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HISTORY

In 1968, the staff in the East Chicago Heights Head Start Program asked Prairie State College to provide courses in Child Development for them.

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.

Prairie State College’s Children’s Learning Center is a licensed facility that provides quality child care for children ages 15 months 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 center also offers ongoing preschool screenings, parent workshops and a toy-lending library. Advanced registration for services is required.

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.

Additional information can be obtained by calling 709-3725 or 709-3728.

PHILOSOPHY

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.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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.

APPLICATION/ADMISSION/WITHDRAWAL

Each application is considered in order received without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.* Interested parents should visit the Center with their child.

*First priority registration will be directed to children of Prairie State College students, followed by PSC staff, and the community.

Enrollment is accomplished through contact with the Center Coordinator, the completion of Center registration forms which include a contract for hours and a current physical examination immunizations, and lead screening with results. A \$10.00/child up to \$25/family enrollment fee is charged each semester. All forms must be completed and received prior to the child's start date. For pre-k registration, see page 13.

Based on licensing and staffing standards, there is a maximum number of children that can be enrolled at anytime of the day. Staff are scheduled according to the childrens' 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."

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Failure to receive advance approval may result in a late fee of the current hourly rate charged for each 15 minute interval the parent is early/late.

Given the availability of space and staff, we will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

Each semester requires submission of a new schedule and "Contract for Hours" by the appropriate date posted.

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.

Daily attendance is strongly encouraged unless your child is sick or there is a family emergency. If your child is absent for the day, call the Children's Learning Center at 708-709-3727, 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.

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.

All parents/guardians are responsible for information and notifications found on the parent bulletin board.

Parents failure to comply with program policies may result in dismissal.

Parents requesting adjustments to fees due because of withdrawal for personal circumstances or dropping classes should contact the Center

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coordinator to discuss procedure.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Our Center is generally open all days that the College is open.

CLOSINGS:

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

Staff Training:

One full week before the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.

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

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).

Regular daily hours open are: 7:00 a.m. to 10:15 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday. Any other extended hours may be determined on a per semester basis according

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to need.

Summer hours may vary slightly according to the College business hour schedule.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTER STAFF

The Center staff is experienced and educationally qualified in Early Childhood Education. We feel it is important to maintain communication between staff and parents. The staff is available for individual conferences, upon request. We hope you would feel comfortable sharing any information that helps us in caring for your child.

In addition to the regular staff, our Center participates in a Foster Grandparent program and serves as a practicum site for Early Childhood Education students at Prairie State College. College students may also periodically observe children as part of class assignments. Work study students and volunteers may also work at the Center.

The State of Illinois requires that staff of a child care facility report all cases of suspected child abuse and neglect to the Department of Children and Family Services. DCFS is responsible for investigating the case.

GENERAL POLICIES

FEES*

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.

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Payment arrangements for all fees should be arranged with the College Business Office once the child care bills are processed for the semester. Unpaid balances will jeopardize your class registration privileges and your child's continuing enrollment at the Center 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 or 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.

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.

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.

Should a parent wish an adjustment in total fees due because of a child's absence for exceptional personal circumstances, the Center Coordinator can be contacted for the procedure.

(*Fees subject to change)

SIGN-IN SHEETS

Your child/ren must be signed in and out daily by the adult bringing or picking him/her up. Each child will be signed in/out twice; first using

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the electronic system by the building entrance and second by signing the attendance roster in the classroom.

The electronic sign-in system keeps track of attendance for all of the reports filed with the state. If a child is not signed in on the system, the Center is not reimbursed for the child. The sign-in sheets in the classroom are important in case there is an emergency. If we have to evacuate the building, the staff must have a listing of all children currently checked in.

The adult must bring the child into his/her classroom to be received by a staff person.

Other than a child's parents we can only release children to adults and teenagers over the age of sixteen you have designated in writing. Anyone we release a child to must present a picture ID.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Day care licensing standards assure parents that child care programs have policies and procedures for appropriate safety, health and medical care, and must comply with specific fire and sanitation requirements.

Enrollment requires a current medical (which includes up-to-date immunizations), and lead screening with results for your child. The enrollment forms also include emergency phone numbers, emergency authorization, and other necessary information about your child.

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

The staff is trained in first-aid procedures and we are equipped with first-aid supplies. In the case of serious accidental injury to your child, we will make an immediate attempt to contact you. If we cannot reach you, we will call the local hospital or Rescue Squad for immediate emergency care. Therefore, it is essential that you let us

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know if there is a change where you can be reached during your child's attendance at the Center.

If your child should become ill at the Center, we will call you, or your contact person, to pick up your child. Children cannot stay or be brought to the Center if they have active symptoms of an illness (vomiting, diarrhea, etc.) or run a temperature of 101° or more. It is recommended that children be "fever free" 24-hours before returning to the Center. 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.

If your child will be absent, you must notify the Center on the first day of the illness, by calling 709-3727. If your child is absent due to a contagious disease such as ringworm, impetigo or measles, he/she must have a doctor's release before returning to the Center.

MEDICATION

Necessary medication may be administered to a child at the Center 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.

If your child requires a sunscreen prior to going outside, the sunscreen should be used prior to arriving at the Center.

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NUTRITION

Our Center 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 or parent. We will work with you to see the child is provided with the appropriate meals.

SPECIAL DAYS

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 must also ask that such snacks be of a nutritional nature and of the store bought variety.

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.

REST TIME

A two hour rest time is provided at our Center for all full-time children between the ages of 15 months and 6 years-old. During the summer,

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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 for the preschoolers and bi-weekly for the younger children at the Center. 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.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline measures are designed and carried out in such a way as to help each child develop self-control, and to assume responsibility for his/her own actions. We take a positive approach to discipline such as letting children know what they can do, as well as what they can not. Another approach we use is redirection to a different activity. We will also use a logical consequences technique - for example, if a child is throwing blocks in the block corner, he/she may have to come out of that area for a time.

If a child is removed from the group or an activity to gain control, it will be for a short period of time. Corporal punishment, such as spanking, is never used. If there are repeated discipline problems, the parent(s) will be called in for a conference with the child's teacher to work together in helping the child.

CLOTHING

Each child should be dressed comfortably and appropriately. During warmer weather, play shoes should be worn. Due to safety reasons on the playground, sandals, thongs, dress shoes and jelly shoes are not recommended unless an additional pair of closed-toed, rubber-soled shoes is provided. During the cooler weather, children will go outdoors even for a short time, unless it is raining, or the wind chill makes it too cold. Boots, mittens, hats, heavy coats and snowpants should be worn for winter play and labeled with the child's name

Sometimes play is messy or a toileting accident causes a child's clothes to get soiled. Therefore, we ask that you leave an extra set of

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clothes in your child's 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.

TOYS FROM HOME

We ask that children do not bring toys from home. This avoids the possibility of those toys becoming lost or broken. The Center is not responsible for toys brought from home. Your child's teacher may schedule "Show'N'Tell" from time-to-time. You will be notified in advance of those dates.

TODDLER'S AND TWO'S ROOM

The hours of the Toddler Room and children that are not potty-trained will be 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. Daily comment sheets will be provided for each child. The top portion should be completed by the parent/guardian when signing in. You may call or arrange a conference to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have regarding your toddler with the classroom teacher.

Diapers & Diaper Wipes

Parents/Guardians are to supply diapers, and diaper wipes in unopened packages. Each package and any diaper cream/ointment must have your child's name on it. Reminder notes will be sent home when your child needs diapers and/or diaper wipes.

Pacifiers

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

Bottles & Sippy Cups - Toddler Room Only

Bottles and "special" sippy cups will need to be supplied by the parent/guardian. Label all parts of the bottle and sippy cup with the child's name. If the child is still using a bottle with formula, the

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formula will also need to be supplied by the parent/guardian, along with the times and amount of formula for each bottle. If the child is using a sippy cup or bottle, he/she will only receive it during snacks and meals. Children will not be allowed to walk around with sippy cups or bottles during the day; however, water will be made available to the children throughout the day.

PRE-K

In addition to our current child care and preschool services, the Children's Learning Center also offers a state funded pre-kindergarten program for Illinois children ages 3-5 years old. Pre-kindergarten is supported through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education and is intended to provide children with a wide variety of age appropriate learning and social experiences. Children are exposed to early literacy, math and science activities, and learn social and listening skills that help prepare them for academic success. Families interested in participating in the pre-k 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, older children will receive first priority. Like other center programs, pre-kindergarten follows the College calendar during the fall and spring semesters. Pre-kindergarten is not in session during the summer semester.

Hours of Operation

- There are two sessions of pre-k.
- The morning class is in session from 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
- The afternoon class is in session from 12:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

In order for children to get the most out of their pre-k experience, it is important that they arrive on time. Children should not however, be brought to class more than five minutes before the start of the session and should be picked up promptly at the end of the session. This allows teachers the necessary time to prepare properly for each session. Children who are not picked up promptly will be taken to the

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office until parents arrive. Wrap around care may be arranged if space is available. Prairie State students and staff will be given first priority for wrap around care.

Fees

The pre-kindergarten program is free and parents will not be charged for the hours of the pre-k session. Parents will be charged for wrap-around-care. (Funding options may be available for qualified families for wrap around care.)

Attendance

Barring serious illness or other extenuating circumstances, children enrolled in the pre-k program are expected to maintain an 80% attendance rate in order to keep their place in the class. Please report absences by calling 709-3727 or 709-7734.

Parent Involvement

Parents of children enrolled in the pre-kindergarten program are required to volunteer in the program and attend a minimum of two parent meetings per year. Parents can help in the classroom, chaperone field trips or assist in preparing materials needed for classroom activities. We ask that parents document their participation in the *Parent Volunteer Log* located in the pre-k classroom.

A parent coordinator will schedule two home visits with pre-k families during the school year. Teaching staff will conduct parent conferences in December and in May to review each child's progress. Parents are welcome to request additional conferences if needed.

Field Trips

To enhance the classroom learning experiences, the pre-kindergarten children will attend monthly field trips. On field trip days, both morning and afternoon sessions will attend together and the field trip will take the place of the regular pre-k session. Field trips are free for the

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children. 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.