

**The Children's Learning Center
at Penn College**

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2010/2011



★★★★ A Keystone 4-Star Center



Middle States Commission on
Elementary Schools
Early Age Accreditation

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WELCOME

We are pleased to welcome you and your child to our Center. We offer the following guide to our policies and procedures to help make your child's adjustment as smooth as possible. Please ask the Center's director or your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns about anything in the handbook.

By enrolling your child in our Center, and signing the form indicating your receipt of this handbook, you are agreeing to abide by the policies and procedures outlined here, and so are we.

NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR ON-LINE ENTRY OF CHILD ASSESSMENT DATA

Since October 2009 all Keystone STARS 3 and 4 child care centers, along with Head Start, PreK Counts centers, and early intervention programs, have been required to enter the results of developmental assessments done by program staff into a web-based system provided and monitored by the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). The assessments are done using the Ounce Scale for toddlers and the Work Sampling System for preschoolers.

These are the same assessments we previously completed on paper and shared with you at fall and spring parent conferences. The difference is that we are now required to enter and report the results via the on-line version provided by Pearson, the publisher of the Ounce Scale and the Work Sampling System.

The information included in the website is all password protected. Only your child's teacher, the Center Director, and OCDEL have access to the information for your child. You will continue to receive a paper report printed out from the website.

Three times a year, in October, February, and May, the data will be collected by OCDEL to generate reports about children's progress in the programs funded by their office. The reports will not contain information about individual children, only aggregate data about all the children enrolled.

Please contact Karen Woland Payne, Director, if you have questions.

ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTER

MISSION

The mission of the Children's Learning Center at Penn College is four-fold:

- to support and advance the mission of the Pennsylvania College of Technology through a service that facilitates students' access to the College experience and serves employees;
- to function as a model early care and education program, one that meets or exceeds licensing and accreditation standards to demonstrate the highest standards of care and early childhood education;
- to provide exemplary early care and education, following developmentally appropriate practices, for young children and their families; and
- to extend the educational experiences of students enrolled in Penn College majors by providing a demonstration and observation site.

PHILOSOPHY

At the Children's Learning Center, our first priority is establishing a safe, nurturing, and responsive environment where children's physical needs are met and they feel psychologically secure. We believe that high quality early care and education fosters the physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive development of young children. Reciprocal relationships with each child's family are an essential element of quality. We value and celebrate each family's unique composition and their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic background. Positive relationships among all children and adults promote each child's sense of individual worth and belonging to a community.

We believe children are active learners who construct an understanding of the world around them through play and exploration of their environment. Teachers support and enhance children's learning by providing the time, materials, and relationships children need. Children learn at varying rates and in different ways. They also have different methods of representing what they know.

We believe adults are also active learners. We are committed to supporting the education of Pennsylvania College of Technology students who are learning about children and families. This is best accomplished by providing them with opportunities to work directly with children and families, under the guidance of professional educators who serve as role models and mentors, in an exemplary early care education setting. We believe that children's development and learning are enhanced by their experiences with the Penn College community.

ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

The Children's Learning Center at Penn College is accredited by both the Middle States Commission on Elementary Education and by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These prestigious voluntary credentials recognize the quality of our educational program and the qualifications of our staff, which far exceed the requirements for the state certificate of compliance. Accreditation must be renewed periodically, a process which involves a lengthy self-study involving staff, families, and administration, followed by a visit from the accrediting body.

We are inspected annually by the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and meet all compliance requirements for a certificate of compliance as a childcare center. We have been awarded a STAR 4 ranking (the highest possible) under the Keystone STARS system. Please see the certificate display in bulletin board outside the Center, which informs you of your rights as a parent or guardian and tells you where to report complaints. The PA Child Care Center certification guidelines were revised in May 2009. They are available on line at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/PA/pennsylvania.htm>.

OUR STAFF

Our Center's adult-child ratio meets accreditation standards and Pennsylvania certificate of compliance requirements. All of our teachers have degrees in early childhood or elementary education or a related field, and all have prior experience working with young children. The center Director holds a master's degree in early childhood education and has years of experience as a teacher, administrator, and college instructor.

Regular involvement of College students reflects a vital part of our mission. Our well-qualified staff is supplemented by College work-study students and student interns. Students use the Center to complete course requirements for Early Childhood Education, Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assisting, and Human Services, among other majors. Many students also complete their work-study hours with us. The children benefit from the individual attention which can be provided by so many willing adults, as well as from the stimulating environment of the College campus.

All paid staff (including work-study students) are required to have criminal background checks and child-abuse record clearances, as well as biannual health appraisals and an initial TB test. Full-time staff are certified in pediatric first aid and receive a minimum of 24 hours annually of staff development related to their duties as early childhood educators. Check out the Children's Learning Center website at www.pct.edu/childcare for staff photos and biographies.

ELIGIBILITY FOR ENROLLMENT

The Children's Learning Center at Penn College admits children without regard to race, color, nationality, sex, disability, or religious background. Preference is given to children of Penn College students and employees. Other children will be admitted if space is available. Children are admitted on the basis of chronological age, and we will make

reasonable accommodations for any disability or developmental delay. The entire Center is accessible.

It is the goal of the Children's Learning Center to provide a safe, healthy environment for all children. A policy has been developed to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all children and families, while still allowing for dis-enrollment in those rare instances in which one child's needs or behavior interferes with this. Please see "Discipline," and "Dis-enrollment," page 12, and the current year's *Fee and Enrollment Policies* for more details.

CURRICULUM

The Center uses an educational curriculum, that follows the guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children for developmentally appropriate programming and also incorporates the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood. The curriculum offers daily opportunities for children to make their own choices among various learning areas in the classroom, as well as daily teacher-planned activities in language, math, science, art, music, fine motor, and gross motor areas. A full copy of our curriculum can be found on the Center website at www.pct.edu/childcare.

FEES

Fees for the Children's Learning Center are set each year by the College. They cover the cost of staff and supplies. Some students and employees are eligible for subsidized day care through the Child Care Information Services (CCIS) in their counties of residence. Alternately, Penn College offers a discount to low-income students and employees who do not meet these eligibility guidelines or who are on a waiting list for subsidized care. Contact the Center's director or secretary for information on subsidies.

Fees are due on the first service day of the week (usually Monday). They should be paid by check or money order to "Penn College." **Please write your child's name and the dates for which you are paying on the check or money order.** Fee checks should be deposited into the mailbox just inside the Children's Learning Center entrance. You are welcome to pay by the month or semester if that is more convenient for you.

Penn College employees can set up an automatic payroll deduction for child care fees. Ask the director or secretary for details. Employees may also want to contact Human Resources about setting up a flexible spending account, which allows for payment of child care expenses with pre-tax dollars.

Once you have established an attendance schedule at the time of enrollment, we will expect your child at those times unless you make other arrangements with the director. Let us know if your child is ill or if he or she will be absent for more than a day for some other reason. Fees are due for every day your child is *scheduled* to attend, whether or not he or she is actually present, and we are not able to offer make-up days to children enrolled part-time. No fees are charged if the Center is closed.

At the end of the calendar year, you will receive a statement of fees paid for income tax purposes.

Please see the current year's *Fee and Enrollment Policies* for more details about full and part-time fees.

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Center staff are mandatory reporters under Pennsylvania law. This means that we are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or child neglect to the appropriate local Children and Youth agency and to Child Line. We are not permitted to investigate such cases ourselves. As with all matters relating to families and children, such reports are treated with absolute confidentiality.

IN-HOME CARE DISCLAIMER

Because parents and their children become comfortable with our staff, they sometimes ask our staff and work-study students to provide after-hours, at-home childcare. Please be advised that the Children's Learning Center at Penn College assumes no responsibility for employees who provide private services to families and that we are not permitted to refer possible babysitters. Parents may contact the Penn College Career Office to post job openings for College students.

DAILY OPERATIONS

CENTER HOURS

The Center opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. (Hours may change according to changes in the College work schedule, especially in summer.)

Early morning staff sometimes arrive before 7:30 a.m. to prepare the classroom or attend to personal needs, but **you may not leave your child until the teacher is officially "on duty" at 7:30 a.m.**

If you are not able to pick your child up by 5:30 p.m., please make arrangements for another authorized person to do so. If an unavoidable emergency will cause you to be late, please call the Center to let the staff know what is happening. They can then reassure your child, who will be worried if left past the usual time.

Please see the current year's *Fee and Enrollment Policies* for details about late fees. We reserve the right to terminate services for those who repeatedly arrive late to pick up their children.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Parking for the Children's Learning Center drop-off and pick-up (with flashers on) is provided in the circle in front of the LEC building. You are welcome to use this space while you accompany your child to the room, sign in, wash hands, and put away belongings. If the children and staff are not in your child's room when you arrive, look for a sign on the door indicating the group's location, and accompany your child to the group so that a staff member is able to greet your child and take responsibility for him or her. NEVER send a child into the Center without making at least eye contact with one of our staff!

Please see the attached memo about the new card-swipe entrance procedures.
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At pick-up time, check your child's cubby for clothing, notes, artwork, etc., to be taken home. Check your mailbox for notes and notices. Sign out in the same book you used for sign-in.

We will release your child only to those persons authorized by you on the emergency form you provide at enrollment. You may add other people to the pick-up list at any time by giving us their names in writing. (Ask the teacher for an emergency change form, or write a note and sign and date it.) If someone not on your pick-up list must come for your child in an emergency, you must call the Center to give us this person's name and description. Ask the pick-up person to bring a photo ID so that we can check identification.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Before your child can attend the Center, you will be asked to complete the required paperwork, including emergency information, permission forms, a fee agreement, and a Child Care Food Program application. As you do this, remember that your child's safety and well-being may depend upon the information you provide. State law requires that we have the name and telephone number of at least one emergency person other than parents/guardians. This **MUST** be someone who is willing and able to come for your child in any emergency when you cannot be contacted. (Examples may include injuries requiring attention beyond simple first aid, emergency closings of the Center, or delayed pick-up when we have not received notice from you.)

If you will be somewhere other than your usual place of work or study during the day, it is important to note this in the sign-in book and to tell us whom to call first in your place if you will not be available.

Emergency information will be checked routinely for accuracy every 6 months, but you should notify us right away of changes in:

- home address or phone number
- workplace information for either parent
- child's medical needs or allergy status
- authorized emergency person or pick-up people

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CUSTODY ORDERS: We may not deny a child's parent the right to see or to leave with that child unless we have a copy of a current custody order on file which limits that parent's rights. If you think this may apply to you, please alert us to the situation and provide us with a copy of your custody order.

SNOW DAYS

The Children's Learning Center follows the same schedule as Penn College for snow days or other emergencies. Penn College students and employees are encouraged to sign up for PCT Alerts. Check local radio and TV stations for delays, early closings, or closings for the entire day. We do not announce delays or closings separately for the Center, so listen for Penn College announcements. You may find it more convenient to call the College switchboard at (570) 320-2400 for a recorded announcement about delays or closings, or to check the Penn College website (www.pct.edu) for announcements posted there.

If the College is closed for the entire day, then the Children's Learning Center will be closed as well. In the case of a delayed opening, the Center will open 30 minutes before the announced College opening time, so that parents/guardians can bring children and still get to class or work on time. If you are on campus when an early closing is announced, or if you hear an announcement on the radio or TV, please come directly to the Center for your child. Remember that our staff may have some distance to travel home and will appreciate your promptness. If you are off campus, we will call you at the

number you have provided and then contact your emergency person if we can't reach you.

WHAT TO BRING (AND NOT TO BRING) FROM HOME

Bring the following items: a complete change of clothing, including socks and underwear (more than one change for children just out of diapers), a small blanket, and a favorite soft toy for rest time. We supply a cot and cot sheet, and we will send the rest-time bedding home to be laundered each weekend. You should also provide a personal water bottle, which we will empty and rinse out daily. Starting in August 2011, the Center will supply diapers and wipes. We provide a child-size toothbrush and toothpaste (with fluoride for children 3 and older), as well as a generic SPF-30 children's sunscreen. You may provide your own diapers, wipes, sunscreen and toothpaste, if you prefer.

It can be difficult for children to share toys from home, so it is best not to bring them unless you have made special arrangements with your child's teacher or unless your child is willing to have the toy "rest" in his or her cubby for the day. **NO CANDY OR GUM, PLEASE!**

Don't forget to LABEL all belongings with your child's first and last name.

MEALS

The Center participates in the *Child and Adult Care Food Program* through the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Menus, meal service, and record keeping are monitored periodically by a representative of the Department of Education. Penn College Dining Services provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack each day. Menus are sent home monthly, and meal times are posted in each room for you to see. Please be sure to tell us about any food allergies or food restrictions due to religious or other considerations.

We will provide menu substitutions only when medically necessary and only upon written instructions from a health professional indicating which foods may not be given and the appropriate substitution. For legitimate religious or ethical preferences, you are welcome to provide alternate foods, but otherwise please **do not send alternate meals**. We do not have the refrigerator space to store them, nor the staff to serve them. Young children can be picky eaters, but in the long run, their nutritional needs are best met by serving them a variety of good food and expecting them to eat what is served.

Our meals are served family style. We encourage children to help themselves to as much of each food as they would like and will actually eat. We encourage them to try each food, but we never force children to eat something, nor do we use food as a reward or punishment.

After either breakfast or lunch, the children brush their teeth. We provide toothpaste and child-size toothbrushes, which we label with their names.

REST TIMES

A nap or rest period is scheduled after lunch for all children who are spending a full day at the Center. The duration varies according to each child's need. Staff help children relax with stories, soft music, and back rubs. Those who do not fall asleep can look at books or play quietly in the room after about thirty minutes.

The Center provides rest mats or cots for all children. Please bring a cover and optional small pillow and a naptime animal if you like (see "What to Bring From Home," above).

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Center activities include painting, sand and water play, clay and play dough, and daily outdoor play. Children WILL get dirty, so please dress your child in sturdy, washable play clothes. We do have aprons, but they don't always protect the clothing and sometimes children refuse to wear them. Play clothes are the best solution. Assume that your child will be going outside in all but the most inclement weather. Hats, mittens, and boots will be needed for cold and snowy or wet days.

A complete change of seasonal clothing, including underwear, socks, pants, and shirt, should be kept at the Center for accidents of any kind. Children who are just learning to use the toilet should have several changes. They will also be aided in their toilet learning by elastic waist pants and easy fasteners on all clothing. Pull-ups, in our experience, merely delay toilet learning and make changing harder for staff. Please send your child either in diapers or in underwear.

IMPORTANT: Label everything with your child's first and last names.

OUTINGS & CLASSROOM VISITORS

Walks and visits to locations around the campus are a regular part of the program. We participate in appropriate College-wide events, and we welcome your suggestions for good on-campus "field trip" possibilities. Off-campus outings occur only rarely, and you will be asked for signed permission for each one.

Classroom visitors also help to enrich the children's experience. Sometimes these visitors are parents or grandparents who come to read a story, cook a favorite family recipe, or share a hobby. Teachers also invite friends or acquaintances who have special interests to share.

Special activities such as Stretch and Grow, a fitness program for preschoolers, and Tumblebus, an onsite gymnastics program, supplement the regular curriculum. Tumblebus requires a separate fee, payable to the gym itself, but Stretch and Grow is included in the program for all children. The J.V. Brown Storymobile comes every other week so that children age 3 and over can check out their own library books to take home.

Outdoor play is scheduled every day, in every season, unless the weather is truly inclement. The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development defines "very bad weather" to mean a wind chill factor or temperature of 20 degrees or less, a heat index of 90 degrees or higher, falling precipitation, or an air quality alert recommending that young children stay indoors.

BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS, AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

We will acknowledge every child's birthday in some way unless you tell us that you prefer we do not. You are welcome to bring a small, nutritious treat or a small favor to share with the Center for your child's birthday; however, please do not plan a whole birthday party at the Center. A simple treat to be shared at snack time or after lunch is enough. If you intend to bring in a treat, please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. Please do not feel obligated to provide a birthday treat if it is a burden on your time or budget or if you plan to celebrate the birthday at home.

As part of our multicultural, anti-bias curriculum, we like to include holidays celebrated by children of various religions and ethnic groups, without overemphasizing any of them. Sometimes we make up our own celebrations, such as Pajama Day or Teddy Bear Day. We try to keep all school celebrations low-key to avoid adding to the holiday stress and hyperactivity that often accompany parties for young children. We believe that the most important holiday traditions are the ones that take place within the child's family. We think one way to ensure this specialness is by not overdoing school time celebrations.

Please let us know if your child should not participate in parties or holiday activities for religious or ethical considerations. And please share with us any family traditions or holidays that are important to you.

Here are some guidelines for specific holidays:

HALLOWEEN: Along with many other area schools and preschools, we do not do trick-or-treating or a costume party. Not only do many families object to this celebration on religious or nutritional grounds, but also we have found that dealing with costumes and trick-or-treating at school makes for a stressful experience for many young children. For those of you who DO enjoy Halloween trick or treating, watch for announcements about events sponsored by student organizations on campus.

THANKSGIVING: We don't teach children about Pilgrims and Indians, but we do talk about being thankful and ask children about their families' Thanksgiving Day celebrations. We give thanks to you on Parent Appreciation Day. You will receive an invitation for this event, which involves joining your child for either breakfast or afternoon tea on a day near the end of the fall semester.

WINTER HOLIDAYS, INCLUDING CHRISTMAS, KWANZAA, CHANUKAH, AND NEW YEAR'S (and others inadvertently omitted): We like to include customs from various cultures and ethnic groups. Does your family have holiday customs

unique to your family, religion, or ethnic/national group? Would you be willing to share them? If so, talk to the staff in your child's room.

SPRING HOLIDAYS SUCH AS EASTER AND PASSOVER: We celebrate Spring with activities such as spring walks, gathering flowers, and perhaps an egg hunt, but we do not touch on the religious aspects of these holidays.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is seen as guidance, and our goal is to help the children to regulate their own behavior. We try, through good classroom management and constant alertness, to foresee and prevent behavior problems whenever possible. We treat children with respect and consideration, and we expect them to show respect and consideration to staff and other children. When a child's behavior is not appropriate, adults will redirect that child to another activity or to another area of the room. Removal of a child from the group is a last resort, used when the child's behavior is so out of control as to be a threat to his/her own safety or to the well being of the other children.

No physical punishment, threats, or shaming are allowed in our Center.
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DIS-ENROLLMENT

We reserve the right to deny care to any child whose behavior, in the opinion of the director, constitutes a threat to the well-being or safety of other children or staff or whose special needs cannot be met with reasonable accommodations. Prior to denial of service, the director and teachers will meet with parents or guardians in an attempt to establish a plan for the child that will allow for continued enrollment. This may involve referral to an outside agency or specialist for screening, assessment, and possible follow-up services. Failure to help develop or follow the established plan may result in termination of services.

The Center also reserves the right to give notice of termination of services in the event of parental failure to follow the policies and procedures described in this handbook or conduct which, in the opinion of the director, is of a harassing or threatening nature toward staff, parents, or children.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

We treat each child as an individual and attempt to meet individual needs while still providing a good group experience for all the children. We want to know about documented special needs, and we make referrals (with parent permission) to appropriate agencies for developmental screenings if families or our teachers have concerns. Therapists and special education staff are welcome to come to the Center to work with children in their care, but we do not have specialists on our own staff.

ASSESSMENTS & REFERRALS

Our teachers do ongoing observational assessments of all children and complete an on-line assessment form three times a year, in accordance with the requirements of the PA Office of Child Development . (See the box on page 2 for more information about this requirement.) Recognizing that parents know more about their own children than anyone else, we also rely on their input about each child's development. We always ask for your permission before making a referral for testing or evaluation outside of the program. The assessments are routinely shared with families at regularly scheduled conferences in the fall and spring and are available for your review at any time.

PROGRAM TRANSITION GUIDELINES

There are three common types of transitions that occur at the Children's Learning Center. One is when children begin attending the center for the first time. A second is when children move to different classes within the center and the third is when children leave the center for attendance at a kindergarten program. The following procedures should be seen as a guide and not a set of rigid rules. These practices are imbedded in the overall philosophy of developmentally appropriate practice.

Transitions into the center for the first time

1. Children are placed on the waiting list on a first-come basis within the following preference categories:

- Siblings of currently enrolled children
- Children of Penn College students
- Children of Penn College staff/faculty
- Children of Penn College alumni
- Children from the community

2. Currently enrolled families are asked to complete a re-enrollment form each November and March, indicating their intention to return and their preferred schedule. Currently enrolled children always have first preference for subsequent semesters, unless parents have ended their relationship with Penn College, either by terminating employment or, in the case of students, by withdrawing or being dismissed prior to graduation. Parents who graduate become alumni and may continue their child's enrollment without interruption. Others may finish out the current semester and then re-apply as community members, but continued enrollment is not guaranteed.

3. By June 1 (for Fall semester) or Nov. 30 (for Spring), the Director will offer openings to children on the waiting list according to the priorities defined in #1 above. Parents will have 2 weeks to accept an opening before it is offered to another child.

4. During July* of each year, the Director will send out an enrollment packet to every child (both new and returning). This packet will include a welcome letter with suggested times for visiting prior to the child's start, registration forms, a yearly calendar, list of items to bring, and for new children, "Saying Goodbye Gets Easier with Time," a handout to help with separation in the beginning.

* change dates for children who start other than in August.

5. Part of the enrollment paperwork is a form for parents to complete about their child, including information on daily habits, special needs, likes and dislikes, prior experiences in childcare, etc. This is used by teachers to get a first impression and to have some knowledge of how best to relate to this child.

6. A "Meet the Teacher" event is scheduled for the week prior to the beginning of the fall semester. This is a time for parents and children to visit their new room, meet the staff, see where belongings go and sign-ins are completed, etc. It is an informal open house, and families can stay for as long as they like while children explore the room. The director and secretary are available to review enrollment paperwork with families and

complete anything outstanding. Families who are unable to come during this time are asked to schedule a different visit time or, if this is really not possible, to plan to stay with their child for a transition visit on the first day. No child will be allowed to stay at the center until required paperwork is completed and parents have met the director and the child's teachers. At the Meet the Teacher event (or upon enrollment for those who do not attend), Family Handbooks are distributed and parents are asked to sign a paper indicating that they have received the handbook and agree to abide by the guidelines.

7. During the child's first few days at the center, teachers make every effort to connect personally with the parent, either upon arrival or departure, and they write a note about how the day went. Parents are also encouraged to call the classroom directly if they are concerned about how their child is doing. A phone call is preferable to dropping by, because new children often have a very difficult time separating from their parents more than once a day.

8. The first family event of the year, a few weeks after the start of the semester, is the Fall "Welcome Back." Families and children are invited for a light supper, and parents go to their child's classroom for a brief overview of the teacher's goals for the children and an orientation to the center curriculum. The first parent conference, in October, is largely based on a questionnaire given ahead of time to families, asking them for their impressions of their child, their goals for the child, and what they want from the program.

9. If, during the initial enrollment, parents indicate that their child has received special education services or has special medical or emotional needs, a special care plan is completed and an individual conference may be scheduled to discuss the care plan for that child. If an I.E.P. or I.F.S.P. already exists, the parent is asked to bring a copy to the program so that we can coordinate our services with those being provided by the other agency or agencies. A form giving the program permission to share and receive information with the other agencies may also be completed, as needed.

Transitions within the center

1. Guidelines

When considering moving a child from one room to another, the following characteristics of each child will be evaluated:

- Age cohort: Normally, children are assumed to belong with children who will enter kindergarten at the same time. In most school districts in our area, 5 years of age by September 1 is the cut-off date for kindergarten.
- Maturity as indicated by such characteristics as:
 - Toilet training: To transfer to a preschool room the child should be toilet trained (out of diapers/pull-ups all day except for naptime) unless there are health/special needs that must be considered.
 - Communication: To transfer to a preschool room the child should be able to communicate his wants and needs verbally unless there are health/special needs that must be considered.

- Social/emotional readiness: To transfer to a preschool room the child should exhibit some degree of independence in following classroom routines, separating from parents and interacting with other children unless there are health/special needs that must be considered.

2. Moving to a new room

In the spring of each year, teachers will make recommendations based upon their observations of the child and discussions with parents. Parents will be invited to visit the rooms to which their child will transfer, and they will be urged to meet with the teacher or director if they have questions or concerns. All children moving to a new room will have opportunities to visit the new classroom during the regular activities of the day at least three times. One of these should include a meal. Sometimes children will visit alone, sometimes with a friend or with a teacher. Sometimes toddler groups may visit the preschool rooms with their teachers when the preschoolers are outside. The length of the visit may be from a half hour to a whole morning. Parents of children who are transitioning to a new room will be given a welcome letter and invited to meet the teachers.

Transition to Kindergarten

Because children enrolled at our center live in many different school districts, including some that are 30 miles or more from Williamsport, it is not possible for us to arrange group visits to schools or to provide detailed information about each district's kindergarten enrollment procedures. Rather, the transition process to kindergarten is focused on helping parents of children who will be old enough to enter school in the fall to understand the process.

1. At the beginning of the academic year, teachers will find out through a questionnaire where each child will be attending kindergarten, if this is known.
2. In the spring the staff will post information (when and where and what is needed) about kindergarten registration, as this is made available from the various school districts. The director distributes an annual memo reminding parents of the importance of registering at the appropriate times.
3. During the spring conference, a major topic will be kindergarten transition. Teachers will share the results of the Work Sampling System assessments and suggest that the parent and child visit the new school, even when this is not a routine part of kindergarten registration for the receiving district.
4. Books and videos about going to kindergarten will be available in the room or office, and teachers will provide parents with appropriate articles if requested. Throughout this process, the goal is to create a positive expectation about a new school.
5. The center will provide copies of records if requested by the parent or the school district.
6. In the case of a child with documented special needs, a staff member will attend the transition meeting that the intermediate unit will arrange.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

HYGIENE & SANITATION

The health and safety of the children in our care is our first concern. We follow the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics for illness, emergencies, and basic sanitary procedures. Instructing the children in good personal hygiene is an important part of our program. This includes frequent handwashing, regular use of the bathroom with staff monitoring proper habits, tooth-brushing after meals, and proper use of tissues.

An important hygiene practice is to have children wash hands upon arrival at the Center each day. You may want to have them wash their hands when they get home at the end of the day, too. In this way, we minimize the spread of germs from one setting to another and keep everyone healthier.

The staff follow a sanitary diaper-changing procedure which is posted in each room where children are diapered. Table surfaces and handwashing sinks are disinfected regularly with a 1:64 bleach:water solution, as are toys and rest mats. College custodial staff wash floors, clean bathrooms, and vacuum daily.

INJURY RESPONSE

We try to prevent injuries by constant adult supervision and alertness, but occasional accidents are bound to happen whenever active young children are at play. You will probably receive one or more **written incident forms** at some point in your child's time with us. We complete these whenever a child is hurt badly enough to require first aid or in any way that has left a mark on his or her body. If your child has an accident, you will find the form in your mailbox at pick-up. You will be asked to sign it, and a copy will go home with you.

It is important for families to realize that young children sometimes **bite** when they cannot otherwise express themselves. While distressing to adults, bites are a common occurrence wherever young children are together in groups. You will receive an incident form if your child is bitten, of course, but also if he/she is the biter. Due to confidentiality concerns, staff are not permitted to share the name of the other child involved in these incidents. (See Medical Emergencies, below, for more information about more serious accidents.)

We are fortunate to have the services of the Penn College Health Services available to us. The College nurses are available to evaluate ill children or to provide first aid when they are on duty. Center staff are also trained in pediatric first aid, including management of a blocked airway. If your child has a health condition that might require CPR or other special emergency interventions, please notify the director prior to enrollment so that staff can be properly trained.

ILLNESS

Unfortunately, we have neither the staff nor the space to provide care for ill children.

Please do not bring your child if he or she is unable to participate in all Center activities, including outdoor play. If your child is too sick to go out, he or she is too sick to be at the Center.

We follow the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics for exclusion of ill children. Briefly, we will not care for children who have any of the following symptoms:

- vomiting or diarrhea;
- unexplained skin rashes;
- discharging sores;
- fever accompanied by other symptoms of illness;
- fatigue to the point that the child is unable to participate in Center activities.

If your child becomes ill while at the Center, we will notify you, and you will be expected to make arrangements to pick your child up within an hour. We must sometimes ask for a note from your physician to return to care.

With or without a note, children must wait to return to the Center for 24 hours after they have been sent home for illness or have received their first dose of antibiotics or other prescription medication, assuming they are free of symptoms by then.

We try to notify all parents if one of our children has a contagious illness, usually by a sign posted on the classroom door. We appreciate your help with this by informing us if your child is ill or has been diagnosed with a contagious illness.

MEDICATIONS

Because having medication in the facility is a safety hazard for all children and administration of medication poses an extra burden for staff, you should check with your child's physician to see if a dose schedule can be arranged that does not involve the hours the child is in the Center.

In cases where this is impossible, we will administer medication to children for whom a plan has been made and approved by the director or the group leader in the child's room. *Your written instructions and a physician's permission will be required.* (This applies to medicated skin creams and lotions and to inhalers or nebulizers of any kind, as well as to medications given by mouth.) Non-prescription medications such as Tylenol or cough syrup require a physician's written instructions in addition to your written permission. In the case of prescription medications, the prescription label on the original container provides the written instructions.

All medication must be brought to the Center in the original container, labeled with the child's name. It should be given to the Group Leader upon arrival. Tell us if the medicine must be refrigerated.

You may come to the Center at any time during the day to give your child medications. This does not require written permission, although we will ask you to sign our medication log so that we know what you have given and whether there may be side effects.

Because of the possibility of allergic reactions to medicine in young children, the first dose of a new medication must always be given by a family member. Generally, children must wait to return to the Center for 24 hours after they have received their first dose of antibiotics or other prescription medication, as long as they are free of symptoms by then. Medications and medical apparatus of all kinds must be given to the staff for proper storage.

NEVER leave medicine or medical apparatus (such as an asthma inhaler) in your child's cubby or backpack, where other children can reach it.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of an illness or accident which requires medical attention beyond simple first aid, we will contact you, your child's other parent (if applicable), your emergency contact person, or your child's physician, in that order. If it is impossible to reach any of these people and should emergency treatment be required, we will contact 9-1-1 and accompany the child to the nearest emergency facility. A Center employee will remain with the child until he or she can be released to a parent or other authorized emergency person. Your signed permission to obtain emergency treatment was obtained at enrollment. (See "Emergency Information" earlier in this section.)

Please note that **your own health insurance will be responsible** for bills stemming from injury treatment. If you do not have health coverage for your child, please see the director for information on how to obtain it.

HEALTH APPRAISALS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Licensing regulations require an initial health appraisal, including an immunization record, for all children. You are then required to provide updated health appraisals periodically as your child has regular checkups and immunizations. In most cases, this will be annually. *Please ask for a form to take with you to the doctor (or print one out from the Center website)* whenever you schedule a check-up for your child. Failure to provide the required health documentation is grounds for terminating childcare services. Special regulations apply to children with incomplete immunizations. Please notify the director prior to enrollment if this applies to your child.

Our complete health and safety policies are posted on our website at www.pct.edu/childcare.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION & INVOLVEMENT

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

We will try to keep you informed in several different ways about the Center and your child's experiences here:

E-mail – You will receive regular e-mails, usually daily, from your child's teacher. Usually these will have an attached Word document titled "Here's What We Did Today" (sometimes abbreviated HWWDT). The document will include a few photos of children in your child's class and a few sentences letting you know what they did that day and what they learned from the activity. Be sure to give us a correct e-mail address for one or both parents. To save on paper, we also send monthly class newsletters and center menus by e-mail. If you need to receive a paper copy instead, just let us know.

Bulletin boards – Check the bulletin board near the card-swipe door and the one located next to the door to your child's classroom for notices about activities, daily schedules, lesson plans for your child's group, menus, etc.

Classroom doors – Reminder notices and notes about events of the day are posted on classroom doors. So are notices about contagious illness.

Hallway and classroom displays – Don't forget to look over the photos and the children's work both inside and outside the rooms.

Written notes and permission forms– Look for these forms of communication in your mailbox. Let us know if you would like to have duplicate copies of permission forms, notices and assessment forms, so that parents living in different households can each have one. We are happy to do this.

Sign-in book – There is space in the sign-in book for brief non-confidential messages to and from the staff, such as a change in your child's schedule for that day, a different contact number, a reminder to bring something the next day, or a note from you that someone different will be coming to pick your child up.

Our website (www.pct.edu/childcare) – From this site, you can link to the entire text of our curriculum, our health and safety policies, and this Family Handbook. You can also find staff photographs and biographies, a printable version of the application for admission, and photos of center activities.

Locked mailbox – This box is located in the lobby of the Center. Please use it to deposit fees (checks and money orders only -- no cash), to return forms, and for written notes to the director or your child's teacher. This mailbox is emptied daily.

Parent conferences – We schedule individual conferences with you each semester, but don't wait until then to ask questions or bring concerns to us.

Contact the director or your child's teacher at the numbers provided on page 24 or at drop-off or pick-up time or by note to schedule a meeting. We will be happy to meet with you at any time, but must make arrangements to cover the room.

YOUR FEEDBACK, CONCERNS, & QUESTIONS

We encourage you to let us know about changes in your child's life, comments he or she has made about the Center, or anything else that will help us make your child more comfortable and more ready to work and learn.

Each year, you will receive an e-mail with a link to an on-line **Family Survey**. Please take the time to complete this survey. We really do use your feedback to make improvements in the program.

If you have specific problems, please follow these guidelines to make sure your questions and concerns are handled as quickly and satisfactorily as possible:

Concerns about fees/payments: Please speak directly with the secretary or director. Teachers are not involved in financial matters and are not prepared to answer questions related to fees.

Concerns about your child: See your child's teacher first, and then the director. Also, the director will be happy to help with a referral to an outside consultant or agency.

Concerns about a staff member: Talk directly to that person or to the director.

We are always interested in learning more about better ways to serve you and the children you have entrusted to our care. We take this responsibility and this honor very seriously. Please let us know how we are doing. If there is something you do not understand or do not like, tell us right away. We cannot always make changes to accommodate everyone, but we are always willing to try. It's much better to address small problems as they arise than to let them grow into big ones. If you are happy with our Center, tell us that too, and tell everyone else as well!

CONFIDENTIALITY

We treat information about children and families with confidentiality, and we ask that you do the same if you spend time in the Center. This means that we may share information about a child ONLY with that child's parents or guardians, unless specific written permission has been obtained to do so with others. Center staff (on a need-to-know basis, which usually means only those staff who work directly with the child and the director) and licensing or accrediting representatives are the only people other than parents/guardians who have access to children's confidential information.

You may have access to your child's file at any time by coming to the office and asking the director or secretary. We are happy to forward copies of children's files to their next school or to other agencies with your written permission.

Please do not take photos of other Center children with your cell phone or personal camera, nor post such photos on Facebook or other social networking sites.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

We will gladly share our collection of resource materials with you. This includes books about child development; family events such as divorce, death, moving, or birth of a baby; and teacher resource books with recipes for homemade play dough, fingerplays and songs, and suggestions for reading or math experiences. Just ask, or feel free to browse through the collection in the conference room off the lobby area.

BECOME INVOLVED

We hope that you will become involved in your child's Center. You will find it rewarding and your child will benefit in many ways. Some possibilities for involvement include:

- spending time in the classroom, either observing or participating in activities (arrange this with your child's teacher; if your child is new to the Center, you may want to wait until he or she has settled in to the Center routine first);
- volunteering to serve on Center Advisory Committees, which are formed from time to time to make recommendations on policy and personnel matters;
- donating supplies for activities, or time and expertise in various Center projects;
- attending Center events for families;
- arranging and/or accompanying the group on walks and visits; and
- anything else you would like to do! Just let us know.

VISITING THE CENTER

Parents/guardians of enrolled children are welcome to visit any part of the Center, at any time, without prior notification. You may have to make an appointment if you need to speak with your child's teacher for any length of time. Safety requires that teachers be attentive to the children unless arrangements have been made for a substitute.

Some families enjoy joining their child for lunch at the Center. Others occasionally sign their child out for a lunch date. Just ask your child's teacher about either option.

All visitors other than parents must report to the front desk to schedule a visit at a convenient time. This includes parents' friends or relatives unless they have come to pick a child up as authorized by the parent.

College-wide Open House events, held on Saturday or Sunday in Fall and Spring, are a good time for children to show off the Center to families and friends who can't come during the week. Watch for signs and notices about dates and hours.

APPENDIX A: REQUIRED EMERGENCY PLAN LETTER

To Parents/Guardians of Children Enrolled:

Child care regulations of the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development require that all child care centers inform parents annually of the existence of an emergency plan, to assure you of our concern for the safety and welfare of children attending the center. Our Emergency Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- *Immediate evacuation:* Students are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, etc.
- *In-place sheltering:* Sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- *Evacuation:* Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to a relocation facility in another Penn College building as directed by College Administration and Penn College Police.
- *Modified Operation:* May include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building problems (such as utility disruptions) that make it unsafe for children but may be necessary in a variety of situations.

Please listen to local radio and television stations, subscribe to PCT Alerts, or check the Penn College website, for announcements relating to any of the emergency actions listed above.

We ask that you not call during the emergency. This will keep the telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information.

You have already completed an emergency form listing those persons authorized to pick up your child. This form will be used every time your child is released, including during emergencies. Please ensure that only those persons you list on the form attempt to pick up your child and that you or anyone else coming to pick up during an emergency have a photo ID (this is in case your child is in the care of a teacher other than the ones who already know you.)

I specifically urge you **not** to attempt to make different arrangements during an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

In order to assure the safety of your children and our staff, I ask your understanding and cooperation. Should you have additional questions regarding our emergency operating procedures contact me at (570) 320-8026, or kpayne@pct.edu.

Sincerely,

Karen Woland Payne, Director

APPENDIX B: CENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Classroom/Person	Phone	E-mail
Classroom B1076 (Bees)	320-2400, ext. 7271	ltressle@pct.edu
Classroom B1072 (Bunnies)	320-2400, ext. 7256	rhorn@pct.edu
Classroom B1066 (Birds)	320-2400, ext. 7698	jmm4@pct.edu
Classroom B1062 (Bears)	320-2400, ext. 7279	Nes3@pct.edu
Director	320-2400, ext. 7239	kpayne@pct.edu
Secretary	320-2400, ext. 7123	dwarner2@pct.edu

Each room has its own voice mail. After several rings, voice mail will take your message. Messages involving your child's attendance that day or a change in pick-up time or person, etc., should go directly to the teachers in his or her group at the extensions above. Questions and messages about enrollment or policy should be directed to the director. The secretary can answer questions about fees as well as take messages for other staff.

Staff

- Bees: Leah Tressler, B.S., Group Leader
 Sonya Miller, A.A.S., Assistant Group Leader
- Bunnies: Beckie Horn, A.A.S., Group Leader
 Jennifer Bay, A.A.S., Assistant Group Leader
- Birds: Jessica McCoy, B.S., Group Leader
 Regina Andes, B.A., Assistant Group Leader
- Bears: Neva Simcox, B.S., Group Leader
 Joyce Shrimp, B.S., Assistant Group Leader
- Floating: Sandy Hollingsworth, A.A.S., Assistant Group Leader
- Center Aide: Karen Fischer
- Director: Karen Woland Payne, M.S.
- Secretary: Darlene Warner, A.A.S.