
- h. The LT Preschool observes seven (7) holidays per year. All full-time scheduled staff are eligible for paid time off on these days.
- i. The holidays are:
 - i. Martin Luther King's birthday
 - ii. President's Day
 - iii. Memorial Day
 - iv. July 4th
 - v. Labor Day
 - vi. Thanksgiving Day
 - vii. The day after Thanksgiving
- j. If the holiday falls on Saturday, the previous day will be observed, if the holiday falls on Sunday, the first business day following the holiday will be observed.
- k. Part-Time Scheduled Staff paid on an hourly basis will accurately record hours worked on time sheets provided. A record for all employees' work hours will be kept by the LT bookkeeper.

COVID-19 Disclaimer

**During a declared, national pandemic see additional policies.

EX. COVID-19 Policy Handbook

Christian Leadership Covenant at The Learning Tree

Families coming to the Learning Tree may have had no previous contact with a community of Christians. They may have never stepped foot inside the doors of a church or may have preconceived notions of what Christians are like or how “outsiders” will be treated. They may be coming back to the church after a negative experience in their past. I, as a member of the Learning Tree staff, cannot know the hearts of those who enter this facility and I appreciate my awesome responsibility to serve as the hands and feet of Jesus to the families in my care. Therefore, I go forward acknowledging:

- By accepting a staff position at The Learning Tree, I accept a role as a servant leader of the Church.
- As a Church leader, I confirm that I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and will promote Him with my words and actions.
- The mission of O’Fallon First United Methodist Church is to “Connect Imperfect People to a Perfect God.” I will support this mission in word, action, and prayer.
- In addition to guiding children in cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development, I understand that I am responsible for fostering positive spiritual development in my classroom.

Name

Date

OFFUMC RELATIONSHIP COVENANT



I, _____, have received, read, and will abide by the Staff Policy Handbook of The Learning Tree Preschool & Parents' Morning Out.

Signature

Date