



Parent Handbook 2025-2026

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Chesapeake, VA 23321
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www.westernbranchacademy.com

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Friday
7:00 am – 6:00 pm

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Introduction

Welcome to Western Branch Academy. Thank you for choosing us to care for your child and provide them with a wonderful educational experience.

This booklet contains valuable and important information. Please take the time to read it carefully, and hopefully it will answer many of the questions you may have regarding Western Branch Academy School Policies. **Please note, that there may be updates or changes to any policy at any time during the school year to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff at Western Branch Academy. **

Licensing Information

Western Branch Academy is licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services as a child day program. The Commonwealth of Virginia helps assure families that programs who assume responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of a child for any part of a twenty-four-hour day are safe. Title 63.1, Chapter 10 of the Code of Virginia gives the Department of Social Services authority to license these programs. If you would like additional information about licensing information of child day programs, please contact:

Regional Office of Social Services
Eastern Regional Office

Pembroke Office Park
Pembroke Four Office Building, Suite 300
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23462-5496
(757) 491-3990

Mission Statement of Western Branch Academy

The mission of Western Branch Academy is to *believe* in the abilities of young children; create a community for children to *belong* based on love, trust, and respect; and enable children to *become* creative thinkers with a love for learning.

Philosophy

Western Branch Academy is a full-day early childhood program that provides innovative programming for children where emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual and social development flourishes. We strive to:

- Support families through strong partnerships
- Transform curiosity into the love of learning
- Nurture each child's unique qualities and potential
- Foster opportunities to learn about God's world
- Establish a work environment where professionalism, growth, collaboration and creativity are demonstrated
- Connect with community service projects, and
- Meet the changing preschool educational needs of the community.

Positive Guidance/Discipline Policy

The goal of Western Branch Academy is to help your child learn self-control and independent skills. The staff at Western Branch Academy fosters this by creating a positive learning environment that gives each child the tools to build their self-image and promote their self-esteem.

In the event a child needs some guidance, they are redirected to another activity to promote acceptable behavior and set them up for success. If the unacceptable behaviors continue, a conference is scheduled so that the issue can be dealt with in a timely manner.

Physical Facilities

The facility is located at 4225 A Portsmouth Blvd. Suite 101, Chesapeake, VA 23321. The condition of the building has been deemed safe for occupancy and has met the Uniform Statewide Building Codes and has received approval from the local fire department.

Due to insurance purposes, the classrooms and hallways have cameras installed. The footage will only be reviewed internally.

Insurance

Western Branch Academy carries Selective Business Liability Insurance through S.L. Nusbaum Insurance Agency Inc.

Hours of Operation

Western Branch Academy is open 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. Half-day children may arrive no earlier than 8:00 am. All preschool classes begin at 9:00 am. Parents must bring their child by 9:00 am so that the children do not miss important learning activities necessary for school success. The only exception will be for appointments. We ask that you let the office know beforehand so that we can expect the late arrival.

Absence Notification

In the event that your child will be out of school for the day (or longer), we ask that you please email info@westernbranchacademy.com or phone (757-488-4306) the school to let us know. Please notify us of the nature of an illness, particularly if it is contagious. No allowances, credits, refunds, or make up days shall be made for absences. Tuition must be paid in full. Please refer to the Parent Tuition Agreement signed upon enrollment.

Parking

Please use caution when driving through our parking lot. Keep in mind that there are other buildings around us. The posted speed limit is 10 mph. Parking spaces are provided for your convenience. These include the spaces in front of the playground and the field. Please be sure to hold your child's hand to and from the school. Please do not park in the center island or in circular driveway in front of the school entrance. In addition, please do not park in the FACE parking spaces. Please walk on the sidewalk, not behind the cars.

Reporting Suspected Abuse and Neglect

Western Branch Academy complies with section 63.1-248.3 regarding reporting of child abuse and neglect. Virginia Law requires that childcare providers report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to child protective services, regardless of the abuse/neglector's relationship to child.

Staff Line of Authority

Comments, questions, or concerns related to Western Branch Academy should be directed to the school administration. Our administration includes the following individuals:

Rajib Chanda - Owner
Amanda Hibbard – Director
Rosalyn Brialess – Assistant Director

We emphasize the importance of building strong relationships with our student's families. The administration has an open-door policy. We want to hear your ideas and suggestions.

Teaching Staff

The staff members are required to be certified annually by a practicing physician to be free from any disability which would prevent them from caring for children.

Criminal record checks will be completed on all employees, volunteers, and any person involved in the operation of Western Branch Academy. Sworn disclosure statements are also required. Children are always within sight and sound of teachers. This is in accordance with Social Services licensing guidelines.

Staff Qualifications

Each Lead Teacher has a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education or related field, or the necessary training required by Social Services licensing guidelines for Program Leaders. All staff members have at least 20 hours of training in Early Childhood Education each year. This includes Child Abuse and Neglect, and First Aid and CPR, in which staff are retrained every two years.

NAEYC

Western Branch Academy is a NAEYC accredited school. NAEYC represents the mark of quality in early childhood education. They believe that early childhood experiences have a lifelong impact on children's love of learning, readiness for and success in school, and positively contribute to their health and development.

Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Diversity

Western Branch Academy is committed to providing a strong learning community where students can grow to reach their full potential. We value the diverse backgrounds of all people and will build off each individual's strengths. We, as a school, believe that the diversity of our community enriches the learning experience of our students, as they are enlightened by the various backgrounds and cultures.

Parent Involvement

We would like to extend an open invitation for you, the parent and or guardian, to drop in often for informal visits and to share in all classroom activities as per Code of Virginia 63.2-1813. This gives us an opportunity to get to know you and provide you with a firsthand look at your child's learning environment.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in helping with class parties, in-house field trips and special events.

Parents are asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of each year. This information helps to assess how our programs are meeting the needs of parents and children and to identify strengths and weaknesses to help program goals for next year.

Sensitive Family Situations – Divorced or Separated Parents

Western Branch Academy tries to be aware and sensitive to the family situations of our children. If divorced or separated parents are sharing custody and we can help make the situation easier, or avoid making it more difficult, please let us know. We cannot presume that one parent has more or less rights than the other parent without a copy of a custody settlement or restraining order.

Parent Communication

Western Branch Academy's staff views our role as team members with parents in caring for your child. We make every effort to communicate with you each day. Here are some of the ways we will communicate with you:

1. **Newsletters/Calendars**- These are sent home to you each month. Calendars and newsletters inform you of classroom themes and activities. They also include announcements and upcoming events.
2. **Website** – updated regularly to provide quick access to upcoming events, newsletters, calendars, and other documents. The web address is www.westernbranchacademy.com
3. A **communication board** is located outside each classroom. Please read this daily to know “what’s happening” in your child’s classroom.
4. **Communication Folder**- Your child will bring their daily folder home each day. Please check it daily for important school information, papers and art projects.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Formal parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year for PK4 and once a year for PK2 and PK3. Parents are asked not to use arrival/dismissal time to confer with teachers. This distracts teachers from their all-important job of supervising the children.

If parents need to meet with their child's teacher outside of these 2 conference times, they should call and arrange an appointment or phone conference if needed. Any notes, book orders, etc. should be sent to school in an envelope or in the child's communication folder.

Successful Transitions from Program to Program

Western Branch Academy aims to create a smooth transition for children from program to program through our Sneak Peek orientations. Each year we host two Sneak Peek orientations where students meet their new teachers and classmates. One is held before the school year begins and the other before

summer camp. The event is focused on helping the children transition into a new classroom setting before the first day of classes.

Successful Transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten

Western Branch Academy feels that one of the most important transitions is the one from preschool to kindergarten. Western Branch Academy staff, at spring parent-teacher conferences, talks with the parents about the transition from our school to the kindergarten setting. PK 4 teachers discuss kindergarten readiness, literature to read with the children, and kindergarten strategies for parents to use to make a smooth transition from one program to another.

Admissions Policy

Admissions Process

1. Each of the application forms must be fully completed and returned to the school with the application fee.
2. If a class has reached its capacity, the applicant's name will be placed on the applicable waiting list. The family will be notified if a spot becomes available for the applicant.
3. The final decision on acceptance is at the discretion of the school administration.

Application Forms

1. **Student Registration Form** – filled out completely with **two full** emergency contacts.
2. **Enrollment Agreement Form** – signed and with registration fee and activity fees attached.
3. **Birth Certificate** - with the official seal embossed thereon. This just needs to be verified by our staff and is then returned.
4. **VA School Entrance Health Form and Immunization records** – Must be signed by the physician. Physicals must not be more than one year old.

Withdrawal from Program

1. Parent must give two weeks' written notice to the office prior to withdrawal of their child (if notice is not given, you are responsible for tuition and fees).
2. If your child is withdrawn after April 1st (school year) or August 1st (summer camp) tuition for the remainder of the session must be paid.
3. If we are unable to meet your child's needs and it becomes necessary to ask you to withdraw your child, we will give you two weeks' notice.

Discontinuance Policy

Western Branch Academy may discontinue care for a child for reasons which include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to pay tuition
- Disturbance of the program by a parent or a child, and
- Determination that a child may need a different type of environment.

This is a partial list and Western Branch Academy reserves the right to discontinue the enrollment of a child at any time for any reason deemed appropriate. We recognize that one of our key jobs is to guide children to learn appropriate ways to process their emotions and conflicts with peers. We understand that young children may exhibit certain behaviors because they have not yet learned the appropriate ones for those situations. However, sometimes a child's behavior may endanger others. If this type of behavior occurs at school:

1. We will speak to the parents regarding the first incident.
2. If a second incident occurs, the teacher and parent will discuss the behavior(s) and strategies.
3. If a third incident occurs, a conference will be set up with the parents, teacher, and director to discuss causes of the behavior and referrals for outside consultation will be made.
4. If further incidents continue, or any of the following:
 - Western Branch academy cannot meet the child's needs
 - The parents are unable to work with the school to find an acceptable solution
 - The behavior endangers the well-being of other children.
 - Western Branch Academy will take the steps written above whenever possible before dismissal is recommended.

Student Information Changes

If at any time family information changes (address, telephone, health, allergy, authorized pick-ups, employment, etc.) please contact the office and your child's teacher. Health information must be updated every year as needed. Please ask the office for the health form before your child's well check-up.

Tuition Policy

Tuition is calculated separately as a SCHOOL YEAR fee and a SUMMER fee. The SCHOOL YEAR fee is divided into 41 weekly payments, or 10 monthly payments over a 9 ½ month period. The SUMMER fee is divided into 10 weekly payments. Tuition payments are to be placed in the tuition box located in the office or paid electronically. Teaching staff does not handle cash tuition payments.

1. Tuition is paid weekly or monthly. Multiple weeks may be paid at once.
2. Tuition is due on Mondays by close of business for each week of school. A late fee of \$25.00 is charged Tuesday at noon if your account is past due. Monthly tuition is due the 1st of each month.

3. All returned checks are subject to a \$35.00 service charge. If two checks are returned, subsequent payments must be made in cash or by money order, and the automatic debit discount will no longer apply to your account.
4. Post-dated checks will not be accepted.
5. Electronic ACH payments are available free of charge on a weekly or monthly basis. A valid checking account or savings account and signed authorization are required.
6. Debit and Credit Card payments are accepted. A 3% convenience charge applies to all debit and credit card transactions. Debit and credit card payments are processed at the front desk.
7. No tuition refunds or discounts are granted for student absences, vacations, school closings, holidays or other days when Western Branch Academy is closed.
8. An Enrollment Suspension Notice is written for any family that is one week past due. You will have one week to settle your account before your child's enrollment is suspended.
9. A Disenrollment Notice is written for any family that receives an Enrollment Suspension Notice and after one week does not settle their account. A disenrollment notice is final. A child will not be able to return to WBA.
10. Part-time students requiring extended care outside the 8:00 am – 12:30 pm window will be charged separately (\$5.00/hour). Arrangements and payment must be made in advance.
11. Tuition for "child care only" days (i.e. Teacher Work Days) is charged separately (\$15/day). This applies to After School children only and if you do not need care, you will not be charged an additional fee. Pre-registration is required for care on these days.
12. A registration fee of \$135 is due upon enrolling each child for the 2023/2024 school year. This is a non-refundable fee that holds a spot in our program. Registration is first-come, first-served. There are a limited number of spots available in each program.

13. An activity fee is due at the time of registration. This is a non-refundable fee. This fee covers classroom curriculum materials, Handwriting without Tears workbooks (PK 4 and K), Universal Handwriting workbooks (K Only), field trip fees, and in-house events. This fee does not apply for the After School program. The fees are as follows:
- a. PK 2 - \$60
 - b. PK 3 - \$70
 - c. PK 4 - \$95

Arrival/Departure Policies

Arrival Instructions

Parents must bring their children into the building and accompany them into their classroom to check in with their teacher. To alleviate separation anxiety, parents should plan a short goodbye with their child. Teachers are responsible for signing the children in each morning on the clipboard. Parents are responsible to punch their children in upon arrival at our computer check-in. This requires either a finger print recognition or password for security purposes. If you are a new family to the school, we can assist in registering you into our system.

Only full-day children are allowed to arrive before 8:00 am unless special arrangements have been made with the office.

The first few weeks in any new environment can be stressful for your child. The Western Branch Academy staff is sensitive to these feelings and is trained to be alert and aware of your child's reaction to their new surroundings. They will make every effort to help your child adjust as easily as possible.

Dismissal Instructions

Half-Day Dismissal/Pick-Up Procedures

Half Day children dismissal is at 12:30 pm for all preschool children. Parents will follow carpool instructions given to them at sneak peek. The staff signs the child out at carpool.

Full-Day Dismissal/Pick-Up Procedures

Parents of full day students are to pick up their child from their classroom. The parent signs the child in/out at the computer terminal. Teachers will manually sign children in/out in the classroom. Children are only released to individuals named on the registration form as those authorized for pick up.

Release Policy

Children are only released to their parents or individuals authorized by parents. If one of the authorized individuals, other than a parent, is picking up the child the

office must receive written notice prior to the date (if possible). We do not permit "surprise pickups" by authorized individuals. If the office does not receive written notice, a phone call will be made to verify a change in the child's pick up. We must have written/verbal consent. If someone is not listed as an authorized pick up, the parent must notify the school in writing to arrange the special pick up, either by email to info@westernbranchacademy.com or by a red special pick up note given to the front office. Proof of identity is required when picking up a child.

Extended Child Care

Parents wishing to leave their child after the 8:00-12:30 pm window may request extended care at an additional \$5.00 per hour. Arrangements and payment must be made in advance for extended care.

After-Hours Pick Up

Parents of children not picked by their designated time (12:30 pm for half-day children/6:00 pm full-day children) are charged \$10.00 late fee for the first five minutes and a dollar per minute thereafter. Parents/authorized person must sign a late notice and make payment to school before leaving with child.

When a child is left after hours, every effort will be made to contact parents and/or authorized pickups. If no one is available after one hour, the supervising staff will contact Western Branch Academy Director to contact Chesapeake Department of Social Services to take the child into their care.

Medical and Health Policy

The children's health is a matter of importance to all of us. It is our goal to provide the children in our center with the healthiest and safest environment possible. For this reason, the following guidelines regarding health practices have been established in compliance with the health department. All center staff is trained in matters regarding childhood illnesses and health and safety practices. A staff member trained and certified in First Aid and CPR will be present at **ALL** times.

The Entrance Health Form is completed and signed by a physician and the parent upon entrance to the center and must be updated each year. This form must be in the office within five days of the date of entrance. Please let the office staff know if updated information is needed. If you schedule a well-check or immunization, please stop by the office to take a new Health Form for your physician to complete.

Daily Health Screenings/Exclusion of Sick Children

A daily health screening is performed as children arrive at school. Any and all unusual symptoms observed will be noted. If a child has any of the below symptoms the parents will be notified to pick up their child:

- Temperature equal to or exceeding 100.4 degrees
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Heavy nasal discharge and/or persistent cough
- Symptoms of a possible communicable disease (Flu, RSV, COVID, etc.)
- Discharge from the eye

We ask that parents keep the child home if any of the above symptoms are present. The child must be fever and symptom free for 24 hours without medication, before returning to school.

If a child becomes ill while at school, he or she will be removed from the classroom. At this point, a parent will be contacted to arrange for pick up. Children must be picked up within 30 minutes of parental notification. Please notify Western Branch Academy immediately if a communicable disease is confirmed. Children sent home due to exhibiting symptoms of a communicable disease are required to have clearance from a doctor by bringing in a note stating they are not contagious.

Head Lice Policy

All of the students in your child's classroom at WBA will be screened for head lice if there are head lice and/or nits (eggs) found on one or more of the students. A letter will be sent home that day with students notifying the parent(s) if their child was found to have/not to have head lice.

If your child is found to have head lice, the office will ask you to pick up your child as soon as possible. We ask that you contact your pediatrician or clinic for the appropriate treatment option for your child. Your child must receive a head lice treatment prior to being admitted back into the classroom. After being treated, please stop by the office for another head lice screening prior to going to your child's classroom. If they are found free of head lice and/or nits (eggs), they may return to their class. If they are found to have head lice and/or nits (eggs), they may not return to their class. Please contact your pediatrician or clinic for further instructions. Preventative measures listed in the letter must also be done prior to returning to class.

Environmental Health and Pest Control Policy

The school facility and outdoor play areas are completely smoke-free. No smoking is permitted on the property and in the presence of the children. The program maintains the facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insect pests and poisonous plants along with environmental hazards such as air pollution. Pesticides and herbicides, if used are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility. The program

uses the techniques known at Integrated Pest Management (IPM) so that the least hazardous means are used to control pests and unwanted vegetation. The preschool program prohibits smoking, firearms and other significant hazards that pose risks to children and adults. Outdoor activity is limited as a precaution during any air pollution alerts.

Smoking/Alcohol/Drugs

The use of alcohol, tobacco or drug products is not permitted in the center, on the playground or on the grounds. Western Branch Academy is a drug free zone.

Weapons

No person, while on Western Branch Academy school property, will be allowed to possess, handle, or transport any object which can reasonably be considered a weapon/gun. Western Branch Academy is gun free zone.

Hand Washing Procedures

Hand washing is the most important means of interrupting the transmission of infection among staff and children. While the law requires hand washing before eating and after toileting, we also wash hands at Western Branch Academy:

- When entering the building
- Upon return from recess
- Before/after using sensory tables
- Before/after holding school pets
- After contact with any bodily secretion

Hand washing also occurs before prepping and serving food and after handling any unclean surfaces. Staff is required to wear disposable gloves and wash hands after treating injuries. All items exposed to blood will be sealed and discarded immediately.

Diapers

Children who are not potty trained must bring their own diapers. We do not allow cloth diapers at the school.

Medication

We do not have the facilities to care for sick children. If a child is sick, parents are asked to please keep the child at home. Consequently, we do not administer over-the-counter medication unless a parent brings in medicine and fills out the appropriate paperwork in the office. No medication is permitted in a child's tote bag or backpack.

Occasionally, a child may need medication for asthma or other medical conditions. If this is the case, parents must see one of the administrators for assistance. The Administration of Western Branch academy are MAT trained (medication administration trained) in the state of Virginia. The following conditions apply to the administration of medication in these instances:

1. All medication must be in its original container and must be labeled with the child's name, correct name of the medication, the dosage amount, the route to be given, and the time to be given.
2. No over the counter medication is administered.
3. A medication form must be filled out and signed by child's physician.
4. The medication shall stay at school for the duration prescribed by the physician.

Sunscreen/Insect Repellent/Diaper Ointment

Parents should apply sunscreen and insect repellent to children (as needed) before bringing them to school. Sunscreen may be re-applied after nap with a signed Authorization Form. Diaper ointment may be applied with a signed Authorization Form.

Allergies and Asthma

Parents are required to inform the school (in writing) of any allergies or dietary restrictions their child may have or any special medications their child may be taking. Parents also need to fill out an Asthma Action Plan form to leave at the center.

Accident/Incident Reports

Safety is a top priority at Western Branch Academy. Yet, there are times when your child may get hurt while at school. If the accident/incident requires "more than a hug", our teachers will complete a report for the parent detailing what happened and the nature of the injuries. If any first aid is administered, the treatment will be described in writing to the parent. A copy of this accident report (signed by the teacher in charge at the time of the accident and signed by the parent) will be provided to you, and a copy will be placed in the child's file. Injury prevention procedures shall be updated at least annually based on documentation of injuries and a review of the activities and services.

Injuries

Minor Injuries

A minor injury means a wound or specific damage to the body such as, but not limited to: abrasion, splinter, bites that do not break skin and bruises.

The supervising staff is responsible for treating minor injuries using first aid kits. First aid kits are located in all classrooms, office and on the playground.

Notification to parents of a minor accident or injury is given in written form (injury report) at the end of the day.

Serious Injuries

A serious injury means a wound or specific damage to body such as but not limited to; unconsciousness, broken bones, dislocation, cut requiring stitches, concussion, foreign object lodged in eye, nose, ear or another orifice.

Parents are notified of the injury as soon as possible. If a child requires emergency services, a medical consent and insurance form will accompany the child along with Director/Assistant Director.

Dental Emergencies

If a dental emergency occurs, the staff will authorize and seek emergency care. Parents, as well as the child's dentist, will be contacted immediately.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency Response Plan

Western Branch Academy has an Emergency Response Plan in place. Every effort will be made to ensure the safety of the children in our care. In the event the center needs to evacuate, we may or may not be able to contact parents immediately. We will make every effort to contact parents, but it may not be possible depending on the emergency. Our primary evacuation site is Westside Church.

The Emergency Preparedness Plan document is available in the front office. Specific procedures are defined for inclement weather, fire, tornados, intruders, and evacuations.

Emergency School Closing

Upon notification of an impending hurricane, tornado, or other emergency, the parents and/or individuals authorized by the parents will be notified by telephone and email to come immediately to the center to pick up their child. A copy of the Emergency Preparedness Plan is available for viewing at the school.

In the event that children remain at the center during a tornado, the emergency procedure plan is implemented. First Aid Kit, battery powered radio, emergency battery lighting and safe drinking water and blankets are on hand at the center. Every effort is taken to maintain a calm atmosphere during this time. If parent/guardian cannot be reached, Western Branch Academy will contact the authorized pick-up list. If no one is reached, the Department of Social Services will be contacted to take charge of your child.

Inclement Weather

In the case of inclement weather, Western Branch Academy follows the Chesapeake Public Schools closure schedule for inclement weather. In some cases, we may have to close when Chesapeake Public Schools remain open. We may be able to open when the public school is unable; therefore, we ask you to check our school website or parent email for inclement weather information and updates. There are no tuition refunds if school is closed for weather.

Programs & Curriculum

Western Branch Academy provides preschool programs for 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds. All preschool students attend our half-day preschool program. Parents have the option of enrolling their children full-day and utilizing our extended care. After school care is also provided for children in grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade.

WEE Learn (2- and 3-year-olds)

Western Branch Academy uses the WEE-Learn Curriculum. Wee-Learn is a Christian curriculum that meets your child's developmental needs while they experience the world God created for us. WEE Learn provides systematic learning opportunities for children in language, early literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, physical development, personal and social development. The curriculum is relevant to children's everyday experiences and highlights the importance of the family's role in linking a child's early experiences to the world around them.

Scholastic Big Day for Pre K (4-year-olds)

A curriculum organized around "Big Experiences" that engage children and integrate all learning domains, including social-emotional development, oral language, literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, art, and physical development. It also provides rich and varied opportunities for meaningful conversations that help children build oral language and vocabulary at school, home, and beyond. It meets the Foundation Blocks of Learning for the state of Virginia.

Field Trips/In-house Guests/Entertainment/Enrichment

At Western Branch Academy we ensure that children are given the opportunities to be creative and open to new learning experiences. We offer in-house guests throughout the school year to enhance our curriculum and experiences provided to the children (i.e. Holiday visitors, magic shows, reptile shows, etc.).

We provide enrichment classes throughout each month for the children to be introduced to new areas of exploration. Enrichment offered includes Spanish, Science, Music, Art, Fitness, and Movement.

Assessment of Students at Western Branch Academy

A critical part of our program is documenting the progress of the children. The assessment process is ongoing upon entering the school. Western Branch Academy formally assesses each child within three months of entering the program. Each child is regularly assessed two times per year, one in the fall and again in the spring. Children are also informally assessed throughout the year as needed. For our PK 2 and PK 3, the formal assessment tool used is the ASQ-3. Big Day for PreK is used for PK 4 students and Pearson for Kindergarten.

The teachers assess the children in the classroom, in small groups, and on an individual basis. Classroom assessments are repeated through frequent observations by the teachers. Observations and formal assessment data is documented. The results are shared during parent/teacher conferences with families being sensitive to family value, culture, identity and language. Conferences are done in person or via telephone. All assessment reports are stored in the student's school file for confidentiality purposes. Only Western Branch Academy staff and the parents are allowed to review information, unless authorized by the parents.

Throughout the year, if a specific child's behavior or developmental progress appears atypical, then the concerns are communicated by the teacher to the school administration. The administrators then begin to observe the student in the classroom. The administration subsequently meets with the teacher and recommends strategies to improve behavior or developmental progress. If these strategies do not help, then the administration, teachers, and parents meet to discuss concerns. We provide additional resources available to the parents for developmental screening and diagnostic assessments. In some instances, with parental permission, we have development specialists visit our program to observe the children in the classroom and suggest additional strategies.

We utilize community resources for assessing children for speech and vision each year. As a service to our families, speech and vision screenings are offered free of charge to students. These screenings are optional and require parental authorization. Upon completion of these screenings, parents are notified of the results and given additional resources if necessary. All results are filed in the student's record.

The staff at Western Branch Academy strives to plan a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Utilizing informal and formal assessment information teachers adapt their lesson plans and goals to maximize individual and group learning opportunities. The administration supports the teachers by providing training opportunities on how to adapt teaching practices and the learning environment and assisting in modifying the learning environment when necessary.

Daily Supervision

The children will always be within sight and sound, according to Division of Social Services. Teachers are assigned to a specific group of children. When moving from the classroom or the playground, teachers perform supervision checks, including class counts and “name to face” roster calls.

The ratios for preschool children are as follows:

Age 2	1:8
Age 3	1:10
Age 4	1:10

The ratios for school-age children are as follows:

Age 5-8	1:18
Age 9-10	1:20

Clothing and Belongings

Preschool

Each child is assigned a cubby for storing personal belongings. Backpacks are required. It will allow the child to carry things to and from school daily (e.g. notes from school, art, etc.).

Before children start school, his or her name must be marked on all extra clothing. School clothes should be comfortable, durable and equipped with simple fasteners so that the child can manage by themselves. Please no long dresses, backless sandals, Crocs, overalls, boots, umbrellas, pocketbooks, jewelry, money or toys. Children are required to wear tennis shoes or closed toe shoes.

After School Children

Each child is assigned a hook for personal belongings.

Classroom Activities

Our philosophy is that each child develops at his/her own rate academically, socially, and emotionally. We believe learning is a positive, hands-on experience. Here is an example of a preschool daily schedule:

Sample Daily Schedule

7:00-9:00	Free Choice Activities
9:00 -9:20	Circle Time
9:20-9:50	Whole Group Activity/Lesson Time
9:50-10:20	Personal Care/Snack
10:20-10:50	Outdoor Play
10:50-11:00	Bathroom Break
11:00-11:50	Free Choice Activities/Centers
11:50-12:20	Lunch
12:30/12:45	Half Day Dismissal
12:50-1:00	Bathroom Break/Story Time
1:00-2:45	Nap Time
2:45-3:20	Wake Up/Personal Care/Snack
3:20-4:15	Free Choice Activities
4:15-4:45	Outdoor Play/Indoor Gross Motor
4:45-5:00	Story Time
5:00-6:00	Activities Prepared for Dismissal.

Outdoor Play

We go outside each day (weather permitting). The children do not play outdoors in inclement weather or extreme hot/cold conditions. It is our policy that a child who comes to school is well enough to participate in both indoor and outdoor play. If there are medical reasons why a child cannot participate in outdoor activities, but is well enough to be at school, we are happy to comply with your doctor's written request and instructions. The playground is maintained by adding mulch twice a year and regular raking.

Naptime

For full-day preschool children, we have nap time each afternoon. Please bring a nap mat, child sized blanket and crib sheet (labeled). Please take the blanket and sheet home each Friday to launder. Each child is assigned to a specific mat and it is routinely cleaned and disinfected.

In the event that a child does not nap, they are able to rest quietly on their mat with a book or puzzle.

Toys from Home

No toys from home are permitted as this can lead to competitive feelings. Some of the younger children still have the need for a well-loved "snuggly" or blanket which is encouraged for security and/or nap. Please try to send the same blanket/snuggly each day.

Toilet Training

Some things we do to get children ready to train:

1. Start reading books about using the potty and talking about going potty in the big girl or big boy potty during changing.
2. We have them sit on the potty during natural transition times (before recess, nap and diaper changes)
3. We practice with them getting their pants up and down on their own and hand washing.
4. We will supervise them and watch for signs that they have to go or are going and get them off to the potty.
5. We keep close communication with their parents about indicators suggesting the child is ready.

A potty-trained child is a child who can do the following:

1. Be able to TELL the adult they have to go potty BEFORE they have to go. They must be able to use their words.
2. Be able to pull down their underwear and pants and get them back up without assistance.
3. Be able to wipe themselves (with supervision) after using the toilet.
4. Be able to get off the potty by themselves.
5. Be able to wash and dry their hands.
6. Be able to postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if their class is outside on playground.

Some things we do not do:

1. We do not limit food or drinks to be given at certain times. We maintain the same food and snack schedule during training.
2. We do not clean out soiled underwear. We will send home underwear if it has urine in it but soiled underwear is disposed of into the dumpster. We will contact you if this happens.

Childcare Only Days –School Age Only

Childcare only days are for children whose parents are required to work. Western Branch Academy is a school first and also offers child care to the working parent. We accommodate most needs of the working parents. A “child care only” day is when Chesapeake Public Schools are closed and it is not a federal holiday recognized by Western Branch Academy. Pre-registration is required for care on these days. Sign-up sheets are posted in the office several weeks prior to the specific date. Last minute drop-offs are not permitted, and space is limited.

Discipline Policy

We use many techniques to assist children in resolving conflicts. Although methods vary depending on children’s ages and the severity of the situation, all teacher problem-solving skills need to instill an intrinsically motivated sense of right and wrong.

Our first technique is REDIRECTION. Redirection is a request to stop a less desirable behavior accompanied by a suggestion for an appropriate behavior to replace it.

Here are some other techniques we use:

- **Set Limits:** Children are given basic, clear and concise rules to guide their behavior. Boundaries and expectations expand as children develop.
- **Natural Consequences:** Staff point out and reinforce natural consequences as they occur. Children see the results of their own behavior and begin to modify it accordingly. "You threw sand after I asked you not to. Now you need to leave the sandbox and find a different area to play in."
- **Consistency:** So children know what to expect, limits and expectations are consistent throughout the classes, and all adults respond in a similar way to conflict situations.
- **Tone:** A kind yet serious tone delivered by intervening adults reinforces children's sense of security and lets them know the situation is under control.
- **Modeling:** Adults clearly demonstrate compassionate, caring behaviors that set examples to follow.
- **Validating feelings:** Acknowledging one's emotions and those of other children facilitates learning.
- **Generating options/solutions:** Children are given tools to settle conflicts (negotiation, collaboration, etc.)

Preventing Behavior Problems

Staff shall plan their programs as to minimize behavior problems by:

- Planning a program that is appropriate for the age and individual levels of the children.
- Providing a balance between active/quiet and self-directed/teacher-directed activities.
- Carefully planning transitions between activities.
- Focusing on the children, guiding their behavior, facilitating their learning, interacting and encouraging them.

Challenging Behavior

1. Contact parent to discuss behavior observed in class.
2. If behavior continues, make class room modifications and write down modifications made.
3. Start data collection process on one or more of the challenging behaviors.

4. Schedule meeting with parent, teachers and administrator to discuss data collected.
5. Discuss further steps with parent(s), teachers and administrator. The teacher may recommend testing if they feel it is necessary.

Transportation Policy

Western Branch Academy has a 13-passenger van to be used for small scale field trips only. This van maintains all Virginia State motor vehicle regulations and is insured through S.L. Nusbaum Insurance Agency. There will always be a staff member with a clean driving record operating the van and an additional staff member present to aid with supervision. Both staff members will be CPR and First Aid trained. All children under the age of 8 or under 80 lbs. in weight will utilize booster seats. There will be a roster of all children riding in the van, which will be utilized for "name to face" roll calls. Parent permission is required for a child to be transported in the school van.

WBA has two school-wide yearly field trips – one in fall and another in the spring. Parents are responsible for providing transportation for their child for these two field trips.

A charter bus may be rented from TranQuest to transport children for additional special field trips. Permission slips to ride the bus will be given out and must be signed.

Public School Bus Transportation

The school age child's parent or guardian must indicate to the elementary school, in writing, that the said child is attending after school care at Western Branch Academy and riding the designated bus from school with signed permission. Upon arrival or departure of the school bus, a teacher escorts the children to and from the building.

Food Policy

Western Branch Academy is a peanut/tree nut-free school. The school provides drinks (milk, water and 100% juice) and nutritious snacks in the morning and the afternoon. The menu is designed to meet the nutritional needs of children and provide opportunities for them to learn to eat and enjoy a variety of foods. Our snack menu is posted on our website as well as in each classroom on the bulletin board.

Lunch

Nutritious lunches should be sent each day with all students (this lunch should meet the USDA nutritional standards for children www.mypyramid.gov). Some good examples are cheese, fruit, fresh vegetables, low-fat yogurt, lean

meat sandwiches and crackers. Ice packs should be included in the child's lunch.

To ensure the health and safety of children in our care, there are certain foods that should be avoided while they are with us. We are a nut-free zone. Please refrain from bringing any products containing peanuts and/or tree nuts. Products containing the allergen warnings: contains, contains traces, may contain traces, or processed on the same equipment as peanuts or tree nuts may not be brought to school. Products containing the allergen warning, processed in a facility that processes peanuts/tree nuts, are ok to send to school. Other items to avoid as they are possible choking hazards are: popcorn, grapes (unless quartered) and hot dogs (unless cut and quartered). Western Branch Academy provides eating utensils as needed.

Lunches must be labeled with child's name and date and packaged to prevent spoilage. Western Branch Academy reserves the right to reject and return foods that are questionable. Please refrain from packing items that require warming in a microwave in your child's lunch. There may be occasions where a staff member is not available to warm up lunches. Instead, if your child's lunch should be warm, please send it in a thermos.

If a child forgets to bring a lunch, we will provide them with a nutritional lunch for a fee of \$6.00.

Birthday Celebrations

A child's birthday is a very special occasion. A simple snack which meets the nutritional needs of children may be provided by the parents to celebrate their child's birthday. Here are a few suggestions: fruit bars, muffins, cupcakes, fruit or pudding cups.

Because many children in our school have food allergies, we ask that all celebration/birthday foods be approved by child's teacher. Please label all containers.

To avoid hurt feelings, invitations will not be given for an outside party unless there are invitations for all the children in the classroom. We encourage you to meet and exchange phone numbers with other parents when you come to Parent Orientation Night.

School Celebrations

We are delighted to have your child at our school. In order to ensure that all the children receive healthy treats and snacks when celebrating special occasions with us, we have developed some guidelines.

Appropriate Celebration Snacks

Muffins (no nuts)
Fresh raw vegetables

Sugar-free popsicles
Popcorn (4-year-olds)

2025-2026 School Year

August 29 th	Meet & Greet – Meet Your Teacher 4 PM
September 1 st	Labor Day (School Closed)
September 2 nd , October 3 rd	1 st Day of School for students Teacher Workday for Elementary Students, Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required
November 4 th	Teacher Workday for Elementary Students, Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required
November 11 th	Veteran's Day (School Closed)
November 17 th -21 st	PK4 Fall Assessments
November 26 th	Day before Thanksgiving, <u>WBA Closing at 3 pm</u>
November 27 th & 28 th	Thanksgiving Holiday (School Closed)
December 8 th -12 th	PK4 Parent/Teacher Conferences
December 23 rd	Last day before Christmas Break, <u>WBA Closing at 3 pm</u>
December 24 th –Jan 2 nd	Christmas Break (School Closed)
January 5 th	School Reopens
January 12 th	Registration Begins for 2026- 2027 School Year and Summer Camp 2026 In- House Only
January 12 th - 16 th	PK2 and PK3 Assessments
January 19 th	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (School Closed)
January 26 th -30 th	PK2 and PK3 Parent/Teacher Conferences
January 29 th	Teacher Workday for Elementary Students,

January 30 th	Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required Teacher Workday for Elementary Students,
February 9 th	Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required Registration Begins for 2026- 2027 School Year and Summer Camp 2026 For the Public
February 16 th	Presidents' Day (School Closed)
March 6 th	Teacher Workday for Elementary Students, Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required
March 9 th -13 th	PK4 Spring Assessments
April 6 th -10 th	Spring Break (School Closed)
April 13 th	Teacher Workday for Elementary Students, Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required
April 20 th - 24 th	PK4 Parent/Teacher Conferences
May 8 th	Teacher Workday for Elementary Students, Childcare Day for School Age. Pre-registration required
May 25 th	Memorial Day (School Closed)
June 16 th	Last day of school – Chesapeake Public Schools Early Release (WBA Regular Day)
June 17 th	Childcare Day for Elementary Students, Pre-registration required. Childcare hours 7 am-3 pm
June 19 th	Juneteenth (School Closed)
June 20 th	All Summer Camp Staff report 7 am-3 pm
June 22 nd	First Day of Summer Camp 2026