Parent Handbook
2026-2027 School Year

St. Thomas Early Learning Center
703-442-4766
preschool@stthomasmcleanva.org

ST. THOMAS EARLY LEARNING CENTER CALENDAR: 2026-2027

August 24-26	No School-Teacher Workdays
August 26	Meet and Greet with children and parents 11-12
August 27	First Day of Class
September 4 and 7	No School - Labor Day Holiday
September 21	No School – Yom Kippur
October 12	No School - Columbus Day Holiday
October 30	Trunk or Treat for Halloween 12:30
November 25 – 27	No School - Thanksgiving
Dec 21 -Jan 1	No School - Winter Holiday
January 18	No School – Martin Luther King
February 15	No School - Presidents' Day
March 10	No School – Eid
March 22-26	No School **–** Spring Break
May 17	No School – Eid-al-Adha
May 31	No School – Memorial Day
June 15	Pre-K Graduation 5:45
June 16	Release at 1:00 – Last Day of School

Subject to change if Fairfax County Schools change their calendar

GOALS

St. Thomas Early Learning Center seeks to meet the needs of young children by providing an educational program open to all faiths that addresses all areas of developmentally appropriate growth including intellectual, social, spiritual, physical and emotional in a safe and loving environment.

STAFF

A highly qualified and experienced staff, under the supervision of the director, will work with parents to promote the development of the whole child.

PROGRAM

St. Thomas Early Learning Center provides a carefully planned developmentally appropriate environment with a wide variety of activities that appeal to young children. The adult to child ratio is determined by the age of the children but will not exceed 10 children to 1 adult. Class schedules are posted in each room.

CONFERENCES

A parent may request a conference at any time during the school year. Please call to schedule a conference. Drop off and pick up times are very hectic, and our teachers are unable to hold an unplanned conference at those times. We will offer a parent/teacher conference day in late January. Written progress reports will be sent home twice a year.

TIMES & DATES

Classes will begin on August 31st and run until June 17th unless otherwise noted in the current school calendar. Depending on enrollment and need, we may offer a separate summer enrichment program with a separate application and tuition. Preschool hours are from 9am – 1pm. Optional before and after-care hours are available, enrollment permitting:
Before Care – 7:30 - 9am
Rest Time - 1pm - 3pm
Enrichment Class - 3pm – 5:30pm

Parent Orientation and classroom visits may be scheduled for the week before classes begin. You will be notified of the specified dates.

The Preschool follows the same holiday schedule as Fairfax County Schools unless otherwise noted. We will follow the schedule below for SNOW DAYS and DELAYED OPENING:

SNOW DAYS: If Fairfax County Schools are closed for inclement weather, then the ELC will be closed as well.

Two-hour delay: All classes will start at 9:30. There will not be any before care. If Fairfax County schools close during the school day, please come for your child IMMEDIATELY.

Days the school is closed for inclement weather will not be made up.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please keep us informed of anything that is happening at home which may affect your child's behavior at school. We want to work with you to make this a good school year.

Parents are encouraged to participate in the program (unless there is a court order stating otherwise). Please indicate your willingness to the teacher.

No staff member or parent shall use any electronic forum to comment on school policies, staff, children, or families. Names, images, and information pertaining to any child are strictly confidential and may not be published without permission. Photos may be used for school use with parental permission.

Preschool children will receive a snack each day consisting of fruit and goldfish, pretzels, animal cookies, or something similar. A second snack will be served after rest time. Lunches must be brought from home. Please label the lunch with your child's name and date daily. Make sure the teacher is aware of any allergies your child may have. Please ask about allergies in the classroom before bringing a special snack. We do not allow any nut products in the school.

Label items of clothing clearly. Many coats and backpacks are similar and young children often do not recognize their own clothing.

A monthly newsletter will be sent home to keep you informed. Please read these and note important dates and information. Teachers will inform you of their weekly lesson plans. Parents will be contacted by phone in the event of an emergency.

Two-year-olds who use diapers need to bring a bag of diapers to leave at school. Teachers will let you when they need more. All children need to bring in a box of wipes and a box of tissues. This is to help protect your children from the spread of germs.

We ask that you do not allow children to bring toys from home to school except special "lovies" needed at naptime.

The school tax ID number is 54-6041756.

ILLNESS

PLEASE DO NOT BRING SICK CHILDREN TO SCHOOL!

If your child is too ill to participate in the day's activities, you may not bring the child to school. When your child is ill, please call the school and let us know your child will not be coming and the nature of the illness so we can be alert to symptoms in classmates.

Our definition of sick is:

1. A severe cold accompanied by a runny nose, coughing, sneezing, etc.
2. Vomiting and/or diarrhea - keep your child home for 24 hours after the last episode of either of these.
3. Fever above 100 of unknown origin. Please do not give your child Tylenol and send him/her to school. After the medication wears off and the fever returns, we will have to call you to pick up your child.
4. A rash on the face, upper chest or torso.
5. Any COVID symptoms

HEALTH FORM

The Health Department REQUIRES that each child has a medical form on file at the Preschool which has been completed and signed by your physician. It includes information about their general health and their immunization record. This form is available in the Preschool Office and online at doe.virginia.gov.

EMERGENCY RELEASE

If your child needs emergency care, and a parent cannot be reached, this authorization allows us to get your child the help they need. This will avoid delays in the treatment of your child. These forms must be updated yearly. Please be sure to include your local contact's name, addresses and phone number.

FIELD TRIPS

St. Thomas ELC will ensure during the transportation of students that all Virginia statutes regarding safety belts and child restraints are followed. Parents will be notified of any planned trips. Specific information will be provided before any trip. Most field trips will require the parents to attend or arrange a ride for their child. The school does not provide transportation.

PARTIES AND CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays: If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday, please check with your child's teacher about your plans at least one week in advance. The use of candles and balloons is prohibited for safety reasons.

Note: All birthday treats must be nut-free and from this approved list: mini-cupcakes, munchkins/donut holes, mini-muffins, ice pops, prepackaged treats.

Food

1. Lunch: **We ask that you do not send lunches that need to be heated or refrigerated.** Please use packaging that your child can manage themselves. Label and date the lunch container each day.
2. Snack: Snacks are included in your monthly tuition. Snacks are provided at 10:15am and 3:15pm daily.
3. Water: We ask that all children bring their own water bottles.

Food Allergies

We are a nut-free facility, so please do not provide lunches that contain any nuts. If your child has an allergy to any foods, please be sure that it has been indicated in writing in your child's paperwork. This information should also be communicated to the classroom teacher AND the director. All allergies will be posted in the classroom. Depending on the allergy, additional requirements may be made.

TUITION AND FEES:

FEES:

Registration Fee: $95.00 (non-refundable)
Activity Fee: $125.00 (non-refundable)

MONTHLY TUITION:

Preschool (9-1) $850 (required for additional hours)
Before Care (7:30-9) $345
Rest Time (1-3) $365
Enrichment Class (3-5:30) $495
Full day tuition (7:30-5:30) is offered at a discounted rate of $1850

DISCOUNTS FOR FAMILIES WITH MORE THAN ONE CHILD ENROLLED:

Each Additional Registration $50.00
Multiples Tuition Discount 5%

The yearly school tuition is divided into 10 equal monthly payments, regardless of how many days are in the month, to cover the school year (Sept -June). The first payment is due after application is accepted. The remaining tuition should be paid by the first of each month and will be applied for the following month.

Tuition may be paid by check delivered to the school or electronically through the payment portal on the website. A late fee of $25.00 will be assessed for any payment received after the 5th of the month, unless previous arrangements are made. Your child will not be admitted to class if the tuition payments are not current. Tuition is non-refundable. A written notice of withdrawal 30 days in advance must be given to the school if you no longer wish to have your child enrolled at St. Thomas Early Learning Center.

ENROLLMENT

Once your child is accepted into the program, the following information must be submitted <u>before</u> your child enters:

- ❑ Registration Form
- ❑ Health Forms (Signed by a physician and showing that your child has had a physical examination and all required immunization.)
- ❑ Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment
- ❑ Field Trip Permission
- ❑ Proof of birth date
- ❑ Directory Information
- ❑ Release of Custody

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES

In the morning parents will be asked to ring the front bell and leave your child with the teacher at the door after a health assessment has been completed. At 1:00 and 3:00 pick up, the children will be waiting in the hallway for their rides. Come to the door to pick up your child. For other pick-up times, please ring the bell to alert the teachers you are there to pick up. Do not ring the bell between 1-3 as children are napping.

LATE CHARGES

The school policy is $2.00 for every minute a parent is late to pick up their child. Fines will be due at pickup and paid directly to the staff person who is staying with your child. If you are delayed, please call the school and let the teacher know. It is very upsetting to young children when they are not picked up on time. If parents cannot be reached within 15 minutes after school closes, the emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child. If arrangements for pick-up cannot be made within one hour after school closes, Child Protective Services will be contacted to pick up the child.

PICK UP CHANGES

If anyone other than the usual designated person is to pick up your child, PLEASE SEND A NOTE, EMAIL, OR PHONE THE SCHOOL OFFICE. Your child cannot be released to anyone other than the designated person, unless we are informed of the change.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

For the safety of all children, it is important for parents to remember some commonsense rules. Make sure the school always has current phone numbers and

emergency contacts. Take care when opening and closing doors to the classrooms as children may be playing nearby. Drive slowly into the parking lot and be sure to buckle up! Virginia law requires all children up to the age of 8 to be in car seats and we ask you to comply. Please let the teacher or director know if you have any complaints or concerns.

ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

If your child sustains a minor injury while at school, the staff will administer first aid and will notify the parent of the injury by note or phone call. The staff will complete an accident report detailing what happened, the child's reaction, any first aid given and who witnessed the accident. In an emergency 911 will be called and the child may be taken to a local hospital. It is school policy and the law that staff report suspected child abuse as required by Section 63.1-248.3 of the Code of Virginia.

MEDICATIONS

It is best if all medications are given at home, but if the need arises, we have staff trained in medication administration. You must have the appropriate form filled out, complete with physicians' instructions and signature. Sunscreen, diaper cream and insect repellent require a form completed by the guardian and accompanied by the product you wish to use. These products will be administered to children staying for the afternoon program only.

DISCIPLINE

We do not tolerate physical punishment of any children in our care. In addition, children will not be shamed, yelled at, restrained, isolated or have food withheld as punishment. We use techniques that are positive and immediate to the behavior including: encouragement and praise for good behavior, verbal warnings to stop the errant behavior, removal of a privilege such as a toy that is causing the problem, or time out from the situation (but not from the classroom). In extreme cases, the parent may be called to the school to remove the child for the rest of the day. Discipline will be handled by the appropriate staff member.

Care is taken to ensure that children are taught the behavior that is expected so they may enjoy social interaction with their friends and teachers.

<u>Severe Behavior Problems</u>

For a variety of reasons, some children develop severe behavior problems. We encourage parents to seek help for their children, but we cannot provide individual care on a constant basis for a child with persistent, severe behavior problems while at the same time providing adequate care to the other children in the classroom. If your child persists in hurting others, the director may have no alternative but to terminate enrollment for the safety of others.

TERMINATION

The school reserves the right to immediately, without prior notice, withdraw a child from the school on either a temporary or permanent basis if:

- The child's behavior endangers the physical or mental health of the other children.
- Tuition and/or other fees are late.
- The parents fail to abide by school policies and procedures.
- The child is repeatedly picked up late or left at school sick.
- The program is unable to meet the developmental or special needs of the child, as determined by the director.
- The child fails to adjust to the school, as determined by the director
- Proper health or other required forms are not provided on a timely basis.

EMERGENCIES

In case of emergency the teachers will have all student information and emergency supplies with them and will call the parents or emergency contacts. Please make sure the teachers always have current contact information. If we must evacuate the building, we will take the children across the street to Providence Baptist Church. The school regularly schedules emergency drills. Parents can contact 703-442-0330 for information during an emergency.