Family Handbook
The Early Learning & Research Center at the University of Memphis is a laboratory school that currently serves children ages 2 through kindergarten. We are licensed through the Tennessee Department of Education and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Address
3771 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, TN 38111

Office Phone
(901) 678-2120

ELRC STAFF

Director
Brooke Willis

Director of Operations
Mary Logan

Art & Engagement Coordinator
Jorden Miernik-Walker

Supervising Teachers
Carol Cordeau Young-Reggio Emilia-Inspired University Preschool
Anna Grace Weir-Reggio Emilia-Inspired University Preschool
Kate Gould- Reggio Emilia-Inspired University Preschool
Erin King-Reggio Emilia-Inspired University Preschool
Harmony Swenson-Reggio Emilia-Inspired University Kindergarten
Ligia Lavarreda-Montessori
Shay Hayslett- University Pre-K Teaching Assistant (supervising teacher TBD)
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS MISSION
The University of Memphis is a learner-centered metropolitan research university providing high quality educational experiences while pursuing new knowledge through research, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary and engaged scholarship.

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS VALUES
   Accountability
   Collaboration
   Diversity and Inclusion
   Innovation
   Service
   Student Success

UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS MISSIONS
The mission of University Schools is to provide the children of our community with educational experiences that enhance their development from birth to graduation and promote dynamic research, collaborative partnerships and innovative practices.

ELRC VISION STATEMENT
“It is our privilege to allow children to construct their own learning, in which play is the purest form of research.”

   -Brooke Willis, Director

MISSION STATEMENT
The Early Learning & Research Center is committed to nurturing individuals in our diverse community. We honor an inherent sense of wonder, curiosity, and excitement for early learning.

WHAT IS A LABORATORY SCHOOL?
The Early Learning & Research Center plays a valuable role in the teaching, research, and mission of the University Schools and the University of Memphis. We serve as a model program that demonstrates best practices in early childhood education across various classroom models.

Undergraduate and graduate students are regularly placed at the ELRC for practical experience related to their course of study. University of Memphis students are often assigned to observe children in conjunction with course assignments. All placements and observations are scheduled through course instructors and the director. Student observers are required to sign-in daily and follow strict observation and confidentiality guidelines.

Faculty and students conduct research on topics in early childhood development, education, and other related areas. Research projects may include a variety of methods including observation or direct participation. All research conducted at the ELRC is monitored and approved by the University School Research Consortium and the director. As an ELRC family, you can expect to receive periodic information about research projects and consent for your child to participate.
OUR PROGRAMS

Montessori Pre-Primary Classroom-Ages Three Through Kindergarten
Our teaching practices and many of our extraordinary materials were developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, physician and educator, and one of the most highly original thinkers of the twentieth century. Her philosophy of education, and our demonstration of it, emphasize respect for young children, independence of spirit, freedom of choice, community feeling, beauty and order in the environment, and the joy of learning. Maria Montessori was one of the first educators to assert that children learn experientially, through movement and sense perception; accordingly, our curriculum depends on children's independent, "hands-on" exploration of the classroom areas: Practical Life, Art, Sensorial, Math, Language and Geography & Culture, which includes Science. Children ages three to six are grouped together to suit the specific needs of their stage of development. Children are admitted at age three and it is be considered a three-year-long program.

Reggio Emilia Inspired University Preschool/Kindergarten
The Reggio Emilia inspired collaboration includes all preschool classes and Kindergarten. Developed for use in the preschool and kindergarten classrooms, the method focuses on the idea of a self-guided curriculum, where the students guide the curriculum through exploration and projects to tailor learning to their interests. The curriculum emerges based on children's observation and experiences of their world. The teacher guides the children's interests into a project where outcomes are determined by the children. Many learning abilities can be satisfied by the collaboration process. The product becomes part of the process rather than the ending of a project. This upholds the mission of our laboratory early childhood school for the University of Memphis.

University Pre-K
The Early Learning & Research Center at the University of Memphis, is a proud community partner site for Shelby County Schools Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program. Our Pre-K program is one of the first and most important steps families can take to ensure students are prepared for success in Kindergarten and beyond. Every year, Pre-K students score higher in Kindergarten than many of their peers who did not take an early childhood program. Pre-K students also routinely outperform Shelby County district goals for foundational skills, language and more. Pre-K space is limited, and students must turn 4 by August 15 to be eligible. The application process is fully overseen by Shelby County Schools. To apply, please visit http://www.scsk12.org/prek.
ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT

Application to the Early Learning & Research Center is open to children from birth to age six. Application does not guarantee admission, as limited space is available in each classroom. Prospective families are required to submit an application and a $55.00 application fee for each child they wish to be considered for admission. On the application, parents may indicate if they wish for their child to be admitted to either the Reggio Emilia-Inspired track or the Montessori track. If your child is placed on a waiting list until a position is available, it is the responsibility of the family to make sure that all contact information is up to date during this period.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS:

1. Complete an Application for Enrollment and pay the $55 application fee online.
2. A tour of the school may be arranged by calling (901) 678-2120.
3. When space is available, the family will be contacted and offered a position.
4. An enrollment link will be sent in order for the family to pay the enrollment deposit.
5. Once the enrollment deposit is paid, the child’s enrollment is confirmed.

For a child to be admitted to a classroom serving children age three or older, toilet training must be complete. A child is considered toilet trained when he/she can communicate the need to go to the toilet, can manage clothing independent, and can tend to hygiene needs. Occasional accidents are understandable. However, if repeated toileting difficulties continue to occur, parents will be advised of possible deferred admission of the child until toilet training is successful.

Special case admissions will be taken under advisement by the director, the supervising teachers, the parents requesting the admission, and any official requesting special admission. Placement will be provided based upon a review by, and a consensus recommendation of, these persons.

Continued enrollment and annual contract extension is contingent upon adherence to school policies and university values by both parents and children and successful integration into the classroom environment. Ongoing assessment for the child is conducted by the supervising teacher. If the Supervising Teacher makes a recommendation for additional assessment by another qualified professional in a specific area of concern, parents are expected to follow through with the recommendation within 30 days. After said assessment, a parent-teacher conference will be held to review the results. Conditions for continued enrollment status will be taken under advisement at that time.

By February of each year, placements for the following school year will be offered to currently enrolled students, as available, and to siblings of currently enrolled students who have waiting list applications on file. (Siblings are considered to be: natural siblings, step-siblings, half-siblings, or other children for whom the parent/guardian of the currently enrolled student has primary financial/custodial responsibility).

Once a child is enrolled in either the Reggio Emilia or the Montessori track, the policy of Lipman School is to make no transfers of students from one track to another, or between classrooms within the Reggio Emilia track. Special case transfer requests will be entertained under the same conditions as special case admissions.
TUITION

Tuition for the Early Learning & Research Center is charged monthly for the ten-month academic calendar beginning in August and ending in May and may be paid online. All balances must be kept current. Should an account become thirty days past due, it is the policy of the ELRC to withdraw the child(ren) from the center. Families with outstanding tuition balances at the end of the school year may not carry that balance forward. All balances must be paid by May 31st of each school year. Furthermore, enrollment for the next school year cannot be processed as long as there is an outstanding balance.

Current tuition rates are as follows:

- 2-Year-Old Reggio-Inspired Classroom: $1100/Month
- 2/3-Year-Old Reggio-Inspired Classroom: $945/Month
- 3/4-Year-Old Reggio-Inspired Classroom: $945/Month
- 4-Year-Old Reggio-Inspired Classroom: $945/Month
- Kindergarten: $1000/Month
- Montessori: $1000/Month

ASSESSMENT

Children enrolled in the Early Learning & Research Center are assessed using the Brigance Developmental Inventory at the beginning and end of each academic year. At the beginning of each academic year, each child’s speech/language skills will be screened in order to determine individual needs.

Additional anecdotal notes and portfolios are utilized by each classroom teacher to document each child’s individual achievements and progress.

Parent/teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring. Additional conferences can be requested by the parent or teacher at any time. Should a child exhibit learning difficulties or behaviors that interfere with his/her classroom acclimation, we will immediately engage parents/guardians in conversations about intervention possibilities.
ATTENDANCE/ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Arrival, attendance, and departure policies reflect the importance of the whole school experience to our children. The ELRC staff takes our thoughtfully planned curricula and schedules very seriously. We believe that each child deserves to experience his or her whole school day, and we regard each child as essential to the class community. We therefore expect children to arrive at the beginning and to remain for the closing of each school day, barring ill health or other reasons for excused absence. Late arrivals interrupt the class proceedings for the other children and disorient the child who is late. Early departures, especially without prior notice, also interrupt the flow of the day for all the children, and often cause confusion for the child who misses activities. Compelling reasons for absence, such as family emergencies, illness, doctor or dentist appointments, other professional examinations or therapies, etc., should be discussed with the child’s Supervising Teacher, as far in advance as possible.

ELRC classrooms open their doors at 8:00 a.m. Students who arrive before 8:00 must remain under the supervision of a parent or other adult caretaker. ELRC staff will not take responsibility for students until classroom doors open at 8:00 a.m. The parent or other adult caretaker must initial and fill in the sign-in/out sheet with time of arrival each day of attendance, as required by the TN Department of Education.

Arrival time is from 8:00-8:30 each day. Children arriving to their classrooms after 8:30 a.m. are considered tardy. Tardiness is disruptive to the children who have already begun their day, and it makes transition to the classroom difficult for the child who is arriving late.

ELRC will adhere to the following policy for tardy arrival/late admission:
- Classroom doors open at 8:00 a.m. We encourage families to be ready for children to enter the classroom promptly at 8:00.
- Children who arrive after 8:30 must be checked in at the office by the adult bringing them to school before they can be admitted to the classroom. The adult accompanying the child will receive a late arrival slip from the office to be given to the child’s Supervising Teacher.
- One late arrival slip will result in a verbal reminder of policy from the Supervising Teacher.
- A second late arrival slip will result in a written reminder of policy from the Director.
- A third late arrival slip will require a mandatory meeting of the child’s parent(s), the Supervising Teacher and the Director to discuss tardiness and to formulate a solution.

Children in Kindergarten must adhere to DOE regulations, for which and absences and tardiness are reported. According to these regulations, three tardies constitute one absence. Excessive absenteeism will prevent promotion to the 1st Grade.

Children will transition from their regular school day into daily enrichment activities from 3:00-5:30 each day. Each child’s enrichment experiences will be unique based on your choices but may include music, art, athletics, and/or foreign language programs.

The school day ends at 5:30 p.m. A parent or other pre-authorized adult must initial and fill in the departure time on the sign-in/out sheet, as per DOE regulations. Siblings are not allowed to sign out ELRC students except in cases where siblings are qualified as pre-authorized adult. Once a child has been signed out for the day, the adult assumes physical responsibility for the child. If you and your child remain at school for any reason after sign-out, please make sure that your child is under your direct supervision.
Children are not dismissed early from school, except for compelling reasons, such as doctor or dentist appointments, other examinations or therapies, etc. The school requests notification of such early dismissals, as far in advance as possible.

Parents who pick up their children late are assessed a late pick-up fee of $1.00 for each minute after 5:30. The enrichment coordinator will give parents a copy of their late pick-up fee notification upon their arrival. These fees must be paid before children can return to school the following day.

Children will not be released to persons under the age of 16. Children shall be signed in and out of the program by the legal guardian or persons authorized on the list to pick up the child. Children shall only be released to a designated person in accordance with the child release plan. The program shall verify the identity of the authorized person by requiring presentation of a photo identification. Children should not be released to anyone whose behavior, as deemed by a reasonable person, may place him/her in imminent risk. Immediately call 911, the local law enforcement agency or other emergency services number prior to the release of children. If the person, displaying risky behavior, is not the parent, the program shall not release the child and the parent shall be called immediately.
CELL PHONE USE

During drop off and pick up times, please do not use your cell phone as a courtesy to our staff and your child. Important information about your child’s school day may be exchanged during this time.

Safety of our children is our primary concern. As a result, ELRC asks that you please refrain from using cell phones while operating a vehicle in our parking lot.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

The Early Learning & Research Center has established developmentally appropriate social-emotional and behavior management practices. Our discipline and intervention procedures are focused on prevention and guidance toward developing healthy self-regulation and social-emotional skills. Many disruptive behaviors are prevented through careful environmental design, developmentally appropriate behavioral expectations, positive reinforcement, and established classroom routines. Mindfulness techniques are used to guide children through difficult situations by increasing self-awareness and modeling the language necessary for self-directed conflict resolution.

BEHAVIOR POLICY

Should a student’s behavior become consistently disruptive to the classroom – the following procedures may be implemented:

1. A pattern of disruptive behavior is established through documentation of the behavior by the supervising teacher. The parent will be required to meet with the supervising teacher and the director in order to determine a plan for behavioral intervention.
2. If the disruptive behavior persists or escalates regardless of behavioral interventions, the child may be removed from the Early Learning & Research Center at the director’s discretion.

Should a student’s behavior become violent or physically harmful to self, peers, or adults the following procedure will be implemented:

1. The child will be removed from the classroom and a call will be made to the parent. Should a child become inconsolable or continue to display adverse behavior after reasonable accommodations are made to deescalate the situation, he/she will be released to the parent for the remainder of the school day. Documentation of the child’s behavior and removal from the classroom will be placed in the child’s file.
2. The parent will be required to meet with the supervising teacher and the director in order to determine a plan for behavioral intervention before the child may return to school.
3. If the disruptive behavior persists or escalates regardless of behavioral interventions, the child may be removed from the Early Learning & Research Center at the director’s discretion.
4. Three or more documented incidences of aggressive or extremely disruptive behavior may result in immediate removal from the Early Learning & Research Center.
INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES

The Early Learning & Research Center is a tuition-funded laboratory school that complies with the policies and procedures of the University of Memphis University Schools, the Tennessee Department of Education, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Within this context we work with parents of students with emerging or diagnosed special needs to provide the least restrictive environment, to the extent that our staff and other resources allow.

Inclusion provides both children with special needs and typically developing children with an opportunity to learn that every child has unique needs and capabilities. During early childhood development, emerging symptoms of developmental concerns may not yet be formally identified. We may exercise the right to request that parents seek appropriate evaluation and/or accept recommendations for professional educational medical interventions.

Once conditions and/or behaviors emerge, these are the steps for intervention:

1. The child’s Supervising Teacher will document emerging concerns.
2. The child’s Supervising Teacher will present formal observations to the Director. This team will make further observations and will make recommendations for further interventions.
3. The child’s Supervising Teacher will meet with the parent(s) and director to present these observations and recommend strategies for intervention.
4. Immediately upon agreement about strategies, parents should actively pursue recommended interventions, which may include professional evaluations.
5. If the intervention process reveals that further assessment is necessary, or that the services of other professionals are required for the child’s optimal learning experience, we expect parents to follow through with those recommendations immediately. Should parents choose not to follow through, the Director will outline the circumstances of continued enrollment at Lipman School.

The Early Learning & Research Center requests access to information regarding medical/developmental history and/or educational records which may include formal evaluations. Should our environment prove not to be the best educational setting for a child, we will recommend alternative placement.
EMERGENCY CONTACTS

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to keep the Early Learning & Research Center informed of any changes in phone numbers or addresses. Without this accurate information we will not be able to reach parents in the event of an emergency.

ELRC EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The Lipman School participates in the emergency warning system of the University of Memphis. This will inform us of approaching or imminent danger. We follow these procedures:

IN CASE OF A TORNADO:

1. Move children as quickly as possible into the hallways.
2. They should lie as close to the ground as possible.
3. They should cover their heads with either their hands or naptime cover.
4. Wait for an all clear from either the director or Campus Police & Safety.

IN CASE OF A FIRE:

- Automatic fire alarms will sound or fire is apparent.
- Supervising teachers and other adult staff will move the children out of the building to safety as practiced in monthly fire alarm drills.
- Wait for the all clear from either the director or Campus Police & Safety.

IN CASE OF AN EARTHQUAKE:

IF YOU ARE INSIDE THE SCHOOL –
- Supervising teachers and other adult staff assist the children to get under heavy furniture such as a table closest to an inside wall.
- If time allows, move children and staff into the hallway. Children should get into their cubbies. Adults should duck and cover their heads and bodies if at all possible.

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL –
- Move into the open, away from buildings, street lights and utility wires. Stay in the open until the shaking stops.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION:

Our escape route is to go out onto the sidewalk that connects both buildings to the Central parking lot. Our destination is the Holiday Inn Hotel where we will await further instruction from Campus Police and Safety.

The ELRC staff will contact families to alert them of the emergency situation and where to retrieve their child(ren).
In order to reduce the confusion about when Lipman School will close due to inclement weather the following updates have been implemented:

- The Early Learning & Research Center closes when either/both the University of Memphis or Shelby County Schools close.
- If the University of Memphis has a delayed opening, so will the ELRC
- If either/both Shelby County Schools or the University of Memphis close early, we will also. We will also attempt to call you in this event. It is your responsibility to make certain the office has all current phone numbers for you, including emergency numbers and cell phones.
- The University’s closing information is available on the University of Memphis web site. Please sign up for LIVESAFE, if you have this capability.
- Both the University and Shelby County Schools information is posted on local channels’ television news broadcast, usually by 5:00 a.m.
HEALTH

Records:

A complete Tennessee Immunization and Health Form must be submitted before entrance in the school. Immunization records must be updated each Spring. These records are reviewed annually by the Department of Education/Health Department inspectors. Children will not be admitted to school without complete health records.

Medications/ Treatments:

The Early Learning & Research Center will administer medications in compliance with the following guidelines:

- Over-the-counter medications must be labeled with the child’s name and be accompanied by a physician’s letter including instructions for administration including times and dosage
- Prescription medications must be in the original container (not out of date) with written instructions for administration including times and dosage
- A fully completed and signed medication/treatment form is on file

Other treatments for chronic health conditions (such as breathing treatments) may be given by ELRC staff persons, provided that:

- They are treatments prescribed by a M.D., P.T., O.T., or other health care professional and written instructions for administration.
- Training in the administration of the treatment is provided to the appropriate ELRC staff persons by the health care professional.
- They are treatments which must be given during school hours.
- A fully completed and signed medication/treatment form is on file.
ILLNESS

In order to maintain the health of all children, children must be kept out of school when they are ill. Do not medicate your child and send them to school if a child is presenting any of the listed symptoms. A list of symptoms of illness are attached. If your child exhibits any of these symptoms upon arrival, you will be asked to take him/her home. If any of these symptoms develops while your child is at school, we will remove your child from the class and notify you immediately to pick him or her up.

Certain symptoms in children may suggest the presence of a communicable disease. Children who have the following symptoms should be excluded from the school setting until: 1) a physician has certified the symptoms and are not associated with an infectious agent, or they are no longer a threat to the health of other children at the school, or 2) the symptoms have subsided for a period of 24 hours.

FEVER: Auxiliary or oral temperature of 100 F. or higher, or rectal temperature 101 F. or higher, especially if accompanied by other symptoms, such as vomiting, sore throat, diarrhea, headache and stiff neck, or undiagnosed rash.

RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS: Difficult or rapid breathing or severe coughing (child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds after he coughs; child unable to lie down comfortably due to continuous cough).

DIARRHEA: An increased number of abnormally loose stools in the previous 24 hours. (Observe the child for other symptoms, such as fever, abdominal pain, or vomiting.)

VOMITING: Any episode of vomiting within the previous 24 hours.

EYE/NOSE DRAINAGE: Thick mucus or pus drainage from the eye or nose.

SORE THROAT: Sore throat, especially when fever or swollen glands in the neck are present.

SKIN PROBLEMS: Rash—skin rashes, undiagnosed or contagious.

INFECTED SORES—sores with crusty, yellow, or green drainage.

ITCHING: Persistent itching (or scratching) of body or scalp.

APPEARANCE/ BEHAVIOR: Child looks or acts differently: unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite, confused, irritable, difficult to awaken.

A child presenting any of these symptoms will be sent home until symptom free for 24 hours. Parents are responsible for making certain we have accurate and up to date information on how to reach them. When a parent is called to pick up a child, the decision to do so has been made by classroom staff and the director. It is expected that the parent or guardian will retrieve the child within the hour of the call.

If your child is ill, please notify the school office. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness we expect to be notified so that we can alert other families.

By State law all children must have outdoor play each day. We cannot accommodate special request for children to remain indoors.
MEALS

The Early Learning & Research Center is not equipped to serve hot lunches per Tennessee Department of Education Guidelines. Lunches will be brought from home each day. Lunches may be sent in warm/cold containers, but we are unable to warm lunches at school. The ELRC will provide a morning and afternoon snack each day. Breakfast will not be served.

TOYS

The materials in the Lipman classrooms are beautiful, appealing, and ingeniously designed for successful learning experiences. Every child can always find an array of appropriate items from which to choose. Personal toys, in this environment, prove to be an unnecessary distraction to both the toy’s owner and the other children. Please do not bring toys from home inside the school building. The only exception is one small soft toy for rest time, if needed. The ELRC is not responsible for any toys or items brought from home.

PARENT CONFERENCES

The Early Learning & Research Center schedules mandatory Parent/Teacher conference times in the Fall and Spring each year. We ask that if parents or guardians need to discuss a concern about their child, they should request an appointment, as it is difficult to discuss such matters at drop off or pick up times. This allows our staff members to give their full attention to parent concerns. The Lipman staff will not discuss any one child in front of others.

VISITORS

All visitors and volunteers must be registered per University of Memphis policy. You may request the mandatory Visitor Registration Form from the front office or director. All visitors must sign in at the front office and picture identification may be requested to gain entry.

SECURITY

The Early Learning & Research Center, as part of The University of Memphis, is served by Campus Security and abides by the safety and security policies of the University. In the event of an emergency situation, Campus Security will be notified immediately and proper emergency measures taken. Our doors will remain locked from the outside at all times and access cards are issued to each parent in order to gain entry to the school.

In accordance with Department of Education regulations, the school practices monthly fire drills as well as severe weather drills.
ABUSE & NEGLIGENCE

All employees and volunteers of the Early Learning & Research Center are mandated by state law to report cases of known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

TRANSPORTATION

Parents provide their children’s transportation to and from school. The school does not arrange car pools. Parking is in designated spaces only. Campus Police have advised that parking in non-designated places (i.e. the end of the sidewalk and double parking) is unlawful and interferes with life-saving emergency vehicles’ ability to access the school.

FIELD TRIPS

Our classes often go out into the community and onto the University of Memphis campus to extend our learning. These trips are part of our curriculum, so we would expect that all children would attend. Written permission is required for all field trips. Transportation for field trips will vary based upon the nature of the field trip and parents will be notified of transportation options prior to each field trip.

ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS

Incidents, accidents and injuries shall be reported to the parent as soon as possible, but no later than the child’s release to the parent or authorized representative. A phone call will be made to the parent regarding any injury that occurs above the shoulders. Incidents, accidents and injuries to children shall be documented immediately including the date and time of occurrence, description of circumstances, and action(s) taken by the program. A copy of the accident report will be sent home to the parent on the day of the accident and a copy will be placed in the child’s file.