Prairie State College
Children's Learning Center

Family Handbook
Information You Should Know
Dear Partners in Education,

Thank you for entrusting the care for your child with us. The Children’s Learning Center (CLC) at Prairie State College has been meeting the educational and child care needs for Prairie State College students since 1973. We are a licensed facility through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) that provides quality childcare for children ages 2 to 12 years old. Full and regularly scheduled part-time care is offered to accommodate the scheduling needs of students, faculty, staff and the community. Providing the best in care and education for youngsters, the CLC also offers ongoing preschool sessions and screenings, parent workshops, and a toy-lending library.

We continually strive to use developmentally appropriate goals for young children as a framework for planning our educational program and assessing children’s progress in all aspects of the social, cognitive, and physical foundations necessary for success in primary schooling. We emphasize diversity throughout our program, and our individualized, developmental approach lends itself to meeting the unique needs of most children.

We invite each CLC family to become actively involved in all aspects of our mission. As prospective families, you gain basic familiarity with our philosophy, staff, programs for children, and approach to meeting learning goals.

The purpose of this Family Handbook is to provide an organized source of detailed information specifically related to the ways that families can partner with the school to ensure a high quality experience for all of the learners at the CLC. Please have all of your children’s primary caregivers (e.g., extended family, babysitter, etc.) review the handbook regularly.

As your interests and schedule permit, please respond to our varied offers to become involved in learning at the CLC. We look forward to collaborating with you.
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Please note that the numbering throughout this handbook corresponds to the NAEYC accreditation standards reflected in that section.
Center History
In 1968, the staff in the East Chicago Heights Head Start Program asked Prairie State College to provide courses in Child Development.

Out of that request, the Child Development Program was established to provide training for those who would be teachers of young children.

Very soon, Prairie State College and Cook County Head Start joined together to create a cross-cultural, multi-racial preschool.

In this manner, the preschool met the needs of the community for a child development center and for a training site for Child Development students.

As needs continued to grow so did the preschool at Prairie State College...
In 1974 a Day Care Program was added to provide full day care. In 1976, the Child Development Department was requested to provide care for children of students taking classes at Prairie State. From this request the Center was established for students, staff, and faculty. In 1986, the Head Start program was relocated and later replaced with a grant-funded Preschool For All program through the Illinois State Board of Education in 2004.

Prairie State College’s Children’s Learning Center is a licensed facility that provides quality child care for children ages 2 to 12 years old. Full and regularly scheduled part-time care is offered to accommodate the scheduling needs of students, faculty, staff and the community. Providing the best in care and education for youngsters, the CLC also offers ongoing preschool screenings, parent workshops and a toy-lending library.

In 2004, the center moved into its new 11,426-square-foot state-of-the-art facility the northwest corner of Prairie State College’s main campus.

Educational Philosophy (2.A.01)
We Believe:
• A child learns through play and learns by doing. We can provide activities and opportunities to enhance and encourage that process.
• A child is a whole person. The child’s development is enhanced by health, intellectual abilities, social and emotional development.
• Each child is an individual at varying stages of development and with individual needs.
• A child’s development is a continuous process influenced by all the events a child experiences.
• The process of learning is more important than its product. For example, painting is more important than what has been painted; building with blocks is more important than what has been built.

**CLC Environment**

To foster the development of the whole child - physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively - we provide the following:

• An environment in which your child can enjoy the process of learning.
• Activities and an environment which promote self-awareness and a positive self-concept.
• Opportunities for social interaction with other children.
• An environment enriched with developmentally appropriate cognitive activities (language development, memory skills, reading readiness, math, science, art).
• Activities promoting physical fitness, safety and well-being (large and small muscle development, nutrition).
• Individual and small group projects, as well as total group activities.
• Opportunities for a meaningful cross cultural experience.

**Developmental Objectives (2.A.01)**

Since 1973, the staff at the CLC has nurtured young children’s social, cognitive, and physical development. We focus on the following objectives for each child in our care:

1. **Self-Esteem and Independence** - encouraging each child’s pride in individual characteristics, families, experiences, and accomplishments and each child’s responsibility for personal care, actions, and words.
2. **Interaction and Cooperation** - promoting children’s social skills for diverse adult and peer relations, including listening, turn-taking, following directions, rules and routines, group participation, care for shared materials, and conflict resolution.
3. **Communication** - facilitating comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral and progressing to written language.
4. Discovery and Exploration - fostering a positive attitude toward learning through questioning, observing, and experimenting with varied materials.

5. Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety - giving children opportunities to use their growing bodies in safe ways to develop small and large motor skills, coordination, and healthy living habits.

6. Artistic Expression and Appreciation - cultivating each child’s ability to express ideas and emotions through art, music, movement, and drama.

Accreditation
The CLC is in the process of obtaining accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC has created 10 standards that measure the quality of early childhood programs. The standards were created by a blue-ribbon panel of early childhood experts and are based on the latest early childhood research. As the CLC strives to become accredited we must meet high quality standards by:

1. Promoting positive relationships for all children and adults to encourage each child’s sense of individual worth.

2. Implementing a curriculum that fosters all areas of child development: cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social.

3. Using developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate effective teaching approaches.

4. Providing ongoing assessments of a child’s learning and development and communicate the child’s progress to the family.

5. Promoting the nutrition and health of children and protect children and staff from injury and illness.

6. Employing a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children’s learning and development, and to support families’ diverse needs and interests.

7. Establishing and maintain collaborative relationships with each child’s family.

8. Establishing relationships with and use the resources of the community to support the achievement of program goals.

9. Providing a safe and healthy physical environment.

10. Implementing strong personnel, fiscal, and program management policies so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality
experiences.

Staff Teams (10.B.01)
The CLC has four classrooms during the day; two-year-olds, preschool B, preschool A, and Preschool For All (PFA). During evening services, which are offered during the mid-August to mid-May, two classrooms are available; preschool, and school-age.

All early childhood teachers have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and child care workers have a minimum of an associate’s degree in child development or related field. (6.A.05) A foster grandparent is also available during the day. At times, student interns and employees complement each team.

Interaction Guidelines (7.A.01-14, 10.B.01)
As staff members at the CLC, we share the following core values as guides for the interactions among staff members, between staff and children, between staff and parents, between staff and college students, PSC employees, etc. (1.A., 1.B.).

• We strive to respect each individual and work to create a positive emotional climate for all learners, with sensitivity to differences in age, ability, background, language, culture, religion, and family structure.
• We use direct eye contact, smiles, warm tones of voice, positive touch, social conversations, and joint laughter to support the development of effective working relationships.
• Our partnership in learning is supported by regular, reciprocal communication, affirming recognition of effort and accomplishment, predictable, developmentally appropriate responsiveness to initiative, emotion, and concerns, and proactive conflict resolution.
• We are committed to reaching out to people of different races, genders, ethnicity, and ability, and we strive to create an environment of inclusion that celebrates our differences and highlights our commonalities. Our program accepts children with special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child consistent with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. For additional information, see http://prairiestate.edu/human_resources/.
Staff-Child Interactions (1.B.-1.D.)
We make every effort for all children to know and be known by all adults in our open school environment so that they are comfortable interacting with and seeking assistance from any adult. Each child is assigned to a classroom by age. The classroom has a team of an Early Childhood Teacher and Child Care Worker so they can get to know the children in their care. If either team member is absent, the children will have the security of one of the team members from the room. (10.B.11,13) When absences are planned in advance, an attempt is made to recruit substitutes who have long-term familiarity with our program.

As staff interacts with children, we strive to encourage diverse interactions and not gender stereotypes, address children as frequently as possible by their individual names or we refer to groups of children as “friends” (i.e., as opposed to “boys and girls”). For example, a teacher might begin a sentence with, “Friends, it’s time for us to …” or indicate a subgroup of children as the “friends in the block area”, etc.

Parents as Partners (7.A)
The CLC offers adult family members and other caregivers a variety of ways to become involved in the child’s school community, to participate in family activities, and to confer with the staff to build a strong bond between home and school. (7.A.09) During the year, each teacher meets with parents to share information about the child’s school and home life. Regular communication is encouraged among families, caregivers, and the school staff so that multiple perspectives on the child’s development and interests can be used to enhance the child’s school experience. (1.A.01) We have scheduled parent meetings and conferences, regular whole school and classroom newsletters, a daily white board outside each classroom door, and frequent spontaneous interaction. (7.B.01) A family bulletin board in the hallway to the classrooms provides flyers about local family events and resources, and other parent resources. (7.C.05, 8.B.03)

Adult family members can use the one-way-mirror facilities at any time or schedule classroom visits to observe their child in the program. (7.A.11) Teachers are easily accessible by phone and/or email to answer questions,
schedule classroom volunteering, or discuss effective ways for staff and parents to handle changes and challenges. Staff work email addresses may be released to parents upon request, but cell phone numbers and home addresses are to be kept confidential.

Family events, including Open House, the Holiday Program, and the zoo field trip, offer the whole family a chance to participate in the child’s school and interact with the staff. Many adult family members also contribute their talents to the school by volunteering or presenting in the classroom. (7.A.12-14)

The CLC staff use HighScope COR and a variety of informal assessment techniques including, classroom performance and curriculum based assessments to monitor children’s progress. The CLC staff also use ASQ, a screening tool focusing on major developmental areas of children’s development including; communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and social development. All children are assessed and the information is used to adjust the program to individual interests and needs, as well as to conference with parents and, if necessary, help parents seek special developmental support for their children.

Specific information about the types of screenings and assessments used can be found under the Curriculum, Assessment and Screening section of the family handbook. During orientation you will receive the “Parent Guide Booklet” explaining the details of HighScope Cor and the benefits of parent involvement. All screening and assessment results are kept confidential and will only be shared with the CLC staff working with your child.

The CLC staff are extensively trained on all assessments and screening tools. Professional Development is a high priority at the CLC because it supports our continuous quality improvement. We dedicate one week prior to the fall and summer semesters for professional development time. (4E.06)

If you have questions or have experienced a problem at home or school, please approach the child’s primary teacher or one of the administrators directly (7.C). Recent potty-training efforts, changes in care-giving arrangements, the death of a pet, an extended absence of a parent, etc. can all cause changes in a child’s demeanor and behavior at school, so timely
communication helps the staff respond most effectively to the child. We make every effort to dialogue with children and families in a positive manner to plan strategies, resolve issues, and provide assistance in a timely and effective manner (3.F.03). Please also feel free to suggest ways that we can strengthen our partnership with you as together we seek to provide a high-quality learning environment for everyone in our school community. (7.B.01)

All adult family members are invited to participate in the CLC’s annual program evaluation via a survey conducted in May. (10.F.04) Evaluation results, plans and opportunities are found in the monthly newsletter.

Confidentiality (4.E.07, 10.D.05)
Because the staff at the CLC works as a team, with every adult knowing and interacting at times with every child, all observations and other assessment data may be shared with all staff members. Information about family situations, special needs, and other sensitive issues is shared on an as needed basis. Student workers, volunteers, and other adults working within the school are only informed of such sensitive issues when they are a part of keeping the child safe, supporting the child’s inclusion, or when the information might impact their coursework.

CLC staff will also choose carefully whether to discuss children’s behavior within their hearing distance, doing so only when it is in the child’s best interest.

Written authorization is required before disclosing any information regarding a child to an outside agency or individual. Any photographs taken while at the Children’s Learning Center are intended for authorized professional uses only; they may not be electronically shared over the internet, posted on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, or electronically tagged in any way with individual names. Confidentiality is an ethical obligation.

In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, official written records for each child are kept in files in CLC office and released only to the individuals listed above or those for whom parents sign a written release (7.C.08). These files include enrollment
forms, health assessments provided by physicians, incident reports, reports of diagnostic assessments released to the school by parents, individual education plans, etc. Staff documentation of children's behavior and development, including specialized records for children whose special circumstances require extra classroom documentation are kept in classroom locations accessible to teachers but out of the reach of children and out of sight of classroom visitors.

**Curriculum (2.A.02-06)**
The CLC staff uses HighScope Curriculum to help foster the development of the whole child and meet National Accreditation guidelines for curriculum planning. HighScope is a research based and child focused curriculum that encourages children to actively participate in the learning process. In addition to HighScope, our preschool classrooms utilize the Illinois Early Learning Standards within their curriculum. The HighScope Curriculum is divided into two main categories based on the child's age; Infant-Toddler COR (6 weeks - 3 years) and Preschool COR (2.5 years- 6 years).

*Infant Toddler COR (Child Observation Record)*
The Infant Toddler COR has six main curriculum content areas; sense of self, social relations, creative representation, movement and movement, exploration, and language. Within these areas are 42 key developmental indicators that are observable milestones that guide teachers as they plan learning experiences and interact with the children.

*Preschool COR (Child Observation Record)*
The Preschool COR has eight main curriculum content areas: approaches to learning; social and emotional development; physical development and health; language, literacy, and communication; mathematics, creative arts; science and technology; and social studies. Within these areas are 58 key developmental indicators that are observable milestones that guide teachers as they plan learning experiences and interact with the children.

**Assessment and Screening**
The CLC values assessment as an essential part of our program. The CLC uses assessment tools for the purpose of promoting growth and development, evaluating the learning process, and program planning. Assessment is the
process which includes gathering information through observations, work samples, and curriculum bases assessments. Assessment is viewed as an ongoing process and is connected to the curriculum. The CLC uses a variety of assessments including authentic and performance based, curriculum based, and screenings. CLC Staff observe children daily in their classroom environment and use their observations to complete the assessment tools and plan activities.

Curriculum Based Assessment
The CLC staff uses the HighScope COR assessment as a guide for evaluating the children’s developmental progress. The HighScope COR is used by teachers and parents “to help identify and record the growth that is taking place as children play, try out new ideas, solve problems, and make new friends”(COR Parent Guide). The COR outlines various stages of development and is organized into categories of learning. The teachers observe the children’s behaviors and record anecdotal notes. From their anecdotal notes, teachers will interpret their anecdotes and categorize their development on the COR behavior levels. Based on the information gathered by the COR, teachers will plan learning opportunities to meet and extend the abilities and interest of the children. COR is an ongoing assessment that will be completed twice yearly. The information gathered from the COR will be shared with you during your conference with your child’s teacher.

Developmental Portfolios
Your child’s teacher will keep a collection of work samples, anecdotal notes, COR Developmental summary, photos, and family conference forms. This information will be share with the child’s family semiannually during your conference.

Developmental Screening
The Department of Public Health conducts a mandated vision and hearing screening on all children 2 years 10 months to 6 years of age. The screening is done on site and a letter with the screening dates will be sent home prior to the screening. Recommendations for further testing will be made at that time if needed.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire Social Emotional are the developmental screen
tools used at the CLC. The purpose of the ASQ-3 and ASQ SE is to detect indicators which might show a developmental that should be further investigated. All children will be screened within 90 days of entering the program.

The ASQ is a series of questions which include the major developmental areas of children’s development including: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social, and social-emotional. The ASQ is very flexible and family friendly. Once completed, the survey will be scored by the Parent Coordinator and the parents will receive information regarding their child’s development. Follow up action will be based on the results of the screening.

**Family Conferences**

Semiannually, you will have the opportunity to meet with your child’s teacher to discuss their developmental progress and behaviors. Family Conferences will occur at the end of the fall and spring semester. You will sign up for your conference time with your child’s teacher. During your conference the information the teacher has gathered from the assessments and portfolios will be shared with you. You will also have the opportunity to share your observations of your child’s development and behaviors.

**School Hours**

Regular daily hours
- Monday through Thursday: 7 a.m. - 10 p.m.
- Friday: 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Summer daily hours (mid-May through mid-August)
- Monday through Thursday: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
- Friday: Closed

Preschool For All (meets during the PSC fall and spring semester only)
- AM Session: 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- PM Session: 12 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Note: Hours are subject to change. Please check the website for changes; prairiestate.edu/clc
Application Process
Each application is considered in order received without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.

Families interested in enrollment at the CLC can complete the “Wait List” form at www.prairiestate.edu/clc. The information is the beginning of the registration process. Priority registration will be directed to children of Prairie State College students, followed by PSC staff, and the community.

Once contacted, the “Contract For Hours” should be completed within three to five days. The contract will secure your child’s placement into the CLC. If the contract is not received during that time, enrollment will be provided to another child and placement on the waiting list will be removed. If you are interested in enrollment at a later time, you will need to reapply.

Based on licensing and staffing standards, there are a maximum number of children that can be enrolled at any time of the day.

Preschool For All (PFA)
Families interested in participating in the PFA program will need to request the screening information. Eligibility is determined based on need. Information used to assess need is gathered through the use of parent questionnaires/ developmental screenings and environmental factors. If the program has more eligible children than space permits, children with the greatest need will receive first priority. Like other center programs, PFA follows the College calendar during the fall and spring semesters. PFA is not in session during the summer semester.

Enrollment
Prior to the child’s first day of school, parents are required to submit a current health assessment of the child including either proof of the recommended immunizations or a signed statement indicating that the family has objections to immunization and a lead screening with results. Thereafter, parents must submit an updated medical every two years. (5.A.11, 10.D.05) In addition to the physical, every child must have on file:
  • Medical exemption form (if needed)
  • Emergency card,
• Child and Adult Care Food Program Application,
• Receipts for the CLC Family Handbook and DCFS Licensing Standards for Day Care
• CLC Enrollment Form
• Original Birth Certificate – We are required to see the original birth certificate. We will make a copy of it and return the same time you bring it in.
• A $10.00/child up to $25/family enrollment fee is charged each semester.

Additional enrollment for Preschool For All (PFA) students requires a preschool screening packet. Unless your child is enrolled for hours before or after PFA, the enrollment fee will be waived.

Parents are responsible to notify the CLC Director if there is any change of information on enrollment forms such as: address, telephone number, names of those authorized to pick up child, etc.

Contract for Hours/Schedule Changes
Every child that attends the CLC must have a signed Contract For Hours. Hours of attendance are scheduled based on your child care needs as long as the hours are within the CLC’s operating hours. Staff are scheduled according to the children’s’ schedules throughout the day. Additionally, meals served (breakfast, lunch, snacks, dinner) are provided based on the number of children scheduled during those times. Therefore, any schedule changes must be submitted in writing on a “Change of Schedule” form and be approved in advance. This includes bringing or picking up your child more than 15 minutes before or after the schedule time submitted on your Contract for Hours.

A separate Contract For Hours is completed for each semester; spring, summer, and fall. It must be received prior to the posted date or your child is in jeopardy of enrollment at the CLC and may have to go back on the waitlist. Your child will be guaranteed the time slot(s) enrolled from the previous semester with additional hours and/or changes added if the CLC scheduling permits.
Once the contract is signed, you will be responsible for financing two weeks of child care services, even if you choose not to utilize the Children’s Learning Center. If for any reason you terminate your contract for child care services, you are required to give a written two week notice.

The Center reserves the right of enrollment cancellation or dismissal. This may occur if, after conferring with parents about the situation, a child’s behavior is deemed consistently unacceptable or dangerous to the other children, or if the Center feels the needs of the child cannot be met. Parent’s failure to comply with program policies may also result in dismissal. For additional information pertaining to cancellation, see the section on Termination of Enrollment.

Daily attendance is strongly encouraged unless your child is sick or there are extenuating circumstances. For children enrolled in the Preschool For All Program or the child care subsidy program such as Action for Children or Child Care Initiatives, children are expected to maintain an 80% attendance rate in order to keep their place in the program. For the children on the subsidy program, if the child’s monthly attendance falls below 80%, you may be responsible for payment of the unattended days.

If your child is absent for the day, call the Children’s Learning Center at 708-709-3728, to report the absence. Unless you have an excused absence, your child must have a eighty percent attendance rate for the month or you will lose your spot in the program.

Parents requesting adjustments to fees due because of withdrawal for personal circumstances or dropping classes should contact the CLC Director to discuss the procedure.

**Transitions**

Because the main program operates on an academic calendar, children typically stay in the same class with the same staff August through May and will not transition to a new classroom until the following August. (10.B.13, 14, 15) There is the possibility that in order to accommodate the child care needs of as many families as possible, a group of children may move to a different classroom at the beginning of the spring semester. Unlike some centers that transition the child on his or her birthday, we prefer to move a group of
children at one time so the children have other classroom friends to transition with. If children participate in the summer program, the two year olds stay in their classroom and the preschool classrooms are combined to one classroom.

Volunteers and Family Members in the Classroom
As a Center, our primary concern is that the children are well cared for. It is great when we can have assistance in the classroom to provide extra one-on-one attention for the children; however, we need to comply with DCFS licensing regulations.

- If a family member is going to be at the CLC for more than 15 minutes, it must be cleared through the Director at least one day in advance.
- Any volunteer, including family members that attend the CLC more than ten hours a month, must have a completed staff/child record on file.
- Unless a volunteer and/or visitor have a physical including a tb test, on file, that person will not be allowed to assist with food preparation or serving.

The Child’s Siblings
Our staffing is set for the number of children in each class, and the classroom arrangement, materials, and routines fit the developmental level of the class. For all of these reasons, we cannot accommodate family requests for children’s siblings to join in field trips (other than a family trip), classroom or outdoor activities. Siblings may accompany a parent or other caregiver to the classroom at drop-off or pick-up time. We encourage siblings to participate in celebrating the birthday of a brother or sister, provided that a parent or other caregiver is present to supervise the child.

The Child’s Belongings
Shoes
For your child’s safety, dress your child with proper shoes - sturdy, closed-toe, rubber soled shoes (no flip-flops, crocs, clogs, or slippers). Sneakers are the preferred footwear. For your convenience, please choose washable clothes. Send an extra change of clothing for your child on the first day of school in case a child’s clothes become wet or soiled. Please include shirt, slacks, socks, and underwear and label all clothes with your child’s name. Remember to update this extra set as the weather changes and as your child grows.
Clothing
Sometimes play is messy or a toileting accident causes a child’s clothes to get soiled. Therefore, we ask that all children under the age of five have an extra set of clothes to either be kept in the child’s book bag or cubbie. These clothes should also be labeled with the child’s name. If extra clothes are not provided by the parent and the child has an accident, the parent will be called and will need to bring a change of clothes.

Provide adequate outer clothing for your child and label all items. We spend time outside every day, except in extreme cold or pouring rain. (5.A.07) In the winter, send boots, gloves, hats and snow pants. On snowy days, we restrict children to the sidewalks if they are not wearing appropriate outdoor clothing.

Toys
Please do not bring toys from home unless it is requested for a “special” day. This avoids the possibility of those toys becoming lost or broken. Children may bring books, tapes and CDs that are clearly labeled to share with the other children. Items are often mislaid and/or picked up by other children, causing upsets and disagreements that could have been avoided. The CLC is not responsible for toys brought from home.

Diapers and Diaper Wipes
Parents are to supply diapers and diaper wipes in unopened packages. Each package and any diaper cream or ointment must have your child’s name on it. Any creams or ointments require that an “Authorization For Non-Prescription Topical Ointment” form be completed. The forms are in the CLC office.

Pacifiers
Pacifiers will be allowed primarily at nap-time only and will be left in the child’s classroom cubbie.

Pets
Pets are not permitted at school.
**Rest Time**

A two hour rest time is provided at our Center for all full-time children between the ages of 2 and 6 years-old. During the summer, the children in the school age program are excluded.

Cots, sheets and blankets are provided for the children. The sheets and blankets are laundered weekly. Parents may provide a small sheet and blanket for their child if they prefer to launder their own items. A small pillow or special comfort item may also be brought from home. All items from home should easily fit in the child’s cubby and must be taken home weekly to be laundered.

**Meals**

The CLC participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program which makes nutritionally balanced meals available to all children enrolled without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any United States Department of Agriculture related activity should write immediately to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

We serve breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner and evening snack to all children enrolled during the time those meals are served. Please do not send food with your child. Menus are posted for your information.

*A child requiring a special diet due to medical reasons or allergic reactions must have written instructions by the physician or parent. Such instructions shall list any dietary restrictions/requirements, and shall be dated and signed by the physician.* We will work with you to see the child is provided with the appropriate meals.

**Holidays and Birthdays (5.B.02)**

Birthdays are very special for young children. If you wish, you may bring a special snack for your child to share at school. We do ask that you notify the classroom teacher a day or two in advance.
We are a **NUT FREE** facility. **Please do not bring or send any food containing peanuts or tree nuts to the school.**

Please check with the staff before bringing food from home to share among children. These snacks must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.

We promote a cross-cultural center and might not be aware of special days in your child’s culture. Please keep us informed so we can talk to your child about his/her special day.

**Field Trips (8.B.02, 9.C.15)**

*On Prairie State College’s Campus*

We are fortunate to have access to many interesting activities at Prairie State College. To take the best advantage of the last minute opportunities that sometimes arise, we ask parents to sign a permanent permission slip for on-campus field trips. Teachers always notify the school office before taking children out of the school.

**Off-Campus Trips**

Occasionally, we schedule field trips that require transportation. Parents are required to sign a permission slip for each trip individually. On field trip days, both morning and afternoon sessions of the Preschool For all classes will attend together and the field trip will take the place of the regular pre-k session. Field trips are free for the children enrolled at the CLC. We may from time to time have to charge a small fee for parents who attend. Parents who plan to attend field trips need to make child care arrangements for younger siblings. Individual permission slips will be sent home in advance for each trip. Children who do not have a signed permission slip will not be permitted to attend the field trip.

During the year, there may be one or two family field trips. These field trips are limited to two adults. Siblings between the ages of two and five are allowed. School-aged children may attend if they are not in school that day or home-schooled. Due to the lack of safety restraints children under the age of two are not permitted to ride on the bus. Families are allowed to follow the bus in their own transportation; however, they are not permitted to take children other than their own, enrolled at the CLC in their vehicle.
Health and Safety Guidelines (9.C.08, 10.D.01)
At all times, health and safety are top priorities at the CLC. Each individual’s vigilance regarding health and safety issues contributes significantly to our effectiveness. Always assume that you are the only one who notices a problem or potential problem and bring it to the attention of a staff person.

Staff Responsibility
Staff members are responsible for maintaining a healthful environment. (5.C.01-05) We begin with our own health by submitting bi-annual health appraisals. All staff members have background checks as part of the employment process. We participate in an bi-annual pediatric first aid / CPR class. (5.A.03) Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit. (9.C.10)

We practice fire, tornado, and earthquake drills (10.D.08) in a serious but non-dramatic fashion with the children (2.K.04). The CLC is a smoke-free environment (9.D.06) and uses an integrated pest management program (9.D.08). [Overall 10.D.02]

With the help of the PSC cleaning staff, we follow NAEYC’s frequency table for cleaning and sanitation throughout the school, including toys. (5.C.01,03,10) All staff members follow standard precautions to minimize spread of infectious disease (5.C.02) and store hazardous materials in a locked storage area. We follow parent and/or health professional recommendations regarding children who have allergies, and we limit classroom pets to fish, worms, and insects. (5.C.05).

Because hand washing is the #1 preventive measure to avoid the spread of disease 5.A.09), we explicitly teach, and monitor hand-washing procedures that involve the use of liquid soap and running water, with vigorous and thorough rubbing for at least 10 seconds (the length of the alphabet song), followed by paper towel drying.

We and the children wash our hands upon entry, before snacks and meals, before and after food preparation, before eating and prior to serving food to children, after toileting and diapering, after contact with bodily fluids, after play in the water table, and after re-entry from the outdoor classroom,
as well as after any messy activities or contact with pets. Adults also wash their hands after eating and prior to serving food to children, assisting with toileting, handling garbage or cleaning, and before and after feeding a child or administering medication.

The CLC contracts with outside agencies to provide vision screening and hearing/speech/language screening annually (4.C.01) Participation in this optional service for three to five year old children requires permission from a parent or guardian.

**Staffing and Supervision**
We maintain required staff: child ratios at all times and better ratios most of the time. (10.B.12)
Minimum of 1:8 for 2's
Minimum of 1:10 for the preschool
Minimum of 1:20 for school-age

These ratios are applicable indoors outdoors, and on field trips.

At any time when children are present in the school, we make every effort to have at least two staff members in the CLC. (3.C.04) Classroom space is designed so that there are no areas of the room where children can hide. Supervision by sound is permissible for short intervals, such as when children go to the children's or private bathroom from the classroom or outdoors. Once school-age children are comfortable with the spatial layout of the school, they are permitted, after teacher notification, to go to the restroom or run errands to the office (i.e., out of sight and sound supervision of the school-age staff but within the building. (3.C.05)

**Illness and Injury (5.A.04, 10.D.01)**
Staff members greet children at the beginning of the day, being watchful of their appearance as they enter and throughout the day. Children who become sick at school are removed from the group and cared for until parents can be contacted to come for the child. The child’s cot may be brought down to the office for the child.
Young children often experience falls or bumps during the course of a day, especially in the outside or in the multi-purpose room. Usually, they do not result in injury and are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic band-aid or ice pack (i.e., not necessary but yet comforting). When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training. (10.D.09) They will report the injury to parents, guardians or caregivers, and complete an injury report within one day. Copies are kept in the child’s file, and given to the family.

Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident, and prompt action will be taken by contacting 911. If necessary, we will accompany the child to the hospital.

**Family Responsibility, Sick Children (5.A.04, 10.D.01)**
The CLC community relies on the adult family members’ thoughtful assessment of each child’s health before sending him or her to school. Even if your child begs to come to school, please keep him or her at home if any of the following symptoms are evident. Any of these may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children.

- Oral temperature above 100 degrees within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea
- Rash, bump or other out-of-the-ordinary skin conditions
- Sore throat
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Unusual irritability, listlessness, fatigue

If your child will be absent, you must notify the Center on the first day of the illness, by calling 709-3728. If your child is absent due to a contagious disease such as ringworm, impetigo or measles, he/she must bring a doctor’s release before returning to the CLC. (5.A.05)

In most cases in which medication is required, physicians recommend that the child be on medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school. In addition, please keep your child home until the child is well enough to
participate fully in both indoor and outdoor activities because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors.

Children should be “fever free” 24-hours before returning to the CLC. This policy is for the protection of all the children. We cannot totally prevent illness from spreading in groups of children, but we can try to minimize it.

**Medication**

Necessary medication may be administered to a child at the CLC as long as the medication is labeled with the child’s name, directions for administering the medication, the date and physician’s name, prescription number, the drug store or pharmacy and the appropriate measuring utensil. Parents must fill-out and sign a “MEDICATION FORM”, before it can be administered. Again, please include all instructions and, when necessary, the parent should provide detailed written instructions and a demonstration of how the medication is to be administered. Medications requiring further explanations include EpiPens, insulin, and breathing treatments. Keep in mind when scheduling medications involving special instructions, to try and schedule the dosages at a time the parent/guardian is available to administer the medication. (5.A.11, 10.D.01) Do not send medication in the child’s backpack.

**Sunscreen (5.A.07)**

When children are outside for a longer time we will apply sunblock. We request that the sunscreen is applied prior to the child attendance. Additional sunscreen will be reapplied after nap time by the staff if it has a minimum UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15, provided by the family, and require an “Authorization For Non-Prescription Topical Ointment” form be completed. The forms are in the CLC office. The same practice is available with a daily application of insect repellent containing DEET; however, insect repellent should only be applied once a day and like the sunscreen, should be applied at home prior to arrival at the CLC.
Parking, Arrival and Departure (10.D.06)

Parking Lot C
Parking Lot C is located in front of the CLC. The curved area in front of the CLC may be used to temporarily park (no more than ten minutes) for dropping-off and picking-up children. Parking in the lot is by staff/faculty permit only. If you are a college student, you may park in lots A or B. If you will be volunteering or visiting your child’s classroom, you may use the visitor parking spaces located at the north of the building. You will need a visitor’s permit to park there more than ten minutes. If you do not receive a visitor’s permit to park, you will risk receiving a parking ticket. The CLC cannot “fix” parking tickets.

Parents should hold their child’s hand while walking through the parking lot. If you are entering or departing the parking lot, remember that you are in an area where children are present. Drive carefully and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Arrival
Upon entering the CLC, please use the computer system at the entrance. Once you have scanned into the system, the front door will be released. When entering the building, monitor who is coming through the door with you or who you are letting in when you leave. It is important that you assist us in keeping the children safe. If you do not know the person entering, you need to direct them to the office or close the door and have them ring the bell.

After you have entered the building, walk your child to the classroom. You and your child will be greeted by the staff. There is a sign-in sheet to indicate that your child is in attendance that is used throughout the day to keep an accurate count of the children. It is also important that your child has been signed-in so if there is an emergency we can have an accurate account of the children in attendance.

Departure
Check your child out using the computer system at the entrance of the building and sign the classroom attendance list. The staff should acknowledge that you and your child have left.
Electronic Devices
As children arrive and depart, please provide your child with your full attention. These are the last few minutes you will see your child before you leave or the first few minutes you see your child when you arrive. Using an electronic device, such as a cell phone or texting device, detracts from the time to say good-bye or hello to your child. As a result, the CLC has a “no cell phone” policy. Before you leave or pick-up your child, the staff will wait for you to complete your call or text message.

Child Release and Observation (7.A.11)
A child’s parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must provide a list of adults, 16 and over, to which the child can be released (10.D.06). For security purposes, approved adults must have a picture id or the child will NOT be released to that adult. Approved adults can have their finger scanned into the computer system if they have are on your child’s list and they have an ID. Note that parents can only be excluded when a court of competent jurisdiction has limited the parental right of access to the child and a copy of the order is on file at the CLC and with the PSC police.

Any approved adults may observe the child at school at any time during the program’s regular hours of operation; however it is encouraged that visits are not arranged during nap time.

We request that these adults follow the procedures listed below when observing at the CLC:

• Stop by the CLC office upon arrival for entry into the observation booth.
• Observe from the observation room or observation window whenever possible. Children’s behavior is often significantly affected by a parent’s presence. In addition, repeated reunions and separations can be difficult for young children, especially at the beginning of the year.
• When in the classrooms, remain as unobtrusive as possible, making every effort not to disrupt the activity in progress.
• Please turn off your cell phone when entering the CLC classrooms, including the observation booth.
• If you want an opportunity to talk individually with a teacher, please make an appointment to do so during a time that the teacher can meet with you privately.

At the Children’s School, our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective interaction and cooperation. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, “Let’s keep the sand in the sand table so that we have a lot to pour.” Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so.

We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children’s activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area that can spark renewed engagement and positive behavior (3.B.12).

**Basic Behavior Expectations at the CLC/Discipline**
Knowing and meeting expectations encourages independent action and fosters self-esteem.

School Rules:
**Be a kind friend**
**Listen the first time**
**Follow the routine**
**Stay in your own space**
**Use your words**
**Use inside voices**
**Use walking feet**
**Use things appropriately**
**Put everything in its place**
The students in each class will discuss behavior expectations throughout the year. As appropriate, each class will add specific examples relating to each of the items listed above. For example, for “Be a kind friend,” “share”, “if you put down your toy and move on to something else, another friend can use it.”

The CLC environment, schedules, routines, activities, etc. are all designed to foster positive behavior management. All staff members guide and support children throughout the day as they gain control of their bodies, learn to use language to communicate needs, practice persisting when frustrated, take turns, and play cooperatively with peers.

Experienced teachers recognize the possibility of potential problems before they occur and can redirect the child’s behavior before it becomes unacceptable. All CLC staff will:

- Provide limits in a calm, consistent, and respectful manner, which allows the child to grow in self-control and self-esteem.
- Respond to a child’s challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and the others in the classroom.
- Help children learn to identify both positive and negative emotions, as well as to express them appropriately.
- Work with children to develop conflict resolution skills necessary to solve their disagreements in an appropriate manner.
- Help children express and acknowledge their choices.
- Help children describe problems, evaluate their actions, verbalize alternatives, and consider the perspective of others. Children are guided and supported as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions.

This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. After a quiet time, the teacher invites the child to rejoin the group and reminds the child of the relevant expectations for the activity in progress. Corporal punishment, such as spanking, is never used.

Staff shall observe all children and document any problem behavior to help
ascertain any patterns re: events, activities, and interactions, as well as any precipitating contextual factors (1.E.02). If a child’s behavior problem persists or becomes dangerous to the other children in the class (e.g., punching, kicking, temper tantrums), the teacher will bring the child to the CLC office to regain composure. Such situations are rare at the CLC and are discussed thoroughly with the child, the teacher, and the parent to determine positive steps toward solution. The goal is to support the child’s successful inclusion in the classroom (1.E.01).

**Prohibited Practices and Reporting Child Abuse (10.D.03-04)**

While in the vicinity of CLC, if any adult engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director will take necessary steps to assure that there is no reoccurrence of the practice.

- Corporal or any type of physical punishment is not permitted. This includes hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain. (1.B.09)
- Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted. (1.B.10)
- Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted. (1.B.10)
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted. (1.B.09)
- Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child is not permitted. (1.B.09)

All observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The Director will call the DCFS Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 to report suspected abuse or neglect. The Director will follow the direction of the child protective services agency regarding completion of written reports.
CLC Closings
Our Center is generally open all days that the College is open. The CLC will be closed at the following times:

**Holidays**
- Labor Day
- Spring Holiday
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve Day through New Year’s Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (Fourth of July)

**Other Schedule Closings**
- The College’s Winter Break
- The College’s Spring Break
- One full week before the beginning of the fall and spring semesters

Advance notice will be given for any other particular closure dates.

CLC Cancellations
If the College closes due to inclement weather or other emergencies, the information will be broadcast over local radio stations: WCGO(1600/AM), WGN (720/AM), WBBM (78 AM or 96 FM) AND WLS (890/AM).

In addition, all families are encouraged to sign-up for the PSC Alert found on the PSC website: http://prairiestate.edu/PSCAlert/

Emergency Closings
Should PSC have an emergency closing, the CLC staff will attempt to contact every parent with the closing time.
Fees (Fees are subject to change)
The weekly tuition rate is based on fixed expenses such as salaries, food, and supplies. These expenses occur even if your child is absent. Fees must be considered enrollment fees and not attendance fees. Therefore, it is expected that fees will be paid whether or not a child is in attendance. We want to meet everyone’s needs but we do have to be realistic when it comes to expenses. Fees are not charged when the Center is closed.

Payment arrangements for all fees should be arranged with the College Business Office. Unpaid balances will jeopardize your class registration privileges and your child’s continuing enrollment at the CLC for the following semester. Fees unpaid at the end of each semester are considered a past-due monetary obligation to the College. This will result in your account being forwarded to a credit bureau for collection. A hold will be placed on academic records for past due accounts. Students will not be allowed to register nor have transcripts or diplomas issued if there is a hold on their academic record. Additionally, students will not be allowed to enroll their child until the balance is paid in full.

Academic records may be encumbered if there is a past-due monetary obligation to the College. A record encumbrance is a “hold” placed on a student’s official academic record. Students may not be allowed to register or have transcripts or diplomas issued after an encumbrance has been placed on their academic record.

Registration Fee
A registration fee of $10 per child (up to $25 per family) is charged each semester.

Late Fees
Picking up your child after closing time will result in a late fee charge of $5.00 for the first 10 minutes and a $1.00/minute for each additional minute.

For those parents receiving child care financial assistance, please remember that source will not pay any late fees incurred. Each parent is responsible for any such payment required. Additionally, if the child’s monthly attendance falls below 80%, you may be responsible for payment of the unattended days.
Termination of Enrollment
Unfortunately, there are times that the “Contract For Hours” may be terminated. The CLC may terminate your child’s enrollment under the following circumstances:

• Non-payment for child care services and/or lack of adherence to tuition payment policies as set forth in the “Contract for Hours.”
• The enrollment process, including the form, physical, immunization records and birth certificate have not be finalized thirty days from the child’s start date.
• Parents falsify information on enrollment forms or otherwise knowingly falsify information.
• Parents do not agree or do not follow and comply with the policies set forth in this Handbook.
• Lack of parental cooperation with the Center’s efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child’s needs through parent/staff meetings or conferences.
• Inappropriate or abusive behavior and/or verbal abuse or threats by parents, relatives, guardians or other parties toward the Center staff, other parents or children.
• Inability of parents to deal in a professional manner with Center personnel or other parents and children at the center.
• The continued enrollment of the child poses a risk to the health and/or safety of the child, other children, parents or center staff members or continued enrollment of the child constitutes an undue burden on the Center’s resources.
• There is a reoccurrence in lateness when picking up your child after the Center closes.

Procedures for Termination of Enrollment
Step 1: If appropriate given the circumstances, the Center Director will provide the Parents a verbal warning notifying them of the circumstance above that warrants termination and providing them an opportunity to correct the situation.
Step 2: If the parent fails to correct the situation in a timely manner or the circumstances warrant immediate termination, the Center Director will notify the Parents in writing that the child’s enrollment will be terminated. Parents will receive a referral to the local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR & R) and/or the local school district.

Under most circumstances the Center will provide two weeks written notice of enrollment termination. However, where the particular circumstances warrant, the Center reserves the right to terminate enrollment immediately or less than two weeks notice.