



THE LEARNING CENTER FOR THE DEAF

BADAVAS PARENT INFANT PROGRAM

Family Handbook 2024 - 2025

General School Information

Marie Philip School
The Learning Center for the Deaf
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The Learning Center for the Deaf is a non-profit, non-sectarian day and residential school organized under section 501c of The Internal Revenue Code. It is a 766-approved Special Education School reviewed regularly by The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Education.

The Badavas Parent Infant Program is an early intervention Specialty Service Provider (SSP) operating under the Department of Public Health.

The PIP is located in the Early Childhood Center building.

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Section 1 - Program Philosophy

Mission Statement

The mission of The Learning Center for the Deaf is to ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing children and adults thrive by having the knowledge, opportunity and power to design the future of their choices.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Learning Center for the Deaf (TLC) serves children and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing and who seek access to a quality education where American Sign Language (ASL) and English are the languages of instruction. TLC offers specialized programs designed to meet a diversity of student needs. Our programs enroll deaf and hard of hearing students, including those who utilize digital hearing aids and/or cochlear implants, those with additional learning needs or unique learning styles, and/or those with intensive special needs. A copy of TLC's policies and procedures is available to parents in each of the major offices (Walden School, Framingham Administration Building).

The Marie Philip School at The Learning Center for the Deaf strives to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed in their school. The Marie Philip School prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation and ensures that all students have equal rights and equal enjoyment of the opportunities, advantages, and privileges.

Public schools in Massachusetts are required to amend their nondiscrimination statute to include gender identity in its policy. As a progressive and an inclusive school, we want to demonstrate our steadfast belief in the above statement.

Language and Communication Policy

As a bilingual school, where American Sign Language and English are the languages of instruction and community interaction, it is critical that all faculty and staff be vigilant in ensuring that communication is always fully accessible to all of our students at all times. Since deaf and hard of hearing people access information visually, American Sign Language should be used in all general campus communication interactions.

The Learning Center for the Deaf is a bilingual school where American Sign Language and English are the languages of instruction in the classrooms. In most circumstances, teachers teach concepts and lead class activities using American Sign Language, and English is taught as a second language.

At all times, language access is of paramount importance for students' cognitive, academic, social and emotional growth. Incidental learning plays an important role in the education and language development of all children. Since all deaf and hard of hearing people access information visually, American Sign Language is the only fully accessible language for all Marie Philip students and other deaf and hard of hearing community members. Therefore, American Sign Language is used in all general campus communication interactions. Students are then able

to access conversations and are included in the incidental daily communication interactions of faculty and staff.

While you are on the TLC campus and in the Parent Infant Program, please sign to the best of your ability at all times!

Children Learn Through Play

Play is how children acquire new information and skills. At The Learning Center for the Deaf's Parent Infant Program, we strive to create a rich environment that allows children to explore, create, problem-solve, interact, and develop curiosity and critical thinking skills. Our goal is to help each child become a competent communicator while developing cognitive, social, and gross/fine motor skills.

“Play is the activity by which the infant or young child learns about himself/herself/themselves and about the world. Because both the self and the world are so new, a child is constantly learning, and thus continuously playing. For the infant and young children, play is not a frivolous activity, but rather the most adaptive practice a child can engage in.”

David Elkind, Ph.D.
Professor of Child Study, Tufts University
Author of MISEDUCATION: Preschoolers at Risk

The Power of Play

Play is social and fun.

Our children play for the sake of playing – because they enjoy it. They are not consciously trying to improve their motor skills, practice new linguistic skills, or make connections with others – yet these are important benefits that happen through play. When our children are having a good time playing with us, they learn in a natural way.

Play encourages turn-taking.

If our children are going to learn to communicate, they must get involved in two-way interactions. Taking turns with actions or words is an essential part of shared play and conversation. “I take a turn; then you take a turn”, and so on!

Play is easy to respond to, even without words.

One of the benefits of play is that children will respond to it, even if they have a limited ability or desire to communicate. The active side of play – like building and knocking down a tower of

blocks, or imitating motor movements - gives children who have trouble taking turns an opportunity to participate. Through play, we can engage with children who have limited communication skills. In addition, play helps children connect physical actions with the language that describes those actions - the best way to reinforce understanding and learning.

Play involves repetition.

It is possible to repeat words and actions more often in a play activity than it is during our daily activities. We cannot pour David's milk ten times at breakfast, but we can spend hours pouring water in the bathtub, or having a pretend tea party.

Play integrates many of the senses.

Our children are more likely to learn and remember what we communicate when they see, feel, smell, and taste it. Learning is strengthened when several senses send the same message to the brain.

Play is one of the best ways for our children to learn how to communicate and get along with others.

Adapted from: "It Takes Two to Talk: A Parent's Guide to Helping Children Communicate", Ayala Manolson.

Exploration Centers

Our early childhood environments offer children the opportunities to explore, share, experiment, and create. All of our play areas encourage many important developmental skills. This listing highlights some of the many tasks children are challenged by play.

Blocks

- working together
- development of language
- hand-eye coordination
- communication with others
- planning
- working with another person
- imagination
- a common idea or purpose
- shapes, sizes, lengths
- development of imagination
- weights
- balance
- texture (smooth/rough)
- prepares for new experiences
- lengthen concentration span
- social skills
- basic math (geometry and fractions)
- develop self-understanding

Artwork and Sensory Play

- valuing themselves
- relaxation of tension
- enhance creativity
- a sense of well-being

- an awareness of color, shapes, lines
- hand-eye coordination
- organization of space
- absorption, spilling over
- expression of feelings, moods
- volume, conservation, measuring
- express individuality
- skills of scientific inquiry
- understanding cause and effect
- planning, organizing tasks
- teamwork

The Reggio Emilia Philosophy of Early Childhood Education

The Marie Philip School Early Childhood Center, including the Parent Infant Program, is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education, which originated in Northern Italy. The Reggio Emilia philosophy is an approach to teaching, learning, and advocacy for children. In its most basic form, it is a way of observing what children know, are curious about, and what challenges them. Teachers record these observations to reflect on developmentally appropriate ways to help children expand their academic and social potential.

Children are viewed as competent, curious, full of knowledge and potential, and interested in connecting to the world around them. Teachers are deeply aware of children's potential. Teachers intentionally organize, support, and plan various learning spaces, thus creating an environment that encourages curiosity and discovery. The daily schedules are planned to ensure that there is a balance between individual, small, and large group activities, child-directed and teacher-initiated activities, and indoor as well as outdoor experiences.

Documentation is a means of collecting information, observations, and learning. It can take the form of observations, photography, video, conversation transcripts, and/or visual mediums like paint, wire, clay, or drawing materials. Teachers use documentation to identify strengths, ideas, and next steps to support learning.

Anti-Bias Education

The Marie Philip School Early Childhood Center, including the Parent Infant Program, strives to practice anti-bias education (ABE) and we acknowledge that learning is ongoing. ABE is an approach that supports children and their families as they develop a sense of personal and group identity within a complex and multicultural society. This approach helps teach children to be proud of themselves and their families, to respect a range of human differences, to recognize unfairness and bias, and to speak up for what is right. (Derman-Sparks & Olsen, 2010).

We work collaboratively to create an inclusive community that encourages conversations among children and adults about all types of human differences in the context of classroom life. Discussions may include topics such as culture, race, language, Deaf/hearing identity, physical, mental/social-emotional abilities, learning styles, ethnicity, family structure, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, socioeconomic differences, and our many ways of being. ABE supports

children and adults to listen to each other with open minds, and to reserve judgment when we encounter views with which we disagree.

Part of how we incorporate ABE is to make sure that all families feel included and represented in our program. For that reason, we invite you to send in photos of celebrations, cultural events, and holidays that you celebrate at home so that we can display them at school. We also invite you to come to school to share your traditions with us. While we do not celebrate holidays or birthdays at school, we do educate children about holidays. During your child's birthday month, we will recognize your child's milestone during our playgroup.

Section 2 – Programs and Services

Parent Infant Program Description:

The Parent Infant Program provides home and center-based visits for families of deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to age three years. Ongoing parent education and support are provided related to raising a deaf child. Topics addressed include the importance of early language modeling for successful language acquisition, American Sign Language, acquisition of auditory and spoken English skills for children that might benefit, Deaf culture, and the nurturing of the Child's healthy self-identity.

Playgroups

Playgroups are available for children upon entry into the program until three years of age focusing on modeling of accessible language, development of meaningful interactions, positive self-esteem, cognitive, motor and self-help skills. Peer group sessions with children and parents help develop age-appropriate art, play and movement. Opportunities are created where parents can feel safe and supported as they learn about their children's needs and where they can access helpful resources from a multidisciplinary team made up of Deaf Educators, counselors, audiologists, and speech-language professionals.

Family Discussion Group

A family discussion group is held twice a month, and all parents/caretakers in our PIP are invited to attend. These meetings combine informal group discussions with information sessions. Guest speakers are often specialists from within the school who focus on a particular topic of interest to the group. TLC also has a parent association (TLCPA) that parents are welcome to attend. Each presentation will be recorded and shared with current families via Google Drive.

Home Visits

Home visits are scheduled with the Parent Infant Program Coordinator and/or Educator and take place according to the family's individual needs. The visits are an opportunity for the program coordinator to work one-on-one with the family in the child's natural home environment. This environment could be a variety of locations – the home, another family member's home, out in the community, a daycare center, etc. The visits revolve around play and the acquisition of language.

Spoken English/Language Support Services

A Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) is involved in playgroups to encourage the development of bilingual-bimodal communication. This includes a focus on spoken language for children who access speech through the use of hearing aids or cochlear implants. Services are available to all families, regardless of language modality, and are first come, first served.

One-on-one speech-language services are available as determined on an individual basis. The SLP or the program coordinator can discuss these services if you want more information. Contact your local Early Intervention Coordinator to add these services to your IFSP.

Parent Infant Program Hours:

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| Tuesdays | 9:30 am to 11:00 am |
| Wednesdays | 9:30 am to 11:00 am |
| Thursdays | 9:30 am to 11:00 am |

Because of the limited time we have to spend with your families each week, we ask that you do your best to arrive on time for each session. We want to maximize the time we have together to ensure quality programming. You are expected to attend as many times as possible, in accordance with your IFSP services. If you are unable to attend due to illness or other conflict, please contact the Coordinator as soon as possible so we are aware of your absence.

Interpreting Services

TLC fosters knowledge and respect for American Sign Language (ASL), spoken languages, and multiculturalism. ASL interpreters are provided for equal communication access to both Deaf and hearing parents, family members, and visitors. Our TLC interpreters uphold high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct. We recognize that parents and family members may not immediately be fluent in American Sign Language and interpreters are a bridge to accessing a language-rich environment in which two or more languages are being used.

Sign language interpreters are present at each PIP playgroup and family group discussion, as needed. Other spoken language interpreters are available upon request. Our skilled staff of interpreters makes every effort to facilitate communication among deaf and hearing participants. Communicating in a large group and following the many conversations can be challenging for everyone! Some simple guidelines to follow are:

- Users of both languages are asked to respect our commitment to full communication access for all
- During structured times, speaking one at a time and avoiding overlapping conversations allows for complete communication and understanding

- Always feel comfortable asking for help if you do not understand something or need clarification in either ASL or spoken language.
- As you learn ASL – have fun and don’t be afraid to make mistakes – that’s where true learning happens

Toddler ASL Immersion Program (TAIP) Description:

TAIP is an in-person, drop-off program on our campus, for *Deaf children, 18 months to 3 years old. TAIP is a fee-based extension of our Parent Infant Program and is a response to families asking for more American Sign Language exposure and social interaction with their Deaf peers through hands-on, play-based learning experiences that support the whole child's needs, fostering cognitive development, social-emotional learning, language acquisition, physical development skills, autonomy, and more. Families can choose up to 3 days a week for their child to participate in this program. As children approach their 3rd birthday, preschool transitional support will be provided on a case-by-case basis.

**The term deaf refers to children with varying hearing levels and is inclusive of hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and deaf+, children, as well as children with hearing assistive technology.*

TAIP Hours:

| | |
|----------|--------------------|
| Mondays | 8:00 am to 3:00 pm |
| Tuesdays | 8:00 am to 3:00 pm |
| Fridays | 8:00 am to 3:00 pm |

Section 3 – Health Care Policy

Health Care Policy

To minimize the spread of infectious disease the PIP classrooms, toys, and play surfaces are sanitized and disinfected with appropriate solutions.

The following are general guidelines to ensure the well-being of all families and children attending our program. Please contact the PIP staff if your child shows any symptoms of contagious disease, such as diarrhea, vomiting, rashes, eye infections, strep throat, or fever. Children with these and other contagious symptoms will be asked to stay home until they feel well enough and the symptoms described have disappeared.

- **Fever** - If your child has an oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, you must wait 24 hours after the temperature has returned to normal (98.6), without the use of fever reducing medication, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen and the child feels well enough, before he/she returns to PIP.
- **Eye Infections** - Wait until the cause has been determined and treatment (if needed) has begun, usually 24 hours after the medication has been started, before returning to PIP. Symptoms to watch for are clear, green or yellow discharge from the eye, swollen eyelids, and redness in the eye. When the eye is no longer red or draining, the child is ready to return to PIP.
- **Strep Throat** - A child complaining of a sore throat with a temperature over 100 should be kept home. If a sore throat and temperature last for two or more days, the child may not return to child care until a negative throat culture has been obtained or doctor prescribed medication has been given for at least 24 hours.
- **Diarrhea** - Children with diarrhea should be kept at home until the diarrhea stops, appetite, alertness and strength return.
- **COVID-19, seasonal illnesses, etc.** – Policies will be posted in the playroom and are available on the TLC website.

Please inform us if your child has any food, contact, and/or physical restrictions.

If your child is unwell or will miss the playgroup for the day we would appreciate it greatly if you inform the PIP Coordinator via email or text.

Section 4 - Policies

School Closure Information

The Parent Infant Program follows the Marie Philip school calendar. We are closed during school vacations, holidays, snow days and the month of August. In the event of inclement weather, please visit the Learning Center for the Deaf website at www.tlcdeaf.org or watch TV News Channels 4, 5 and 7 for closure information. The PIP coordinator will email or text families and caregivers if playgroup is canceled.

Change of Information

Please inform PIP staff if there is a change in your current address, phone/text/VP number, or email. This information is important for us to keep your contact information current as well as keep you informed of events and happenings that take place on the TLC campus.

Visitors

Please communicate with PIP staff if you will bring a visitor(s) with you to PIP. This includes outside professionals, early intervention providers, observers from your town preschool, non-immediate/visiting family, etc.

ALL visitors must first sign in with the front office staff in the White House per TLC policy.

Due to safety precautions and limited space, siblings are not permitted to visit PIP playgroups. Occasionally, PIP hosts community field trips and events. Siblings are welcome (and encouraged!) to attend those outings.

Section 5 - Staff Information

Badavas Parent Infant Program Staff and Contact Information

Thea Cabral
PIP Coordinator
Tcabral@tlcdeaf.org

Milmaglyn Morales
Early Childhood Center Principal
Mmorales@tlcdeaf.org

Mary Jane Huru
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Claire Lombardo-Miller
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Toddler ASL Immersion Program
TAIP@tlcdeaf.org

Signature Page:

I am in receipt of The Learning Center for the Deaf - Badavas Parent Infant Program Family Handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:
