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November 4, 2020

Good day parents and guardians,

I hope you and your families are doing well and staying safe during this unprecedented time. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for choosing LearnStar. We are proud and honoured that you have entrusted us with your children's after school care.

This year is a unique one, due to the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been working very hard in conjunction with many people and departments such as: Mr. Jim Sinnott, Director of Facilities and Custodial Management, Corporate Services Division, NLESD School Board, who is so knowledgeable about everything related to his job, even peripherally, and willing to answer every questions and find a solution to every problem. He kept us apprised of the information coming down from the government, that affected our ability to operate safely; with the dedicated staff at 811 who answered the many questions unique to running an after school program in the midst of a pandemic; with the Office of the Minister of Education Tom Osborne, and usually with Mr. Osborne himself, to check and double check that we are interpreting every piece of information correctly. He answered me every single time and found answers to our many questions. Rest assured that keeping your children safe and well is of the utmost importance to us.

To that end, we are following every rule set out for us by the proper authorities and have imposed many more of our own. For example, we request all LearnStar students and staff to wear a mask at all times. LearnStar is a cohort of its own, but because we cannot guarantee social distancing and the keeping of class and grade cohorts, we wanted to offset any risk, by having children and staff masked at all times. While we have always been diligent about cleaning, we have implemented even stricter cleaning and disinfecting protocols, to ensure the safety of your children, with a checklist kept every day. As you are aware, we took it upon ourselves to provide your child with school supplies this year. Each child had a large, resealable plastic bag that contains a LearnStar homework folder, two pencils, crayons, erasers, and two dry erase markers. This way, we have more control over what comes into the room, or what is pulled out of bookbags, and helps us to eliminate the practice of sharing writing utensils, etc. Children need only bring their homework assignments with them, and everything else is supplied. There is no sharing of any common baskets of supplies, whatsoever. Similarly, there is no sharing of activities, crafts or games. We have limited our use of activities, to things that can be disinfected at the end of the day, and things that can be provided to each child personally to avoid any cross contamination. For example, the children cannot build with Legos together. Instead, they are given an individual zip lock bag of Legos and other building and STEAM toys to play with on their own. The children can sit at the same table to build, but there is no sharing of pieces. We have also laminated all our flash cards and sight word bingo cards, so that they can be sanitized daily. At the end of every day, LearnStar staff sanitizes every item mentioned above - from pencil and markers, to Legos and flash cards. Even the plastic bags that hold their supplies and hold the Legos etc, are sanitized daily inside and outside.

Again, we worked closely with Mr. Sinnott to learn the best cleaning products to use, what the required contact time was (i.e., the amount of time the cleaning solution needs to stay wet on the item to disinfect), and the exact dilution. While I now know more about bleach, disinfecting and germs than I ever wanted to, our materials are clean! The same care is taken of the tables and chairs, and all surfaces the children touch. High touch areas are cleaned before, during and after the program. As always, the children never leave the room alone. They are walked to the washrooms with a staff member who waits outside, armed with hand sanitizer, to ensure proper hand sanitizing, and to prevent germs from entering our learning space.

Finally, staff members are always carefully chosen for their qualifications and suitability, and must attend LearnStar training designed by us, as well as continuing education throughout the year. Before staff can start working with LearnStar, they are required to have Criminal Record Checks and Vulnerable Sector Checks every year, and not more than 30 days old. In addition to our staff being required to have valid certification in First Aid, CPR, Level "C" and WHMIS, this year all staff were required to take the COVID-19 Work Safe training course offered by Workplace NL, and submit their certificate of completion before starting work. When and if a staff member is sick, with even the mildest of symptoms, they are required to stay home. Upon their return, they must attest in writing that they have been cleared by 811 to return to work.

Be assured that we are honoured to have been chosen to care for you children, and we take our responsibility very seriously. We will continue to work hard and uphold only the highest standards to show you that your trust has been well placed.

Kindest regards,



 Caroline Whelan
Owner
LearnStar Educational After School Programs Inc.

