



Parent Handbook

Academic Year 2011-2012

Address: 225 Roswell Street, Alpharetta, Georgia 30009

Website: www.thelionheartschool.com

Email: schooloffice@thelionheartschool.com

Phone: 770/772-4555

Fax: 770/772-1871

Contents

The Basics about Lionheart	3
History.....	3
Vision.....	3
Mission.....	3
Organization.....	3
Lionheart’s Educational Philosophy	4
The Developmental Approach.....	4
Classroom Assignments & Individualized Education.....	5
Specific Teaching Strategies and Curricula.....	5
Homework Policy.....	6
Logistics, Supplies & Misc	7
When Your Child Is Absent.....	7
Inclement Weather.....	7
Drop Off/Pick Up.....	7
Parents on Campus.....	7
Field Trips and Other Outings.....	7
After School Program.....	8
School Supplies.....	8
Textbooks and Work Materials.....	8
Planning Social/Non-School Events for Children.....	8
Communication and Parent Involvement	9
Student Binders.....	9
Other Regular Forms of Communication.....	9
Parent Meetings.....	10
Curriculum Night.....	10
Progress Reports.....	10
Assessments.....	10
Parent-Teacher Conferences.....	10
Lionheart’s Policies and Procedures	11
Admissions.....	11
Admission Procedures.....	11
Additional Support.....	12
Re-enrollment.....	12
Termination.....	12
Financial Assistance.....	12
Parental Involvement in Fundraising and Development.....	12
Parent Help at Lionheart.....	13
School Activities.....	13
Special Presentations.....	13
Yearbook.....	13
Administrative Support.....	13
Medication.....	13
When a Student is having Difficulty	14
Basic Procedure.....	14
Behavioral Expectations of Students.....	14
Procedure for Resolving Problems.....	14
Confidentiality Policy.....	14
Nondiscriminatory Policy.....	15
Lionheart’s Observation Policy	15
Enrolled Families.....	15
Outside Professionals working with Lionheart students or as Consultants to Lionheart.....	15
Other Professionals that do not work directly with families but need to observe a child.....	15
Families who are seeking placement, but not currently enrolled at Lionheart.....	16
Appendix A: Excerpts from <u>School Literacy: The Real ABCs</u>, Stanley Greenspan & Richard Lodish	17
Appendix B: Suggested Reading about our Approach	20

The Basics about Lionheart

History

The Lionheart School was founded by some of the Southeast's leading Early Childhood Education professionals and a group of parents unable to find a school or program which fit the needs of their children. Lionheart opened its doors in the fall of 2000, to provide an educational alternative for children with special needs. The mission was to create a new type of learning environment - one which combined the area's finest special education teachers; speech, occupational therapy professionals; and concerned and active parents. At The Lionheart School, a child's development becomes a cooperative inter-disciplinary approach with teachers, therapists, consultants, parents, and, of course, children, all actively involved.

Lionheart is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization. In 2008, The Lionheart School became an accredited member of the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Lionheart is also a Member of the Georgia Independent School Association (GISA), as well as the Georgia Association of Schools for Exceptional Children (GAPSEC).

Vision

Lionheart is dedicated to the education of children, working closely with families to provide an integrated and innovative learning environment. Added to our mission is the commitment to extend our reach beyond the children that we serve full-time; to develop training for educators and parents, and address the lifespan issues that families and children encounter as they transition into adulthood.

Mission

To provide a developmentally appropriate program for children on the autism spectrum and with other challenges of relating and communicating who need a specialized learning environment, therapeutic interventions, relationship building skills and the educational tools necessary to achieve their greatest potential.

Organization

The Lionheart School is governed by a Board of Directors which delegates the management of the school program to the Executive Director, Director of Education & Admissions, Director of Therapeutic Services and Director of Operations. The role of the board of directors is to establish the philosophy, the broad goals, and the overall policies of Lionheart, and to preserve and enhance Lionheart's assets, including land, buildings, endowments and regular income. The Executive Director and Director of Operations oversee the daily operations of the school and all fundraising efforts. They are responsible for increasing development efforts, community outreach, public relations, and the acquisition of educational materials and equipment. The Director of Education & Admissions and the Director of Therapeutic Services oversee all the educational and therapeutic needs of the children, process all admissions, supervise and mentor staff and develop programs that continually address the needs of the individual students.

Lionheart’s Educational Philosophy

The Developmental Approach

Lionheart has a developmental relationship-based approach to learning. At Lionheart, teachers, therapists and support staff work throughout the day on developing and implementing strategies and accommodations to address the individual profiles of each student. Lionheart believes that utilizing traditional curriculums combined with high-affect activities and experiences, enables the student to build intellectual capacity. Two principles for academics, that extend from the DIR® philosophy and are implemented at Lionheart, are multi-sensory exposure and emotionally meaningful interactions. Taking opportunities that arise to explore and expand the range of emotional experiences for a child is critical for the learning process of our students. We believe that healthy social-emotional development is the key to success in the social realm, the academic realm, and in the so-called “real world.” It is important to realize that the DIR® model is a broad framework for understanding how development occurs, how emotions relate to learning, and how one can best interact with a child to foster growth in academic, cognitive, and social-emotional areas.

Most traditional school settings rely on rote learning as the primary means of ‘building intellectual capacity’. The Lionheart School builds intellectual skills by focusing on the building blocks of intelligence: communication and thinking. For example, we don’t try to build up vocabulary by memorizing dictionary words. Students at Lionheart get involved in the real world, and in the classroom we start with things that are emotionally meaningful for the student. Every opportunity for expressive thought and communication is taken throughout the day. Instead of presenting un-emotional facts about an event, such as a visit to the Nature Center, at Lionheart we ask questions like “How did it make you feel to see a snake?”, or “Who thought it was scary, who thought it was cool?” or “What did you think when you saw one of your classmates fall out of the canoe? Do you think he was mad, angry or was he scared?” We know that when there is an emotional thread associated with a topic, children’s ability to relate and communicate becomes more intricate and meaningful. The reason for this is that the emotions propel a child to be more connected to the world and people around him.

Individual profiles are addressed from an inter-disciplinary approach, hence all professionals involved in the education and success of your child work together as a team to deliver the best comprehensive educational plan to fit each individual profile while concurrently working on each child’s ability to grow and be part of a group. We offer the students a rich and challenging curriculum, but we do it in the context of what is meaningful to each of them, and we use the content of the curriculum primarily as a means to develop their ability to engage and interact with others in sustained, flexible, abstract ways. A key starting point is found in the ability of each student to self-regulate—that is, to calm themselves (or be calmed), to repair logical and emotional breakdowns, and to remain organized and communicative under stress of varying kinds. This ability to self-regulate is under-developed in most of the kids we work with, but in every case that we have seen, it can be improved.

By focusing on each child’s individual differences, and maintaining the highest possible staff to student ratio, The Lionheart School crafts a program suited to each child’s developmental profile. This results in a nurturing and supportive environment, directly addressing the child’s social, emotional and intellectual growth. At Lionheart we view the family as central to a child’s success and encourage all important members in a child’s life to contribute to the team effort of building a successful plan, one that focuses on critical developmental and emotional and relational aspects of their growth. Lionheart relies heavily on the participation of each child’s family to integrate the

philosophy of the program into their home life. It is essential that Lionheart serves as part of an integrative approach to a child's whole comprehensive program. This requires a cooperative effort with teachers, therapists, outside professionals, parents and of course, the children, all actively involved.

We will help you to find resources for learning, including conferences, discussion groups, workshops and books. You can start with the appendices in this handbook. We look forward to working with parents in a collaborative way to understand and address the needs of the students.

Classroom Assignments & Individualized Education

Classroom assignments are determined by senior staff through careful consideration of the student's needs based on their individual profiles. Classroom assignments will be released at the Open House at the start of the school year.

Individual Differences (the "I" in DIR®) are evaluated to identify a student's strengths in order to maximize learning potential. Students primarily work in small groups. The ability to address the individual differences while in a group setting is a primary objective at Lionheart. Students are challenged and supported in developmentally appropriate ways. By grounding the educational lessons in a student's interests, we help your child to develop both their social and emotional intelligence.

Regular analysis of each student's profile allows teachers and therapists to address the needs of a student and to make accommodations as necessary. Every opportunity is taken to work on objectives critical to a student's profile. Traditional interventions are utilized in an integrated approach towards learning.

The fact that students all learn differently and have different strengths and challenges is not unique to Lionheart. What is unique is the focus of our professional staff to develop and comprehend a student's profile and to address the challenges from an inter-disciplinary approach - which uses the best of what each discipline can offer. Staff regularly consults with each other, review each other's goals and implement inter-disciplinary goals in all settings during the day.

Specific Teaching Strategies and Curricula

One of the main reasons why Lionheart has such a favorable teacher-student ratio is so that we can address the individual needs of each student. Although students need to be able to function in small groups for most of their day in order to be successful, it is true that most students learn best when the material and the teaching approach matches their individual profile. We use a variety of recognized and innovative strategies and specific curriculums and programs to help our students learn in meaningful, connected ways. Some of these strategies and curricula include (but are not limited to):

- *Lindamood-Bell's Visualizing and Verbalizing (V/V)*. V/V provides a framework and activities for strengthening a student's ability to generate internal visual images, a critical component of reading comprehension, multi-perspective thinking, and emotional flexibility.
- *Michelle Garcia-Winner's Social Thinking Curriculum*. Perspective-taking, or the ability of one person to consider the point of view and motives of another person, is a crucial skill for successful interpersonal relations and is one that anyone with a social cognition disability will struggle with.

- *Georgia Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) Resources.* The Georgia Department of Education provides tremendous resources online, from lesson plans to entire sequenced curricula in a variety of content areas. We make frequent use of the QCC for content, but also as a guide for understanding what students “should” be learning at each grade level.
- *Portfolio-based Assessment.* Students accumulate work throughout the year, revisiting and editing certain assignments and building new assignments off of others. Rather than create an over-focus on grading individual assignments, we help students look at their entire body of work, seeing what they do in a larger, more meaningful context.
- *Project-Based Learning.* Students work on several projects during the year that integrate many of their learning goals. These projects may include an analysis and writing component, an art component, math, social studies, and/or science components, a social-cognitive/interaction component (e.g., interviews, community exploration), or a range of other elements.
- *Sensory-Based Activities to Foster Sensory Integration.* Activities in the classrooms and during the electives all incorporate specific sensory elements designed to help students use their senses in more organized, integrated ways. We use a range of resources in this area, from occupational therapy activities to modified PE games.
- *Reading Curriculum.* Various developed curriculums are selected based on the individual profiles of the students. Reading Mastery (SRA); Reading for Understanding (SRA); Sing, Spell Read and Write; Explode the Code (EPS); Wordly Wise (EPS); Touch Phonics; Wilson Reading Curriculum; Orton-Gillingham and Great Leaps are samples of the curriculums that we may use.
- *Math Curriculum.* Selected curriculums include Saxon Math and Right Start Math. We also integrate math concepts and ideas in other ways as opportunities to do so present themselves such as the school’s coffee shop and outdoor learning labs.
- *Technology-Assisted Learning.* Students and teachers use a variety of tools to assist their learning. Software that we utilize includes Co-Writer, Draft Builder, Earobics, Inspiration, and Kidspiration. All software is available on Lionheart computers. All classrooms are equipped with Promethean whiteboards.
- *Gardens and Environmentalism Curriculum.* Students participating in the experiential learning Gardens Program use a modified LifeLab Curriculum program. In addition, Lionheart staff members are actively developing our own gardens curriculum from other resources to better tailor the lessons to our students’ individual profiles.

Homework Policy

Homework expectations are based on a student’s individual profile. The amount and complexity of homework is determined via collaboration between the parents and teacher.

Logistics, Supplies & Miscellaneous

When Your Child Is Absent

Please call or email the office by 9:15 AM to let us know that your child will be absent for the day. If you know in advance of the date of an absence or family trip/vacation, please let us know as soon as possible, as it helps to inform our planning for activities and lessons.

Inclement Weather

In the event of extreme weather, Lionheart may close the school for all or part of the day. If this decision is made, we will notify you through the following methods:

- 1) An email to Parents-lhrt@googlegroups.com
- 2) A message will be sent out via www.statusme.com's "Lionheart School" club. All parents should sign up for this service and set their preferences
- 3) We will list our school closures via www.wsbtv.com. You can also review their listings to determine whether we have "called it".

Drop Off/Pick Up and Other Driving Issues

The school day runs from 9:00-2:20pm Monday through Thursday and 9:00-1:30pm on Friday. We make it a policy for staff to greet and escort all of our students to class. Drop off is from **8:50-9:00am Monday-Friday**. Pick up is from **2:20-2:30pm Monday-Thursday**. Please make special mental note that pick up is from **1:20-1:30pm on Fridays**. We have a specific schedule in place for each student that kicks off right away, so please make every effort to be on time. Be sure to call the office (770/772-4555) if you are running late. If you are late or there is no one to physically greet your child at carpool, please stop in the office to let someone know that your child has arrived. Additionally, please do not drop your child off before 8:50am. Although there may be staff on campus, they are preparing for the day and need that time to get ready.

Parents on Campus

We require all parents and guests to check in with the front office when arriving on campus for any reason. Whether running late, dropping something (or someone) off or coming to the school for a meeting, please notify the office of your arrival. Additionally, we ask that you do not venture into classrooms or around campus without notifying Lionheart staff. For many of our students it is deregulating for them (and by extension, to other students as well) to see parents in the academic setting. Classroom observations should be set-up with the classroom teacher who will inform the office when a visit has been scheduled.

Field Trips and Other Outings

Lionheart uses off-site facilities. The Lionheart bus is used to transport students on most occasions; however there is not always sufficient room for everyone. This means that your child may be in situations where they will be riding with a staff member in a private vehicle. In these instances, a Lionheart staff member will operate the vehicle and all rules for safety will be followed. Please reinforce rules at home regarding proper behavior and consideration of others so that traveling in school groups can be a successful experience.

We will have small group field trips several times throughout the year. As opportunities arise, and we can tie in curriculum theme objectives to external events, we will also plan "big" field trips. For many field trips, we will ask parents to participate as escorts. We encourage all parents to volunteer for these events as it is a wonderful opportunity to participate in your child's education. We will

explore many local resources from the nearby nature centers to the animal shelter to the grocery store to local museums. We welcome any ideas or suggestions for field trips that you may have.

After School Program

The Lionheart School operates an after school program four days per week - Monday through Thursday. This program maintains the same quality of professional supervision provided during the school day at Lionheart, to ensure each child has a safe, fun and educational after school environment.

The cost of the program is an additional fee of \$40/day if registered in advance. If not registered by the first week of the month, or for last minute participation, which is based on space available, the fee is \$50/day. Registration forms for the after school program will be taken monthly. Families who register for every available day will be given a \$40 discount for the month. Please watch for registration forms each month via email.

The program will start the second week of school, on August 30, 2010, for students who participated in the after school program during the previous school year. We do our best to ensure that the After School Program should be a safe and appropriate environment for any participating student. For this reason, we assess each student's readiness to participate on a case-by-case basis. New students will be permitted to join the program after staff has determined whether the program is an appropriate fit based on the individual student's profile. We should be able to make a determination within the first few weeks of school. Please direct any questions about the After School Program to Bryon at bbartholomew@thelionheartschool.com.

School Supplies

We ask parents to bring in a stock of school supplies at the beginning of the year. The 2011-2012 School Supply Request List is in your enrollment packet. We will make additional requests for supplies and special materials throughout the year. Students' primary binders (or portfolios) will be provided by Lionheart, since much thought has been put into our method for helping students to manage and learn organizational skills. We have a system in place to help all of the students strengthen their ability to get and stay organized and to improve their executive function skills.

Textbooks and Work Materials

Given the individual variability in our students' abilities and interests, the staff will be acquiring academic materials for each student on an as-needed basis. All costs will be included in tuition, however any donations of curriculum, books, computers or other items is always greatly appreciated. Parents do not need to purchase any textbooks or workbooks for their student. If you have items (books, toys, educational material, etc.) that you would be willing to loan out or donate, please bring them into the office and specify any restrictions with our Office Manager.

Planning Social/Non-School Events for Children (A Request)

Please be thoughtful when planning non-school events involving Lionheart students. This is particularly in regard to birthday parties, but should be applied to all non-school play-dates and events. Many of our children are sensitive to feeling excluded in social situations. We understand that natural friendships develop and that coming to understand 'real world' social dynamics is important for the children to learn, but we ask you to be thoughtful when planning events. Where possible, please try to include your child's whole class in any celebration or event. If your child has specific friends that they want to play with, just be considerate in your planning. Remind the children participating that it can be hurtful to discuss their activities with children who aren't invited.

You may also want to be discreet in arranging logistics for the event (i.e. avoid picking the participating students up @ carpool). If you would like advice about a specific event you are planning, please feel free to call and discuss the circumstances with us. It is important to us to maintain healthy and positive social dynamics among the students, so we are happy to help.

Communication and Parent Involvement

Student Binders

Your child will bring home a binder every day. In this binder you will find the student's work-in-progress and any notes or updates from your child's classroom teacher. If there is a need to communicate regarding something on a daily basis (medication effects, behavior patterns, or something of that nature) we will provide those updates in this binder. Please check this binder every day. Your daily engagement with the academic branch of your child's life will help him/her to improve organizational skills as well as providing a regular means of communicating with staff. If you have specific questions about a given issue, simply insert a note to staff inside the binder or send an email to schooloffice@thelionheartschool.com, and we will respond as quickly as we can.

Other Regular Forms of Communication

Lionheart has incorporated a variety of methods to keep you informed about your child's education.

- **Phone:** For any issues that need to be addressed immediately, we will call you. Please be sure to keep your contact information, especially cell phone numbers, updated with the school.
- **Email:** Group notices and requests will generally be sent to families via blanket emails to the parents-lhrt@googlegroups.com email list. Families will also receive individual emails, as appropriate. Please commit to checking your account on a regular basis and reading all Lionheart emails to keep informed and up to date.
- **Facebook:** Lionheart has a group on Facebook called "Speak up for Lionheart, Speak up for Autism!" This group will be a wonderful place for posting pictures, having discussions and telling short stories about the children. We hope it will grow as community resource for our families and supporters. Anyone with a Facebook account can join the group. Please sign up yourself and invite friends and family to do so as well.
- **The ROAR:** This is our email newsletter for parents and staff. It is distributed weekly and has stories and news updates for Lionheart. Please be sure to read it regularly!
- **Newsletters:** Lionheart produces a newsletter two (2) - three (3) times per calendar year. We like to include articles and stories about what is going on with the school and the students. We encourage parents to read the newsletters when they come out and also to pass them on to friends and family. Newsletters are sent to our individuals and organizations in our current database. Submissions for additions to our mailing list, or ideas and articles for the newsletter, can be submitted to Kati Keyes, kkeyes@thelionheartschool.com.
- **StatusMe.com:** This website allows you to receive text message or email notices on your phone in the event of school closures or other immediate logistical notices pertaining to Lionheart. The website is www.statusme.com. To sign up, go to the site, create an account and add the club "Lionheart School". Once setup, you will automatically receive notices as necessary. Note: This is a rare use program, used perhaps 2-3 times/school year.

Parent Meetings

Lionheart holds Parent Meetings once a month during the school year. At least one family representative should commit to attend. All meetings will be held on campus. Meeting dates/times are to be determined and parents will be notified via email.

Curriculum Night

Each fall we hold an event to explain our schedule structure and academics to parents and to provide them with an opportunity to speak with Lionheart teachers and therapists regarding their thoughts/concerns for their child. This year's curriculum night is set for 7:00pm on Wednesday, September 14, 2011. This event is only for the parents, and is mandatory. Please arrange for childcare for that evening to ensure you are able to attend.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are based on each student's goals in academic and therapeutic areas. They will be provided every quarter throughout the academic year. All parents will receive an academic report tracking the student's goals in the fundamental areas of reading, writing and math. Students receiving additional therapies will receive progress reports for each of those subject areas as well. Progress reports will be discussed at the parent-teacher conferences (see below).

Assessments

During the course of the year, more comprehensive assessments may be needed in specific subject or therapeutic areas. The necessity of additional assessments will be discussed with the parents prior to any testing. Every effort will be made to embed the assessment into the daily schedule. In some cases, we will only be able to provide these assessments for an additional fee, since they may require one on one time with the respective evaluator. In the event that a fee will be charged for an assessment, parents will be notified of the expense prior to completion of the assessment. We may ask you to arrange for independent assessments to be done with professionals outside of Lionheart as well.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held twice a year. Attendance is optional. If you choose not to meet, your child's progress notes will be sent home in backpacks. The conference format establishes the important parent-teacher relationship and offers the opportunity for a rich exchange of information. During the conference, parents are encouraged to ask questions, share their goals for their child and explore concerns about academic and social progress. When necessary, additional conferences are arranged to handle concerns, special issues or communication with outside specialists.

The goal of the parent-teacher conference is to give a full account of the child's experience at Lionheart, including descriptive information and an evaluation of the child's progress. The teachers share impressions of the child's way of experiencing the environment, including use of materials and equipment, work habits and interactions with groups and individuals. The teachers also identify what they feel to be the child's strengths and challenges. During the fall conference, goals are set by the student's teacher and respective professionals that work with each student. The spring conference reflects on the goals set and met during the year. Parents should think about their goals for the conference beforehand so that they can make sure all their areas of interest or concern are addressed. In addition to filling out the impressions parents have of their child's school life, the conference can also help parents respond more helpfully to their children at home. Because of time limits, the parent-teacher conference must focus on the individual child.

Lionheart's Policies and Procedures

Admissions

Lionheart seeks students from all ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds who will benefit from the program and who will make positive contributions to our community.

Students are admitted on the basis of individual profiles and professional assessments. Medical and school reports, student visits, and feedback from parents and professionals combine to determine the appropriateness of the Lionheart program for a specific child.

Students are initially enrolled for a three month trial period, during which time the Lionheart team will work diligently to determine the suitability of the program for the child. Parents are informed about of the child's progress throughout the trial period. After the trial program is complete, the Lionheart team will inform the parents as to the appropriateness of the full-time program for their child's continued development. In some instances, families will be asked to extend the trial period for an additional three month period for further evaluation before a final decision concerning ongoing placement at Lionheart will be made. Lionheart reserves the right to shorten the trial period if Lionheart determines that appropriateness of fit doesn't exist.

Admission Procedures

1. The first step in considering Lionheart for your child is to review the website www.thelionheartschool.com in full and to familiarize yourself with our philosophy and model.
2. Prospective families should then schedule an information session and tour of the campus by calling the office. Set admissions-related tour times and dates are posted on Lionheart's website. You may also call the school for information on upcoming tours. Prospective parents are asked to come without their child/children for the initial tour and presentation.
3. For serious inquiries, the Director of Education & Admissions or the Director of Therapeutic Services will review initial intake information and make recommendations to parents about whether they should continue with the application process. If appropriateness of fit is determined, parents will be asked to complete an application. (Available on the school's website or you may request an application via postal mail, email or fax.)
4. After having received a completed application and the \$100 application-processing fee, a file is established on the applying student. The completed application is reviewed and evaluated by the Director of Admissions and the Director of Special Services. Previous school records, teacher evaluations, professional assessments such as speech pathology report, occupational therapy reports and psychological assessments are all required prior to review of the application.
5. Once the application is reviewed, the Director of Admissions will contact the family to discuss the specifics of the case, and if appropriate, to schedule an interview with the child.
6. The student meets independently of his/her parents with the Director of Admissions and/or the Director of Therapeutic Services.
7. If the program is found to be appropriate for the student, the student may be asked to stay and interact with other students at the school. If this is not possible, a scheduled visit will be made so that the child will have an opportunity to visit the school during regular hours to interact with other students. Additional meetings may be requested as necessary.
8. After review, Lionheart will inform the parents of its decision by phone or by mail.
9. If admitted, an initial enrollment contract is mailed to the family. If families decide to enroll, the signed contract, along with a \$1000 non-refundable deposit fee, is required to secure placement in the program.

While enrollment normally takes place before the beginning of the school year, a student may be admitted during the school year if a vacancy exists. In this case, tuition would be pro-rated.

The payment of tuition is a condition of enrollment. Payment is made in three installments on September 15, November 1 and December 15 (the deposit fee amount is applied to the first installment). Non-payment of tuition will jeopardize the status of the student in the Lionheart program. All payments should be made directly to The Lionheart School. If money is due from other sources (grants, school districts or others), a payment schedule needs to be proposed in writing to the Executive Director.

Additional support

Lionheart accepts students who are able to work in small groups. However, there are instances when a student may need additional support to be able to participate in the daily program. Lionheart may require parents to either physically support by accompanying their child, or financially to hire an aide to help during the school day. This may occur at anytime during the school year.

Re-enrollment

Students are re-enrolled on an annual basis subject to re-evaluation of progress, conduct, influence on others and, when appropriate, parental involvement.

Termination

Lionheart reserves the right, at its sole discretion to terminate a student's enrollment by written notification to the parent(s) at any time. In the event of such a termination, Lionheart will provide a pro rated refund of tuition fees (other than the nonrefundable registration fee) to the family.

Financial Assistance

There is a limited amount of financial aid available for families based on need. Financial information is processed independently by the Educational Testing Service. Any families intending to apply for Financial Aid should complete the Parent Financial Statement (PFS) Form. The form is available through the ETS website: <https://sss.ets.org/> or in hardcopy through the Lionheart Office. Please be sure to complete the application NO LATER than March 31, 2010 for the 2011-2012 Academic School Year. Financial assistance awards are made at the sole discretion of the Executive Team with the approval of the Board of Directors.

Families that are granted a financial assistance award are required to volunteer at Lionheart. Hours required will be calculated according to the amount of your award. A grant of \$5000 will mandate a donation of 200 hours of volunteer time throughout the year. This works out to 5 hours/week for each week that school is in session. Hours may be grouped or divided according to what is needed and what works best for you and Lionheart. Parents participating in this policy are required to coordinate arrangements with Lionheart's Office Manager by **September 15, 2011**.

Parental Involvement in Fundraising and Development

Because tuition only covers 60-70% of the cost of each student's education, Lionheart depends heavily on fundraising in order to sustain its existence. Additional funds from individuals, corporations, foundations and other sources are necessary for Lionheart's continued survival. It is essential that all parents contribute to our fundraising efforts. All parents are expected to contribute to our annual fund, our major fundraiser (the silent auction/wine tasting event held each year in January), our capital fundraising efforts and to the GOAL Scholarship program through reallocation

of your Georgia state taxes. Additionally, all parents are expected to volunteer in our development efforts by offering lists of contacts to invite to participate in our fundraisers, assisting with corporate sponsorships, preparation of grant proposals and/or assistance with public relations events on behalf of Lionheart. All parents will be required to sign a volunteer agreement with Lionheart as a condition of their child's enrollment in the school.

***Please fill out the parent involvement sheet that is included with your packet.
VOLUNTEER HOURS ARE MANDATORY FROM ALL FAMILIES.***

Parent Help at Lionheart

There are several ways in which you can participate with your child's school life.

School Activities

In an effort to link a common thread through the varying academic levels and curriculums that students are working on, we will continue to supplement the reading and math curriculums with a theme based curriculum. Each classroom teacher will work with the parents as to what additional items may be needed to support the theme. We encourage parents to supply us with any theme related items, such as books, videos, games, field trip ideas, web sites, etc.

Experiential learning opportunities may also require additional support school. Parents will be asked to participate, reinforce lessons at home when appropriate, and supply materials as needed.

Special Presentations

Many parents (or other family members) have personal interests and/or careers that students might enjoy learning about through a special presentation. We are happy to help you to put together a presentation or learning activity that would be suitable for our students. We are committed to helping students discover their interests and help them find others who share these interests. If you are a physician, marathon runner, chef or whatever, then you have something to share with the students. These events have been great learning experiences in the past for our students and we encourage everyone to either participate, or help us identify people in the community who would love to come in and share their knowledge/talent with Lionheart.

Administrative Support

Our school has a very small administrative staff and can use all the volunteer help it can get. Every week we have teacher materials that need to be photocopied and laminated. We also have ongoing filing and organizing projects to complete. If you are interested and able to assist us, please coordinate with our Office Manager to coordinate regarding volunteer times and specific projects/tasks. Dedicated space for volunteers will be available this year.

Medication

Many children are on different medications for various reasons. We understand the need at times for a controlled 'blind' study to determine effectiveness of a certain medication. However, it is imperative that there is specific knowledge of medication and dosage noted in case of an emergency. Therefore, if it is necessary to get 'blind' feedback from members of the team, the School requires, in writing, that at least one staff member is informed of the medication and dosage(s) being given and of the fact that other members of the team are not aware of such medication and dosage(s).

Any prescription or nonprescription medication that is to be administered at school must be clearly labeled with the child's name and information. Non-prescription medication should also be provided by the parent(s) and instructions clearly labeled. The medicine must be stored in a child-safe bottle as provided by the pharmacy with the label clearly marked. (Any pharmacy can supply extra bottles if requested.) Prescription and nonprescription medication is administered only as authorized in writing by a parent or guardian. A new authorization form must be signed if there are any changes in the medication, dosage(s) or other instructions.

It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that required medications are at school for prescribed times.

When a Student is Having Difficulty

Basic Procedure

Teachers will share concerns with parents as problems arise or when special attention is needed beyond the normal expectations of the school. This discussion may occur at one of the two annual parent-teacher conferences or by calling a special meeting, depending on the nature of the concerns. After areas of concern are outlined, parents and teachers will work together to gather more information and formulate plans to help the child progress. In some instances, outside help may be necessary. Suggestions of outside help will be communicated to the parents who would be expected to seek counsel with appropriate professionals to help define the issues and ways of intervening. Lionheart staff, teachers or therapists may make referrals to recommended specialists.

Behavioral Expectations of Students

Lionheart seeks to maintain a secure and nurturing atmosphere. Students are expected to be able to display appropriate behavior throughout the day. When inappropriate behavior occurs, we use a combination of sensory input, social story-making, redirection and individualized instruction to modify or control the behavior. If our methods are not successful, information will be communicated to the parents by notes, telephone or email. If behavior problems persist to the point where the behavior becomes disruptive to the other children, the parents will be notified and asked to meet with staff to discuss how to further address their child's behavior. In certain situations, outside consultation may be necessary to help formulate a plan to address the behavior. If a plan cannot be executed within Lionheart, the parents and the staff will re-evaluate the suitability of Lionheart to meet the needs of the child.

If a child exhibits seriously disruptive behavior, such as hitting/biting someone or throwing/breaking an object, the student will be immediately removed from the group. Parents will be called immediately to pick up their child. Parents will also be called if there is any concern that the child may pose a danger to him/herself or others. In such cases, the staff and parents will discuss the problem and collaboratively determine what measures need to be taken (and what progress shown) before the child can return to school. Depending on the severity of the incident, outside professionals may need to be consulted before the child returns to school.

In any case where a student has exhibited disruptive behavior, Lionheart reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to determine whether and under what circumstances the child may return to the school.

Procedure for Resolving Problems

If a family has concerns with any of the professional staff or Lionheart programs and is unable to resolve an issue, they should notify the Director of Education either by phone, email or writing. The

Director of Education will collaborate with the family to determine appropriate actions and/or to resolve the issues.

Confidentiality Policy

All information provided to the school regarding an individual child remains confidential. The following exceptions apply: (a) All staff shall have access to student files, including information that has been provided by the parents, other staff and outside consultants, specialists and medical personnel, and (b) staff may discuss a child with outside professionals and specialists who consult with Lionheart, but only as is relevant to that child's treatment and development, and only with permission from the family.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

The Lionheart School admits students of any race, color, religious faith, national origin and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Lionheart's Observation Policy

Enrolled families

Parents of enrolled students may observe their child at any time. We ask that parents coordinate with the office regarding when they would like to observe, in what manner, and for how long. Observations can be done by video camera or in person. Parents who wish to be physically in the classroom for their observation will need to set up a time with the Director of Education. We ask that you make your request at least one week prior to your preferred observation time.

Outside Professionals working with Lionheart Students or as Consultants to Lionheart

Non-staff professionals need to call the office at (770) 772-4555 to set up a time to observe. Either the Director of Education or the Director of Therapeutic Services will accompany the observing professional throughout the duration of their visit. We ask that the observation and conversation be limited to the specific child being observed. Lionheart staff that work directly with the child may be available to answer questions either by phone or email. Generally, during the observation time, teachers and therapists will not have time to consult. If an in-person consultation is necessary, please notify the office when scheduling your visit so that we can attempt to incorporate this into your existing appointment. Parents of a child being observed will be notified as to the time of observation, but will not be expected to be present. Documentation on the child will not be shared with outside professionals unless a release is signed by a parent/guardian. Student observations are limited to one professional at a time.

Other Professionals that do not work directly with families but need to observe a child

Other professionals that are not Lionheart consultants, or professionals working directly with enrolled families, will only be allowed to visit the school if the following criteria are met:

1. A written request to observe is submitted to Lionheart, and specified parents, with details regarding ideal date, duration and the reason for the visit. Requests should be submitted at least 10 days prior to suggested observation date.
2. Permission for visit is authorized by the Director of Education and specified parents.
3. Visitor needs to report to Lionheart office upon arrival.
4. Visitor needs to be accompanied by a Lionheart staff member at all times.

5. Observation is limited to specified child.
6. Observation time is limited to 30 minutes.
7. Observation may be limited to remote/video observation only; this decision will be made solely at the discretion of Lionheart.
8. Observation will be limited to one person at any one time, unless other arrangements are approved by Lionheart.
9. Lionheart reserves the right to change or cancel the observation at any time.
10. A maximum of three visits per year will be allowed in observation of any one child.
11. No student files or documentation will be shared unless requested/approved by the parents.

Families who are seeking placement, but not currently enrolled at Lionheart

Set admissions-related tour times and dates are posted on Lionheart's website. You may also call the school for information on upcoming tours. Prospective parents are asked to come without their child/children for the initial tour and presentation.

Every effort is used to minimize interruptions of the classrooms. Please follow the instructions provided by Lionheart staff. Lionheart reserves the right to cancel an observation at any time.

Appendix A

Excerpts from **School Literacy: The Real ABCs**

By Stanley Greenspan and Richard Lodish

Published in *Phi Delta Kappan*, December 1991

Learning does not necessarily occur in schools or as a result of instruction; it occurs in the split-second initiatives that children take with others as they try to attend, engage, interact, communicate, and reason.

Before children can learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, they must possess "school literacy"--that is, they need to know *how to learn*. School literacy comprises four elements: attending and focusing, establishing positive relationships, communicating, and being able to observe and monitor oneself. Most infants and children (regardless of their individual rates of learning) have the potential to go through a series of stages in which they acquire these critical abilities.

Attending and Focusing

The ability to *attend and focus* is the first requirement for being able to learn. It is the ability to take in information with the senses and to focus attention on that information without becoming over stimulated, bored, or confused.

An important element of a child's ability to attend is his or her unique style of processing information, a style that is defined by both constitutional and maturational factors. For example, a child who doesn't listen to the teacher may be over reactive to a high-pitched voice and find the teacher's tones upsetting. Alternatively, another child may not be able to follow the sequence of visual images that the teacher creates on the chalkboard. The unique perceptual characteristics of each child must be considered in relation to each of the four abilities that constitute school literacy.

If a child is over reactive to sound and has a hard time following the sequence of sounds or words, how should we expect him or her to react to a busy, noisy classroom? How should we expect children who are sensitive to touch and need large amounts of space around them to react to "circle time"? And how should we expect the active learner who needs to move around to react to hours of sitting still?

Relating to Other People

The second basic of school literacy is the ability to *relate to other people* in a warm, trusting way. This capacity is fundamental to any learning relationship. Students who are aloof, withdrawn, suspicious, angry, or expecting to be humiliated will not be able to trust or even to "hear" what the teacher is saying. Such students may decide that they can rely only on their own thoughts or experiences. Distrustful of adults and other children, they effectively march to their own drummers. Lost in their own sensations, feelings, and thoughts, they become further and further alienated from external reality and the world of logic and objectivity. Of course, most students do not follow this extreme pattern. Nonetheless, few observers would disagree that most early learning occurs as a part of relationships and that some degree of trust in these relationships is essential.

Communicating With Others

The third basic ability, *communication*, builds on the first two. One must first attend and relate to another person before one can communicate. Communication is a complex process, unfolding in a sequence of stages.

Gestural Communication

Information is first shared with gestures--a smile, a frown, or a pointing finger; later, words are employed. Complex emotional themes are also first communicated through simple gestures. Consider how nods of the head, smiles, and verbal tones let a toddler know of approval and acceptance or rejection and annoyance. Children who skip this level of gestural communication (or whose learning at this stage is dysfunctional) lack a basic sense of the workings of human relationships. Children who have a hard time interpreting other children's gestures tend to have difficulty relating to peers.

Interestingly, the ability to express and read gestural cues is well developed by the age of 18 months. At this age, children can comprehend many of life's most important emotional patterns, such as limits, acceptance or rejection, safety or danger, and approval or disapproval--all from facial expressions, movements, and sounds. Children with good receptive and expressive gestural abilities who enter school at age 5 will generally be cooperative and attentive, picking up the nonverbal cues and figuring out what to do in class. But children, who don't have a sense of these nonverbal basics, although they may understand many words, may at times behave in seemingly random, unfocused fashion. They may, for example, misread the teacher's overwhelmed look and think, "Boy, I'm exciting her."

Two-way communication, of which the gestural level is the first of a number of levels, can be thought of as opening and closing circles of communication. Amy points to the teacher's desk; with a curious look the teacher silently asks, "What do you want?" Amy can then "close the circle of communication" by pointing more clearly to the teacher's sparkling key chain. Alternatively, she can fail to close the circle if she does not respond to the teacher's gesture but instead looks out the window while twirling her hair or jumping up and down. Once the first step in communication succeeds, more "circles" can be added, but without that first connection, further logical communication--and, later on, logical thinking--is impossible. The only way for a child to learn to open and close circles of communication is through practice with adults or other children in situations involving an active exchange of gestures and ideas. It doesn't matter whether a word or a simple gesture is being communicated between teacher and child or between child and child. Reciprocity is the key. Two-way communication, along with relating and attending, is therefore the foundation for all the higher levels in the learning process.

Communication with Symbols

A child who has learned simple, gestural two-way communication can move on to the next level: communication with symbols--that is, with ideas. Fantasy, creative thought, and problem-solving abilities all depend on the use of symbols. Initially, symbols are employed quite simply: a child who says, "I want that pencil," instead of just grabbing it, is using symbols. "I want" replaces the child's impulse or desire; "the pencil" represents the object of the desire. The use of symbols to convey intent is quite different from the purely descriptive use (i.e., "That's a chair"). Later, symbols can be used to represent more sophisticated concepts and as part of more complex emotional interactions.

Logical Ideas

Eventually, a third level of communication is reached, in which logical, reality-based ideas emerge. The child is now able to make connections between different categories of ideas and thoughts: "I am angry today because you didn't come and play kickball with me," or "I'm frustrated because I can't learn the math," or "If I take away two apples from four apples, I will have two apples left," or "In the story, David took the thorn out of his dog's paw, and therefore the dog was happy and David felt good." The ability to know the difference between fantasy and reality, to understand the consequences of one's actions, as well as to solve basic math problems or to comprehend a story is an expression and application of the ability to make connections between ideas.

Self-Observation

An even higher level of communication and the final basic skill is the ability not only to communicate logically with another person but to communicate with oneself at the same time via *self-observation*. Children must not only perform a task; they must be able to observe themselves in the process. Children who have achieved this sophisticated ability monitor and evaluate their own thoughts and actions and use the data to make adjustments. For example, such a child, when asked to color a worksheet, might say, "Gee, I'm coloring inside the lines sometimes and outside the lines sometimes. If I do it this way, the color stays inside the lines, and if I do it that way, I color on the lines. I will try to do it the first way." A child who is at risk is more likely to daydream while coloring and to experience nothing more than a session of busywork, or, worse, confusion.

The Real ABCs

When children communicate their ideas, get a response from someone else, and then build on that response, they begin to form the elaborate categories of ideas that support logical thinking and understanding. This interactive learning requires a lot of feedback, particularly in the early years of life. As students age, they can wait a week or a month for a response (to a term paper, for example), but in the early years immediate feedback on a child's use of gestures, logic, and ideas is essential.

We often make the mistake of thinking that children are learning when they seem busy at their desks. Only if children are able to observe themselves and experiment on their own are they learning by themselves. An easy way to think about those early steps in the learning process is as "the real ABCs." *A* equals attention, *B* equals better relationships, and *C* equals communication, including gestural, symbolic, and self-observing capacities.

Appendix B

Suggested Reading about our Approach

We recommend several books that may help you to better appreciate Lionheart's approach:

Building Healthy Minds, Stanley Greenspan

How early development relates to learning, and what needs to happen in order for children to develop. This is a fairly broad and philosophical book, but with incredible richness and many thought-provoking ideas.

The Child with Special Needs, Stanley Greenspan

How to intervene with children who have trouble relating and communicating. May not seem relevant to older kids, but in fact it is the best source for understanding how to interact with your kid of any age. Less abstract than *The Growth of the Mind*, but covers similar ground.

The Challenging Child, Stanley Greenspan

Focused on school-age children. Not as deep as the others, but also not as dense.

The Out-of-Sync Child, Carol Stock Kranowitz

Provides a basic understanding of sensory integration, and what happens to kids when their bodies don't interpret sensory information correctly.

The Schools Our Children Deserve, Alfie Kohn

A Different Kind of Teacher, John Taylor Gatto

These two texts are more reactionary than the others and less directly relevant to what we're doing at school, but both make compelling cases for some specific changes to how education is handled in this country.

Engaging Autism, Stanley Greenspan and Serena Wieder

Much easier to read and we would recommend this as the first choice for parents who want to get more insight into the DIR® model and its principles.

We can also provide some handouts and other ways of guiding you. Please do not hesitate to ask.

We are always happy to provide you with direction and resources that will help you to connect with and support your child.