

# PARENT HANDBOOK 2019-20

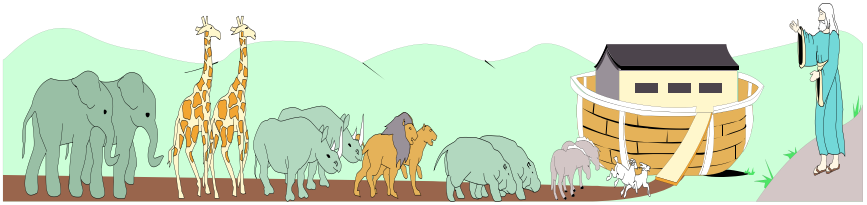


*The Ark  
Children's  
Center*

at  
Oakdale Church  
3425 Emory Church Road  
Olney, Maryland 20832  
(301) 774-5369  
[www.oakdale.church/ark](http://www.oakdale.church/ark)

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***The Ark Children's Center is a Christian education program which celebrates children—building foundations in social development, spiritual growth, and academic readiness in a nurturing, caring, and safe school environment.***

## **HISTORY**

Oakdale Church has been the site for many quality education programs for the last thirty years. It housed YWCA programs (1968-1992) and a preschool program under independent and secular leadership, known as The Children's Center for Discovery (1995-1997).

In February of 1997, Oakdale's Administrative Board voted to form and implement its own Christian preschool known as The Ark Children's Center. This ministry outreach program serves children ages 2 years through 4 years in programming offered weekdays, Monday through Friday. The school program is managed by an on-site director and is governed by a Board of Directors, who are all Oakdale Church members.

2018-19 School Year

## LICENSURE

The Ark Children's Center is a non-profit organization licensed by the State of Maryland (MSDE) for operation of a non-public nursery program. We hold additional licensure through the Child Care Administration for operation of our **Extended Care** Program. We comply with all regulations set forth by both licensing entities.

## PHILOSOPHY

We believe that every student is an individual who has been created by God and has been blessed with special gifts. Our Christian preschool celebrates children in a caring, safe, and nurturing environment. Our program promotes play, self-discovery, problem solving, social and emotional growth, developmentally appropriate learning, sensory experiences, and pre-academic readiness. Our Christian focus encourages children to learn about God, practice daily prayer, and treat others with respect. By modeling Christian attitudes and encouraging moral development, we believe our students can make profound differences in our community and in the world!

Our preschool environment encourages social awareness and provides many opportunities for children to serve others. Throughout the school year, children will be encouraged to use their "hearts and hands" to serve others in our local and world communities.

## ADMISSION POLICY

The Ark Children's Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. When choosing The Ark Children's Center, it is understood that Christian values will be taught within the classroom.

## WE PARTICIPATE ...

Participation in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Non-Public Textbook Program provides our families a cost savings for the preschool program which offsets, maintains, and allows affordable tuition fees for the geographical location of Montgomery County.



## HOURS OF OPERATION

The Ark Children's Center operates part-time Christian preschool offerings from September through May. Class size ranges from 10-14 students per class, with a lead teacher and assistant teacher.

### CLASS OFFERINGS

#### 2s Programming

(Children must be 2 by September 1 of enrolling year)

**Monday, Wednesday & Friday**

**9:00 a.m.—12 noon**

**Tuesday, Thursday**

**9:00 a.m.—12 noon**

#### 3s Programming

(Children must be 3 by September 1 of enrolling year)

**Tuesday, Thursday ~ 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

**\*Monday, Wednesday, Friday ~ 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

#### 4s Programming

(Children must be 4 by September 1 of enrolling year)

**\*Monday, Wednesday, Friday ~ 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

**\*Monday through Friday ~ 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

**\* Children must be potty trained.**



**Parents enrolling children at The Ark Children's Center agree to follow the policies and procedures unique to the preschool. Parents will be responsible for reading, understanding, and compliance to these policies as communicated in this yearly Parent Handbook.**

## STAFF

Staffing is a key element to successful programming. Our staff members believe in Christian education and practice Christian principles each day in their actions and words. They are committed to providing the best learning experiences for healthy physical, social, emotional and spiritual growth, and development in young children.

Staff credentials are in compliance with education requirements established by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). All staff participate in Continuing Education classes annually and have fingerprint clearances issued from the State of Maryland and Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Our staff members participate in CPR and First Aid training annually.



## REGISTRATION

Registration for preschool classes occurs in late January for the following school year. Community members may call the office at any time to be put on the mailing list to receive registration materials for the upcoming school year. All currently registered students will receive registration information and be eligible to participate in early registration. Priority registration is given in this order:

- Current In-House students and siblings
- Oakdale Church Members and ARK Alumni
- Community Members

Following the registration process, students will be accepted as space permits until all classes are filled. Once classes have been filled, we will start a waiting list for students who wish to be considered for placement.

Health forms will be given to parents upon confirmation of preschool placement in late January. These health forms (Health Inventory and Immunization Certificate) should be completed by the physician and returned to the preschool before May 1<sup>st</sup> of the enrollment year. Please don't delay completion of these medical forms, as they are required before children can attend our program. (Forms are available on our website—[www.oakdale.church/ark](http://www.oakdale.church/ark))

## FEES & FINANCIAL AGREEMENT

At time of registration, parents are responsible for the following financial commitment to enroll their child into our preschool program:

- **Application Fee**—NON-REFUNDABLE at any time.
- **Materials Fee**—NON-REFUNDABLE after August 1<sup>st</sup> of the enrolling school year.
- **Tuition**—Our yearly tuition is divided into ten installments for our nine month school year. The first payment is collected with registration, followed by nine monthly payments (September through May).

**Tuition is due before the tenth day of the month.** Tuition payments may be paid monthly, bi-yearly, or on a yearly schedule. Payments may be mailed to the school or may be dropped in the tuition box located outside The Ark Office. All check payments should include the child's name and class information in the memo section of the check.

Late charges will be assessed for any tuition payments received after the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month (a \$5.00 late fee). Thereafter, a \$10.00 fee will be incurred on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> days of the month if payment has not been received. Returned checks will be charged a \$25.00 processing fee. Past due tuition and other fees are subject to collection interest at 1.0% per month. Associated court costs, and attorney's fees will also be assessed.

A booklet of monthly payment reminder “coupons” (to attach with your payment) will be provided for each family selecting the monthly payment option. Please refer to our Hours & Tuition Fee Schedule for fees and school tuition rates.

When enrolling children at The Ark Children's Center, parents acknowledge that they have registered their child for our preschool program and will meet all financial obligations in a timely manner. Inability to honor and/or refusal to comply with the following financial commitments can result in your child's immediate dismissal from our preschool program when:

- repeated attempts to collect an overdue account are unsuccessful.
- tuition falls two months delinquent.
- an account becomes overdue for more than two occurrences in a school year.
- numerous efforts to collect delinquent tuition are unresolved by established deadline dates.

Families with three or more children enrolled at The Ark are eligible for a 20% discount of the oldest child's tuition expense.

The Ark Children's Center has a tuition assistance program for a limited number of qualified students. Applications are reviewed by the committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month. To receive further information and an application, please contact the director.

# WITHDRAWALS

Requests for withdrawals from our preschool program must be submitted in writing. Please include in your letter, the date of correspondence, the date of withdrawal request, your child's name, reason for withdrawal, and the class for which your child was enrolled. All letters should be addressed to the director and mailed to the school.

Written withdrawals post-marked before August 1<sup>st</sup> of the enrollment year will be considered for refund of the Materials Fee and the first Tuition payment. Withdrawals made after August 1<sup>st</sup> of the enrollment year are not eligible for refund.

- Withdrawal requests made during the school year require 30 days notice, in writing. Withdrawals that occur without the 30-day notification will be subject to the current month's tuition payment and an additional monthly payment.

## SUMMER MAILINGS & STUDENT FORMS

All families who have confirmed enrollment for their child will receive an information packet mailed in July of their enrollment year. This packet will contain information regarding the upcoming school year, including the school calendar, emergency card information, update on student health records, and important information about what is needed for the school year ahead.

Our school office is closed from mid-June through mid-August. Registration forms are available at [www.oakdale.church/ark](http://www.oakdale.church/ark). **Please return all student forms via U.S. Mail to the school before September classes begin.**

**Please note: All student records must be complete before your child can attend school. No exceptions!**





# COMMUNICATION

**Please advise our office of your current mailing address, telephone, and e-mail address information throughout the entire year.**

Effective communication is a two-way process. Communication breakdowns occur when information isn't provided, or isn't read! We communicate school news and class happenings regularly with parents. It is important that you read notices and clear out backpacks each day.

Our staff is committed to sharing information and answering questions about your child. It is difficult to have extended conversations at drop-off and pick-up times, so please feel free to send a note requesting our staff to call you at a convenient time. If you hear about something that happened at school that is of concern, please call us so we can look into the situation and clarify the details. We look forward to a partnership with parents.

**Outside each classroom is a bulletin board where teachers will update you on the day's happenings.** This is a great way to start conversation about the school day and ask questions about class events. Don't be content with general statements like, "I had a good day"... instead, encourage your child to tell you more! We do many things at school and play with a variety of materials, so don't be shy about asking questions about an art project, graphing activity, sensory play, or free play time!

**Class News** is available on Shutterfly share sites. It will highlight themes for the month, dates to remember, things happening in the near future (upcoming month), and give highlights of things happening in the classroom. Information is constantly being posted for parents to appreciate the many ways children learn, and post pictures of dynamic learning opportunities at The Ark Children's Center.

**Important Weekly Updates** are e-mailed to parents mid-week and reminders are posted near the Welcome Desk in the main entrance hall of the church. These messages will remind you of events, deadlines, and special announcements for the upcoming week.

## CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Our staff has been trained to identify physical and behavioral indicators of neglect and child abuse. In Maryland, the child abuse and neglect law requires that all persons report suspected abuse or neglect directly to Montgomery County Child Protective Services. **Never leave children unattended in parked vehicles in our parking lots. Please familiarize yourself with Family Law 5-801 which states:**

A person who is charged with the care of a child under the age of 8 years may not allow the child to be locked or confined in a dwelling, building, enclosure, or motor vehicle while the person charged is absent and the dwelling, building, enclosure, or motor vehicle is out of sight of the person charged unless the person charged provides a reliable person at least 13 years old to remain with the child to protect the child.

Parents are welcome to review our Child Abuse and Neglect Policies by contacting the Director.

# CURRICULUM

Serving children from age 2 years to 4 years requires dynamic programming with rich curriculum offerings. Our program is designed to meet the many needs of the “whole child” across 9 domain areas; physical, language, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, science & technology, social studies, and social-emotional development. We strive to nurture social, emotional, physical, moral, and cognitive growth in all of our students. We employ many different teaching strategies to encourage children to be successful in their learning process. The Ark Children’s Center offers a variety of creative school experiences and learning opportunities including:

Arts & Crafts	Creative Movement
Sensory Play	Circle Time
Cooking	Learning Centers
Music	Science Exploration
Chapel Time	Sharing Time
Bible Discovery & Song	Dramatics & Play
Gross Motor Play	Math Readiness
Concept Development	Cultural Arts Assemblies
Library Time	
Fine Motor/Manipulative Experiences	



## More about our school programs....

**Our 2s programs** offered MWF or T, TH, provide opportunities for play, exploration, active discovery, and social interaction within a small group setting. Classes meet twice a week for three hours with a smaller class size to make their first school experience a success!

**Our 3s programs** are offered T, TH and MWF for four hours in length. The 3’s program offers rich classroom experiences (see activities listed above), weekly Chapel and Music instruction, a focus on social and emotional skills, and an emphasis on sensory experiences, developmental play experiences and concept development/pre-academic readiness skills. Children are not required to be potty-trained for the T, TH class option, but must be independent in toileting skills to participate in the MWF option.

**Our 4s program** offers 3 day and 5 day sessions that are four hours in length. All children must be potty trained. These classes are designed to nurture social, emotional, and spiritual growth, communication skills, independence, decision-making skills, and to develop readiness skills necessary for success in Kindergarten. Weekly Chapel and Music instruction are offered. Our curriculum is the same for both the three and five day sessions, with additional extension opportunities offered in the 5 day program. Children must be independent in toileting skills to participate in all 4’s classes.

## **MEDIA AND SCREEN TIME POLICY**

Children enrolled at The Ark Children’s Center are limited to media time of no more than thirty minutes a week for the purpose of educational or physical activity use only. Media times should correlate with the current month’s curriculum themes or relate to a physical activity (Let’s Move activities, yoga, dance, and movement). All media must be reviewed, evaluated, and approved by the Director. No media shall be allowed during lunch time. Computer/iPad viewing use should be limited to no more than fifteen minute increments. Screen media shall be free of advertising and brand placement.

## **DISCIPLINE**

We believe in Positive Discipline! By employing many different discipline strategies, such as redirection, modeling, guided choices, and positive reinforcement, children can work cooperatively and have positive outcomes. When difficulty arises between preschoolers, our staff encourages the children to use words to talk about actions and feelings. Teachers intervene in a child’s play when it is not headed in a positive direction. Children who are in danger of hurting themselves or other classmates are taken to the office for “cooling time”. The director will address the problem, talk about different choices the child might have used, write a letter home, and (when appropriate) return the child to the classroom. The child will return to their classroom when: a) he or she regains self control, b) verbalizes how their hands, feet, or words hurt others, c) verbalizes that he/she is ready to return to the classroom and “re-do” situations for a more positive outcome.

We believe in communicating child successes and challenges with parents. We believe that children are more successful in mastering challenges when there is **good communication** and a commitment toward **teamwork** between home and school.

Behavior contracts are always discussed between the director, parents, and teachers before implementation. Contracts are used to highlight positive choices and behaviors, and to communicate areas of needs, in an effort to improve behavior and classroom interactions with peers.

We strive to meet the needs of our individual students at The Ark Children’s Center. On the rare occasion when we are still unable to adequately meet the needs of a student (after numerous conferences with parents, action plans, interventions, and adjustments to programming), the director will suggest withdrawal from The Ark Children’s Center. The director will help to find alternative programming placement that might better serve the child’s specific needs.

## ABSENCES, SICK POLICY, INJURY AT SCHOOL

Please call the school (301-774-5369) if your child will be absent. Provide your child's name, room number, and nature of the absence to the person answering the phone or leave a voicemail message so we can inform the teacher. If your child has visited the physician and is diagnosed with anything communicable or contagious in nature (i.e., chicken pox, strep throat, conjunctivitis, lice, pinworms, etc.), please notify the office so we can send home a fact sheet about the health situation.

**Please keep sick children at home! Children must be fever-free (without use of fever-reducing medications or on prescription medications for 24 hours before returning to school.** Other situations that might indicate and/or necessitate a day at home even though the child is fever-free:

- Thick and Colored discharge from the nose
- Diarrhea and loose bowel movements
- Child is fever-free, but vomited during the night or woke up saying, "I don't feel well."
- Child complains about a headache and/or ear ache

We depend on parents to be considerate of the health of our school staff and family. Please use good judgment when making decisions about your child's return to school. Please be sure to practice thorough hand washing and healthy sneezing and coughing (into sleeves, not hands!)

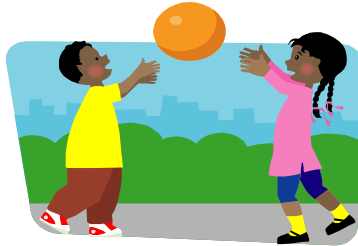
Any injury happening at school will be reported to the parents on an OUCH~INCIDENT REPORT. While the injury may be minor, this report will document what happened, where the injury occurred, and the First Aid steps taken at school. This report is sent home as a precautionary measure just in case there are symptoms later in the day.

On the emergency card parents are requested to fill in three names for emergency contacts. Please be sure to provide available and dependable second and third names, and people who have means of transportation in the event of illness or injury. In case of a head injury or a child who loses consciousness, we will call 911, and then contact the parents.



## CONCERNS, ALLERGIES, MEDICATIONS

Any parent(s) who would like to discuss their child's special medication needs, allergies, and/or custody concerns should call the office and schedule an appointment with the director. We are eager to work as a team to develop a plan and make your experience and your child's transition into preschool as smooth as possible. Please call before the school year begins or schedule an appointment with the director to discuss concerns!



## GATHERINGS, SPECIAL TRIPS, CULTURAL ARTS

Throughout the school year we offer times when parents are invited into the building for special gatherings. These times are planned so parents can meet other school parents and to build a better sense of “community” within our school family. The children really look forward to parent participation on these special gathering events so please mark your calendars to attend!

The special gathering dates are printed on the school calendar and indicated with an (\*).

We offer special off-site trips each school year. During these trip experiences parents are responsible for transporting children to/from these trip locations and supervising children during the scheduled trip. Information about these trips will be sent home in backpack mail approximately two weeks before the trip. These trips will also be highlighted monthly on the class share sites. Off-site trips usually have additional costs that are not included in school tuition.

Cultural Arts Assemblies are arranged throughout the school year. Some of our recent visitors have been: Mad Science of Washington, Reptile Wonders, Author & Illustrator Visit, The Baltimore Zoo, The Culken School of Irish Dance, Jugglers & Magicians, and local area Fire Fighters.

## VOLUNTEERS

We welcome volunteers into the building for special class events and parties. Please watch for volunteer opportunities posted on class share sites in mid to late October. We are unable to welcome siblings into our building during volunteer service times, but have many Take 'n Make projects that can be completed at home. We appreciate your service to the children and staff! All volunteers must complete the Baltimore-Washington Sexual Misconduct Form before serving at The Ark Children's Center.



## INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of a MCPS delayed opening, due to weather, we will operate as follows:

Children should bring a lunch.

MWF & M-F Classes

10:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

T, TH Classes

10:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

2s Classes

10:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

**If MCPS closes school, due to weather, we are also CLOSED.** You may call our school answering machine (301-774-5369) if ever in doubt.

Recordings are available after 7:30 a.m. We also announce school closure with WTOP. Log onto [www.WTOPNEWS.COM](http://www.WTOPNEWS.COM) for information regarding school closure announcements.



## FAMILY CONCERNS

While it is not our intent to pry into your personal life, we do find it helpful to be notified if your family is under any unusual stress or if you have any legal custody concerns. Please keep us informed about new joys (i.e., birth of baby, new home, adoption, etc.) and difficult transitions (i.e., divorce, custody changes, shared living situations, etc.). Sharing important “family changes” can help us better understand your child’s needs so we can better support your child through these life changes.

We are happy to pray for you and your family’s needs. Please let us know how we can best support you and your family! You are welcome to call the office (301-774-5369), schedule an appointment with the director, or send a note to school.

We also have a Prayer Request box located mid-hallway, near the office. Our staff is happy to pray for special intentions. Names are not necessary.

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

Every school needs a comprehensive emergency plan in case there is a need to dismiss children early from school. Different situations might require an early closing of our school. Instances might include building damage, loss of power, heat, or water in our facility, and other unforeseen emergency conditions.

Should an emergency evacuation be necessary at The Ark Children's Center:

If the Emory Hall educational building is not operational, children will be moved to the Historic Oakdale Chapel located on the property of Oakdale Church. This building will safely accommodate our students and has direct phone service (301-774-2030) into the building. A phone message indicating the need for evacuation will be recorded on our school answering machine, a note will be posted on our exterior doors, and parents will be notified via e-mail of our location change.

Students will remain under the supervision of staff in each of these emergency evacuation situations. **Students will only be released to authorized parent(s) or adults indicated on the child's emergency card. It is extremely important that emergency card information is kept up-to-date with current home, work, and cell phone numbers, along with names of authorized persons for pick-up.**



## DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Please park on the east or west side of Emory Hall during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times.

Walk children into the Main Entrance Hallway of Oakdale when doors open at 9 a.m. Walk down the steps adjacent to the Welcome Desk and proceed to lower level classrooms. Children scheduled in the upper level classrooms, can easily access classrooms by taking the elevator to the Oasis Level. Encourage your child to put the backpack in the bin located outside the classroom, hang up his/her coat, and place lunch in the designated class area. Exit the building on the north side of Emory Hall at doors A and C. These routines are intended to build confidence and help promote self-help skills within the classroom. Parents are responsible for signing children into and out of school during arrival and dismissal.

Parents should meet students enrolled in our 4s classes in the designated outside area for dismissal. On severe weather days, we will dismiss inside. Parents who have children enrolled in 2s or 3s classes should meet children inside the building at classroom doors. Please enter and exit the building as outlined above.

Children who have not been picked up by 5 minutes after the dismissal hour will be taken to the office. Parents will be billed an Emergency Late Fee of \$ 5.00 per half hour and will be required to sign-out child at time of pick-up.

## CLUBS PROGRAM

Our Clubs program is an optional stay opportunity for children to satisfy their ever-growing curiosity and need for extended care options. These clubs are led by enthusiastic, kid-friendly adults who encourage children to explore a variety of hands-on and motor activities. Clubs are offered during fall, winter, and spring sessions from 1:00 until 2:00 p.m. Reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and placement is only confirmed when the registration form and full payment are received. Our clubs program encourages child participation. If your child demonstrates adjustment issues or is unable to appropriately participate in the club, we will suggest withdrawal without possibility of refund.

Consider joining the fun. In the past, we have offered cooking, soccer, karate, story time, creative arts, and “Little Minds, Big Ideas” science options. Clubs are open to children in the 3s and 4s classes who have successfully transitioned into our regular preschool program and are able to follow adult direction. Children enrolled in a 2s class are not eligible to participate in the Clubs program.



## WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL WHAT NOT TO BRING!

- **SMILES..... More SMILES !**

We know some children will be a little anxious about school in September and upon return from long holiday breaks. It’s perfectly normal and expected. Be sure to hold your child’s hand while entering the building, give your child a hug in the hallway, and a quick kiss goodbye. Prolonged “goodbyes” at the classroom door makes the separation process more difficult for the child. Our staff are experts at calming upset children! You are welcome to call the office after 9:30 a.m. if an update is needed.

- **Nut-Free Lunch**

Please send lunch in an insulated lunch tote with zipper (Sack or Square style- no larger than 8 ½ x 11). A reusable water cup with lid or box styled beverages only! Please refrain from sending in Capri pouch style drinks! **Please label the outside of the lunch tote, using permanent marker, with your child’s first name initial and full last name.**

- **A standard size backpack** will be needed at school each day. (No suitcase/roller styles, please! They cause accidents on the steps). Notices, schedules, and child “masterpieces” will be sent home on a regular basis. Please remove notices and artwork daily and be sure backpacks are labeled with your child’s first name initial and full last name on the outside of the backpack.
- Be sure the backpack contains a **change of clothing, including underwear and socks** for when accidents occur at school. Please keep these sealed inside a large zip-lock bag.
- **NO TOYS FROM HOME, please!** Please follow Show N’ Tell schedules and guidelines from teachers.



# LUNCH POLICY and GUIDELINES

## We are a NUT-FREE School!

**(Please also refrain from sending “soy, seed, or nut” butters in your child’s lunch as it is very difficult for staff to determine whether or not these alternative spreads are nut based.)**

We care deeply about the health and safety of all children in our care. Each year, we work very hard to educate parents about the medical dangers associated with children who possess nut allergies. We have children in our program who are highly allergic to nut products. We need your commitment and cooperation to keep our school environment safe from nut allergens. Nut allergies are often severe and can be fatal. Even a tiny amount of exposure (taste, touch, or smell) to nut particles or residue, can cause the allergic person to experience strong reactions. Without medical interventions, the person can die within minutes.

Over the years we have taught children “who love peanut butter sandwiches/crackers” to choose other food choices when they understand that those “nut products” can make their friends sick. Please talk to your child about this food safety issue and prepare your child for making different lunch choices to help keep everyone safe at school. Some helpful suggestions and guidelines:

We will not allow your child to eat nut products at school! Encourage understanding of children with nut allergies by using words like, “It’s not okay to take nut products to school because it can make your friends sick”.

We suggest non-perishable foods and the use of frozen ice packs to keep food chilled. We are unable to refrigerate lunches.

**No** candy, sodas, glass bottles, or glass containers.

Involve your child in selecting a variety of healthy lunch choices. Ask your child what other friends are eating during lunch time.

**Read labels carefully and seek foods that are not processed in a plant that packages and produces nut products.** Be very careful to avoid bulk food choices, seasonal baked cupcakes, and decorated cookies as many of these items are processed in plants that produce and package nut products.

### **Try some fun lunch alternatives... Check labels:**

Applesauce	Fruit Cups	Graham Crackers
Leftover Pizza	Yogurt	Cold Cuts
Fresh Fruits	Celery w/soft cheese	Mini bagels
Cheese Sticks	Mini Carrots	Pudding Cups
Cold Spaghetti	Hot Dogs	Favorite Leftovers
Pita Pockets	Goldfish	Pretzels
Popcorn	Rice Krispie Treats	Raisins
Dried Fruits	Fruit Roll-ups	Cheese & Crackers

## LENDING LIBRARY PROGRAM (3 and 4 year old classes only)

Our Lending Library Program allows children an opportunity to select a children's book, take it home, and enjoy story time with parents and family members. Children visit our bookshelves weekly and can select a picture book, non-fiction, early reader, or informational book. It is our hope that parents will take a few moments to cuddle up with their child and enjoy a shared reading experience.

Research suggests that one thing that you can do to make a difference in your child's early development to ensure later success in school is to READ ALOUD everyday with your child. Parents can enrich the learning experience by making every story come alive, inviting children to think about the characters, plot, action, and conflict. Talking about pictures, words, and stories and relate them to experiences you may have shared or lessons you may wish to reinforce. Think of story time not as a one-sided read aloud event but as a dynamic dialogue between you and your child. Enjoy!



### BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

We enjoy celebrating birthdays at The Ark Children's Center! We celebrate birthdays many different ways within the classroom. Some classes choose to make birthday crowns, play birthday BINGO, make books of birthday wishes, make a birthday surprise, or share a birthday treat.

If you would like to provide a birthday treat (optional), please check with your child's teacher the week before your child's special day to make arrangements.

#### Guidelines:

- Keep snacks and refreshments simple!
- **All snacks must be purchased. We are no longer able to accept homemade treats. Read labels carefully— any products that state “processed in a plant that produces and packages nut products” are not safe for consumption. They will be returned to parents and not served to children.**
- Consider fruit cups, pudding cups, individually packaged rice krispie treats, loft cookies or ice cream cups.
- **NO GOODIE BAGS!**

We also do not allow family members to attend school celebrations, nor permit birthday party invitations to be distributed through school backpacks. Please be thoughtful about inviting school friends to birthday parties, as the children talk about these important “social events” and it can be hurtful when all class members are not invited.