IMMERSION, NATURE AND COMMUNITY SCHOOL
3701 E. MLK Blvd., Unit 2 and 3
Austin, Tx. 78721

PARENT HANDBOOK 2025 - 2026

Philosophy: Los Amiguitos is a community of multi-aged learners. Our goal is to enhance the development of the whole child in a global world, with a focus on creativity, problem solving, socio-emotional intelligence, empowerment, critical thinking, respect, sustainability of self, others and Nature. At Los Amiguitos, children become culturally and linguistically aware and open minded. They are provided with a fun, loving and stimulating environment and are engaged in activities to enhance the whole child's development.

Children served: Los Amiguitos serves children ages 3-8 years old (3-12 years old for camps, campouts, and other activities).

Curriculum: The Curriculum is emergent and based on the belief that children can easily absorb a second language through immersion, and that each child learns best by experiencing the world through active outdoor hands-on play. Through observation we create developmentally appropriate activities that recognize the uniqueness of each child and facilitate their growth. Lessons can vary per age group, and are in line with the Los Amiguitos school philosophy. Our curriculum enhances the following areas of development: social, emotional, cognitive, physical, language, and creative. All curriculum is provided in Spanish, by native Spanish-speaking teachers! Most of our school day occurs outside! It includes

multi-age learning groups as well as break-out, leveled center groups where students receive lessons specific to their education levels, interests, and age.

Classes and Fees 2024-2025

MONTHLY FEES from September through June:

5 days program	8:45 am-2:30pm	$1,115/month for 10 months
After care	2:30pm-5:30pm	$350/month for 10 months
Part-Time After Care (3 Days of aftercare Mon,Tues, Wed))	2:30pm-5:30pm	$290/month for 10 months $35/day drop in

K-2nd grade

5 days program	8:45 am-2:30pm	$1,180month for 10 months
After care	2:30pm- 5:30pm	$350/month for 10 months
Part-Time After Care (3 Days of aftercare Mon,Tues, Wed)	2:30pm- 5:30pm	$290/month for 10 months $35 /day drop in

Payments are to be made through Procare application, by ACH draft to cut down on Credit card fees**. Tuition (and aftercare) are not subject to adjustment because of illness or absence, nor for days school is closed for holidays, staff development days, bad weather, nor school vacation (except for July and August).**

Tuition is due and payable on the first of each month between September and June. Payments made after the 3rd will incur a $35 late fee.

No tuition will be charged in July or August; only summer camp tuition if your child attends.

All programs require a minimum of 6 families signed up.

Enrollment Forms and Orientation: Parents are invited to school tours and receive an orientation before their child attends school. Parents are responsible for completing enrollment forms prior to care. Forms include a Registration Form, Health Forms, Permission Form, Emergency and Medical authorization, Discipline Form, Off-site permissions and waivers, and a Child pick-up authorization. Parents must also disclose any known allergies so our team can create an allergy action plan.

Yearly commitment Families are asked to commit for an entire school year, from September to June. To ensure consistency for the group, it is required that a family give two months (three months in summer) notification. Tuition must be paid during this time to allow for the group to find another family. The notification should be emailed explaining the reasons for withdrawal.

Annual registration fee: There is a yearly $150 non-refundable registration fee upon enrollment.

Security deposit: At the time of acceptance, a security deposit of $650 is due. The deposit will be applied to the last month that the child is enrolled in our regular PreK3-2nd grade program at Los Amiguitos. It will not be reimbursed if your child does not end up attending Los Amiguitos, nor will it be applied to the last month your child attends if you do not give a two months notice of withdrawal.

Supply fee: To cover the costs of supplies, furniture, Procare school application, etc. there is a yearly non-refundable supply fee of $350 per student payable at the beginning of the school year or divided between beginning and middle of the school year (extra $25 for this option).

Late pick-up fee: A late pickup fee of $5.00 is incurred for every 5 minutes (or portion thereof) that a parent is late in picking up a child past the designated pickup time.

Calendar: Los Amiguitos strives to offer children a calendar that fits their growing and learning needs by allowing for regular short breaks throughout the school year. This calendar has proven to increase positive engagement and learning while decreasing stress, sickness during the school year, and needing to relearn and retransition after a long summer vacation. Please check the school year calendar for more precise vacation dates and days off.

Screen time and physical activity:! T.V., games, and/or computer time is not available to students at our school. Occasionally, teachers use technology for instruction, but it is always to enhance learning. Weather permitting, students spend the majority of their school day outside where they are encouraged to run, jump, skip, dance and practice yoga. More information about screen time and the importance of physical activity and learning in nature can be found here:

Effects of Excessive Screen Time on Child Development: An Updated Review and Strategies for Management - PMC

Why Kids Need to Spend Time in Nature - Child Mind Institute

Nature Play is Important for the Cognitive Development of Early Learners | informalscience.org

Parent-Teacher conferences and assessment: Conferences are scheduled twice a year (October and April). Assessment results, portfolios, and your child's progress will be shared. We observe and document each student's progress daily and in weekly team meetings. and share with families in order to build a curriculum, set goals for individual children, and monitor progress.

Volunteering, Parent participation,community events: Research has demonstrated the benefits of parent and family participation in children's school education. It enhances the sense of community, of empowerment and ownership in children and parents alike and creates closer ties with other members of our community. Participation can be either directly with the children or indirectly by

enhancing their learning environment, facilitating activities or through community outreach. Parent participation also helps to maintain reasonable tuition and offer tuition discounts through scholarships or barter systems to those who can't afford quality education. In addition to conferences we welcome families at the following events: weekly Spanish classes for adults, seasonal community gatherings, camping trips, and community work days among others. Events are published in a bi-monthly newsletter.

Parent Communication:

Any communication specifically to/from teachers should be done through Procare messaging. Please inform teachers if your child will be absent or tardy or needing to be picked up early or by someone else than one of the parents. Also let teachers know if something is going on that might affect your child's behavior.

Any administrative questions or inquiring about space for drop in aftercare should be emailed to admin@escuelaamiguitos.com.

We send information about community events, volunteer opportunities, curriculum and thematic units in a bi-monthly newsletter through procare and email.

Parent feedback: Families are offered an annual written survey via google docs. An email will be sent out at the end of the school year and upon care ending. Suggestions and evaluation results are integrated into the program operation when applicable.

Parent expectations: Parental support is crucial to your child's education. Teachers and parents need to work together for your child's benefit.

- Regular and punctual attendance (on time for drop off and pick up)
- Notify us via email/message (through Procare) if your child will be absent or late
- Participate in community events (community gatherings, community camp out)
- If possible, drive and chaperone so we can ensure successful field trips
- Make sure your child has enough changes of clothes and a variety of them when the weather is changing often.
- Make prompt payments and return any necessary forms
- Check emails/newsletters from Los Amiguitos for important information
- Help your child develop skills to become independent (getting dressed, eating, going to sleep, helping with carrying bags, picking up after him/herself, putting on shoes, etc)
- Communicate with teachers about your child's mood of the day or any other special circumstances we should know about
- Email/message (through Procare) any questions, comments, concerns

- Participate in regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences

Meals: At Los Amiguitos, children bring their own food and drinks. This makes it easier for the children since parents know what their child will eat best. It also insures parents know and agree with what their child eats, and helps prevent any kind of problems due to allergies. Our staff are trained on preventing food allergies and they keep all liquids above 110 degrees out of the reach of children.

At Los Amiguitos, we emphasize the importance of a healthy diet and we request that you ensure your child has a nutritious meal and especially do not pack any food or drink that has sugar or caffeine (like juice, sodas or chocolate) for your child. We do not have a refrigerator, so meals from home should include an ice pack (or 2 in summer) to maintain the needed temperature. You are encouraged to leave labeled non-perishables for those days when your child is still hungry or in case part of the food is dropped by accident.

We strive to share good nutritional practices with families through our farm to table school garden. Additional resources for child nutrition sites are listed below.

Our Top Healthy Lunches for Kids to Take to School

SuperKids Nutrition

NEW! Kid's Healthy Eating Plate | The Nutrition Source | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Clothing and Personal Belongings: Children's clothing should be comfortable, allowing complete freedom of movement, washable, and suitable for daily indoor and outdoor activities.

Since children spend time outdoors every day, parents should consider weather conditions when planning daily dress. Boots are highly recommended for those rainy days. Also, do not bring any clothes you do not want your child to get dirty, as we will be playing and gardening outside and doing art activities that can also be messy. To encourage development of independent bathroom skills, children's clothing should be easy for them to manipulate with a minimum of assistance.

Children must wear shoes which are practical as well as comfortable. Please do not send your child in flip flops or shoes that are too small/large or need help putting on.

A complete change of clothing should be kept at the school at all times.

Except for special items needed to smooth the transition from home, toys and personal

belongings should remain at home. This will avoid lost possessions and hurt feelings.

The school will make reasonable efforts to safeguard children's personal belongings and clothing, but will not be responsible for lost or damaged items.

Things to bring for your child:

- Change of Clothes - for those accidents and dirty times. Please make sure to replace them the following day.
- Outdoor closed toed shoes and boots that your child can put on by him/herself.
- Indoor shoes or slippers during chilly or cold weather
- Labeled oversized shirt or art smock for messy activities
- Extra clothes for sudden changes of weather
- Mat and Small blanket for nap time (if your child naps or needs to rest)
- A stuffed animal is ok for naptime. It needs to remain in the bin or in the sleeping mat. We also allow them at the start of the new year to ease transition if needed.
- 2 labeled water bottles (or 3 if they are small)
- Labeled lunch box
- Sunscreen and bug repellent with your child's name and your signature (optional)
- Binoculars

Arrival Sign In & Departure Sign Out: Children may not enter or leave the Center unless accompanied by an adult (an individual at least 18 years of age-per TDHS). Parents are required to sign the attendance sheet upon arrival and departure. Please do not use your cell phone while picking up or dropping off your child other than for signing in and out your child. Please do not allow your child to wander off unattended or leave the building ahead of you. For safety purposes, only those listed on the enrollment forms as designated persons for pick up will be permitted to leave with your child/children. If a circumstance should arise for someone other than those on your list to pick up your child/children, you will need to update your list in advance. We will require a Valid ID for identification of any individual we do not recognize. Please inform those you have designated to pick up of this policy.

Saying "Goodbye" (Separation): To help achieve the goal of allowing your child to become independent, emotionally healthy, and well adjusted, we recommend the following practices:

*If possible, children should be walked in, not carried

*Present your child to the teacher on arrival. The greeting between teacher and child is

invaluable. Many things about the child's health and state of mind can be determined in that brief time and nothing should interfere with it. The teacher will then help the child join into school activities.

*Goodbyes at school should be part of a normal, everyday routine every child goes through. Separation should be sweet and BRIEF, with reassurance about the planned pick-up time, especially at the beginning if the child is crying.

*Parents should encourage children to make friends with the teachers and look forward to being at school without feeling guilt or disloyalty to a parent.

Policy changes: Any policy change or changes including the tuition fee/ method of payments will be NOTIFIED to parents or legal guardians via email and newsletter. Policies are reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Updating contact information: Parents are required and responsible for updating all the information needed: address/telephone numbers (including home, work, cell) and medical records. Information can be updated by parents directly on Procare or by emailing **admin@escuelaamiguitos.com**

Consequence of non-payment: The parent/guardian agrees that if payment of tuition and fees are not made in accordance with this agreement, Los Amiguitos shall have the right to refuse to admit the student and take legal action to collect the unpaid balance due.

Dismissal If parent expectations are not met or if the school doesn't seem like a good fit for the child, a conference will be held with the parents/guardians at the discretion of the director. All situations will be held on a case by case situation, but the final decision is the director's. Families will receive any refunds owed within 30 days of dismissal.

Injuries: The staff makes every effort to ensure the safety of your child while in our care. Unfortunately, accidents may occur. Teachers and Center Staff are trained in CPR and basic first aid procedures. We have implemented the following procedures, should your child experience an injury while at our center. We will determine the severity of the injury (i.e., scrapes, bumps, bruises, etc.), administer appropriate first aid, and forward an accident report home with the person that picks up your child at the end of the day. In case of a serious accident or injury, EMS (911) will be contacted first. Within the limits of our ability, we will administer first aid. We will make every attempt to contact you immediately. If we cannot reach you, we will call the person you have indicated on the forms to make medical decisions for your child. If we cannot reach you, we will release your child into the custody of the emergency paramedics to transport your child for immediate medical care. Staff is prohibited from transporting an injured child. A staff

member will remain with your child until you or an authorized person arrives. Any medical and transportation bills that may arise due to an accident are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Children's Illness --- *Please note Covid Procedures are separate* --Every effort is made at Los Amiguitos to prevent the spread of disease. Even with precautions, children entering care are likely to experience an increase in mild illnesses. The frequency and severity of these will vary from child to child. However, an average child under the age of five has six to twelve mild illnesses per year. When a child is ill, they need a special level of attention and care, and we are not able to provide that care for one child, because we must also consider the rest of the children. Also, when ill children are present, they are potentially spreading germs to other children and to teachers. In addition, an ill child is vulnerable to catching a second illness while their immune system is overworked. If your child is so ill that they need special care, and they are not able to participate normally in our activities, they should remain at home. If they become ill at school, you will be called upon to take your child home. In the event that your child becomes ill and we cannot locate a parent, we will contact the person(s) you designated on your emergency care form, and ask them to pick up your child. The teachers at Los Amiguitos are the final judges of the severity of illness.

The following conditions are causes for exclusion from Los Amiguitos:
--- *Please note Covid Procedures are separate* --

Fever over 100 degrees. Children should stay at home at least 24 hours after a normal temperature is achieved WITHOUT the help of fever-reducing medications. For example, if your child goes home on Monday with a fever, they may come back to Los Amiguitos on Wednesday, if their temperature was normal on Tuesday. The 24- hour waiting period allows your child's immune system to regain strength.

Fever over 99 degrees with a stiff neck or back. Children may return only with a doctor's written permission.

Diarrhea (watery, bad-smelling stools more than once in succession). Children may return when normal function returns.

Vomiting (two or more episodes in the last 24 hours). Children may return when they can retain a light meal.

Persistent hacking or congested cough with sore throat (very red or blistered throat). Children may return with doctor's written permission.

Green nasal discharge (indicated a respiratory infection which requires treatment). Children may return with doctor's written permission.

Difficulty in breathing to the point where the child is very uncomfortable or unable to sleep normally.

Convulsions.

Persistent pain in abdomen.

Swelling, redness, or throbbing in an injured part of the body.

Undiagnosed profuse rash or blisters on parts of the body.

Unexpected profuse sweating.

Head lice**.** Children may return after treatment and removal of all nits.

Infectious skin or eye conditions (such as ringworm, impetigo, or pink eye). Children may return 24 hours after treatment with an antibiotic is begun.

Medications and Allergies: We do not administer any medication to the children in our care. Exception: If a child has a recurring medical condition, such as asthma or allergic reactions, the child's parent or health care provider may sign a medication authorization form allowing Los Amiguitos to administer the medication when symptoms occur for up to a six month period. The authorization must include information on symptoms to watch for. Sunscreen and Bug Repellent need to be labeled with the child's name as well as a parent's signature on the container in order for us to administer the product. Medication, as well as repellent, sunscreen, hand sanitizer cannot be stored within children's reach; please make sure to give it directly to the teachers.

Immunizations: Immunizations are required of all children attending child care in the state of Texas. You will need to provide a note from a physician indicating your child is apt to participate in a school setting.
Children 4 years and older are required to take a yearly hearing and vision screening. If your child is not up to date on his/her immunization you will need to provide a notarized affidavit.
Los Amiguitos encourages but does not require staff to get specific vaccinations.

Discipline & Guidance: Los Amiguitos has a philosophy of positive guidance and conscious discipline, incorporating creative teaching and involvement to help children develop self-discipline and inner control over their actions as well as learn to voice their feelings. It is based on mutual respect and an understanding of children's needs and development. We use praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only on unacceptable behavior. We also remind the children of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements. Positive guidance uses redirection, verbalization of misunderstandings, consistency, and acceptance of feelings, firmness, and fairness. Children are encouraged to identify and express their feelings verbally as well as to discuss and resolve conflicts rather than 'act out' their feelings. There must be

no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited: (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment; (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training; (3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child; (4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument; (5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth; (6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child; (7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language; (8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and (9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Research has shown that positive guidance and conscious discipline teaches children skills that help them get along in their physical and social environment. The aim is to develop personal standards in self-discipline and regulation and not to enforce a set of inflexible rules as well as learn to communicate effectively.

Challenging Behaviors: If behavior is challenging the Teacher/Director will have ongoing conversations with parents to express concerns and discuss strategies in addressing challenging behaviors. Conversations are framed around the objective of the program. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress. Though we strive to work together and find a good solution, please note that Los Amiguitos is not able to offer special services for children requiring extra attention to help them through severe learning disabilities, emotional issues or behavioral issues.

Visitation: Research has demonstrated the benefits of parent and family participation in children's school education. It enhances the sense of community, of empowerment and ownership in children and parents alike and creates closer ties with other members of our community.

Participation can be either directly with the children or indirectly by enhancing their learning environment, facilitating activities or through community outreach.

Parent participation also helps to maintain reasonable tuition and offer tuition discounts through scholarships or barter systems to those who can't afford quality education.

Los Amiguitos has an Open Door policy on parents visits. We recognize and support parents' desires to see and spend time with their children whenever they can. If visiting the child causes disturbance or upsets the child, we will discuss with the parents how we can find a better way for them to check-in on their child without causing disturbance in the child's care.

Accommodations: We will support families and children who may need additional accommodations as much as possible, which could include home language, special needs/differing abilities, and/or cultural backgrounds. Please talk with the director to see what we can do to meet your needs. Note, there may be some situations we can

not accommodate due to staffing/funding/nature focus, but we will do all we can to work with you.

Non-discrimination Policy: Los Amiguitos is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352), The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-135), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112). This is an equal opportunity program. No person, in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, political beliefs, or religion, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of,

or be otherwise subjected to discrimination. If you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, age, sex, a disability, political beliefs, or religion, you may lodge a complaint against Los Amiguitos by immediately writing and/or calling the Civil Rights Department, Texas Department of Human Services, P.O. Box 19030, Austin, Texas 78714-9030 512/450-3630.

Gang free zone: Los Amiguitos is a gang-free zone. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers and schools. The gang-fee zone is within 1000 feet of your child care center. Gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

Emergency Preparedness: In the event of an emergency, operating procedures are in place to ensure the safety of children. In case of a need of evacuation, children will be taken to:

3701 E. MLK Blvd, unit 1 (meeting room of Friend's meeting).

Austin, Tx. 78721

Parents will be contacted and informed.

Emergency Drills: Los Amiguitos is equipped with smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers. We are inspected yearly by the Fire Department. Emergency Fire Drills are held monthly and Severe Weather Drills and lock down drills are held every three months to ensure children are accustomed to emergency evacuation and relocation procedures. All exits are clear and unlocked and an emergency map is clearly posted on the doors. In the case of an extreme evacuation procedure one caregiver will round up children by telling them to line up and blowing a whistle. Each caregiver will have an updated list of the children on them and one caregiver will grab the first aid kit with emergency information and numbers and evacuate out the appropriate exit. During our relocation, the sign-in clipboard will be

used to keep track of all our children and their parent's phone numbers. If there is an evacuation, each child's parent will be contacted immediately by the caregiver's cell phone. Signing your child in is an important safety measure you need to take in case of an emergency.

Inclement Weather Policy: Los Amiguitos will closely monitor inclement weather, and may cancel school, delay the start time, or end the school day early to ensure safety of teachers and families. In the case of inclement weather, Los Amiguitos will closely follow weather updates, and will notify families via direct message on Procare. Parents are expected to check their messages and adjust their schedule in those extreme circumstances.

Child Abuse: Los Amiguitos policy, state law, HHSC child care licensing requirements, require that staff immediately report suspected child abuse and neglect. All staff are mandated reporters. .Los Amiguitos staff are required to obtain training on abuse and neglect every year. Training will include topics like warning signs, identifying abuse or neglect, and prevention of abuse or neglect. The child abuse hotline number is 800-252-5400.

Child Care Regulations: The office has posted copies of Los Amiguitos' most recent licensing inspection report, and other required notices. A copy of the Texas "Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers" is available from us and on the web at:

www.tdprs.state.tx.us/child-care/child-care-standards=and-regulations/pdf/final1746.pdf

Parents should also be aware of the following important contact information:

Local Child Care Licensing Office 753-2233

Texas Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400

Child Care Licensing WebSite State Child Care Licensing Website

Community Resources: We love supporting families and helping them thrive. You can find community resources on our parent board, in our bi-monthly newsletters, and on our facebook page. Additional community resources can be found here:

Family Resources in South Central Austin | LiveGrowPlayAustin.com

Family Resources - United Way For Greater Austin - Help Starts Here

Resources | AustinTexas.gov