

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

INFANT AND PRESCHOOL CENTER

PARENT HANDBOOK



HORRABIN HALL 15 - 17
(309) 298-1250
REVISED 8-27-2026

Welcome to WIU Infant and Preschool Center! We have an outstanding program for young children and we hope you and your child will enjoy your time with us. In this handbook you will find our philosophy and goal statements, a basic overview of our program, and general information concerning policies and regulations. We hope that you feel free to discuss any concerns you may have or ask any questions about our program. Any ideas or suggestions of ways we can better serve you and your child are always welcome. You are encouraged to visit your child at the center or to just enjoy watching from our observation booth. We take very seriously the trust you have placed in us to care for your child.

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Center History

The College of Applied Sciences and College of Education established the WIU Infant and Preschool Center in the fall of 1977 as a lab-training site. In 1990, the College of Education took over the full administration of the center. An average of 600 college students utilize the center for observation or hands-on experiences with the children each semester. These students come from many departments and disciplines across the university.

The center is licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services to serve children, six weeks to six years of age. We accept any children within the specified age range, including children with special needs.

Goals of the Center

The WIU Infant and Preschool Center strives to maintain a program that is geared to the optimal development of the growing child. The goals of the center are to aid the children to:

- develop and maintain positive feelings about themselves and about their own abilities to create and to learn;
- develop their awareness of the world around them through sensory experiences—opportunities to see, hear, taste, smell—that are prerequisites for developing concepts and solving problems;
- develop and improve language through listening, speaking, and dramatic play activities, which form the basis for reading, writing, and other communication skills;
- develop an ability to express, both verbally and nonverbally, feelings such as joy, happiness, fear, and anger in acceptable ways;
- develop maximum physical growth and health through motor activities and proper nutrition;
- develop an awareness of their strengths and limitations; cope with success, failure, and change;
- develop effective ways of coping with stress in their lives;
- develop and support the dispositions of persistence, focused participation, hypothesis testing, risk taking, and self-regulation through a curriculum that encourages choice and active participation;
- develop the capacity to see themselves as a part of humanity who show respect and concern for rights and property of others;
- develop an appreciation for life, through interactions with others and by caring for pets and plants in the classroom.

We strive to meet these goals through children's involvement with caring adults, varied materials, and engaging experiences.

We understand that parents and families are children's first teachers and each home culture begins the learning process for children. Each child brings with them their own unique cultural heritage and experience to our program. We strive to be sensitive to these experiences and use a variety of instructional practices to reach and engage your child.

Center Personnel

We have an exemplary staff caring for your children. The director and lead teachers hold master's degrees in early childhood education. Members of the teaching staff are assigned to the room where they have the greatest expertise. Our program also has an excellent cook and an efficient office manager.

A faculty director (a member of the Early Childhood faculty), other Early Childhood faculty in the School of Education, the Director of the School of Education, and the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services all serve as an advisory board for our center.

Serving as a lab site for the university, we have a high number of students working with or observing the children. Center administrators closely monitor these students to ensure they follow center policies and procedures.

All teaching staff members attend a minimum of 20 hours of conferences and in-service training per year. This ongoing professional development contributes to the high quality of our program. All staff members are certified in C.P.R. and First Aid and take recertification training bi-annually and food handling certification.

ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL

Registration for the center is handled in the office located in the preschool room (HH 17A). Parents are encouraged to come and observe the program with their child prior to admission. Each family will be given a personal tour of the center.

Waiting List

Our center does have a waiting list. For a family to be placed on the list, we must have a completed enrollment form for each child. These forms are dated when they are returned. When an opening occurs, the family is called for final enrollment processing. Preference is given to those wanting to enroll full time. Families with siblings previously enrolled in our program will be given preference over those on the waiting list. Once a family has been called and told of the opening, they have a specified time to respond as to whether they want to enroll their child/children.

We require that a \$50 deposit per child be made upon verification of enrollment to hold your child's spot in the center each session.

Enrollment

Enrollment is open to anyone in the community. There is no preference given to university employees or students.

Upon enrollment, the center must have an updated enrollment form, signed consent forms, signed tuition contracts, and signed DCFS forms. Physical examination/immunization records need to be on file prior to the first day of attendance. A birth certificate needs to be on file the first day of attendance. Children will be required to receive an updated physical exam every two years.

Withdrawal

Two weeks' notice must be given to the center, in writing, when a child is to be withdrawn from the program. If this notice is not given, the parents are liable for two weeks' tuition, to be paid before the child's last day.

Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates an inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be discharged from the facility. The child's teacher, center director, and the faculty director will make this decision after careful study of the child's situation. Parents will be given two weeks to find an alternate care facility.

Referral for Special Services

No two children are alike - each one is unique. Most of the differences are nothing to worry about; but for some children, these differences can be warning signals of special needs. The earlier a delay or disability is identified, the better chance the child has for reaching his or her potential with the help of intervention services. In order to facilitate early identification of children with special needs, **the law requires childcare providers to make referrals within two working days after they identify a child with a possible disability or developmental delay.** If a disability or developmental delay is identified, early intervention services are the first step in helping the child. We use the Ages and Stages Developmental Screening tool to identify children who may need further assessment for possible developmental delays. The center staff will meet with the parent(s) and provide a link to local services that will help them form a plan for their child. Every child will be screened either by Center staff, the Early Intervention Program, or through the Public-School system, no later than 60 days after entry into our program and screened annually thereafter. For ages 0-3, connect with the Early Intervention program. For children ages 3-5, connect with MacArthur Public School/Lincoln Public School.

SCHOOL HOURS AND ATTENDANCE

Hours of Operation

The center's hours are from **7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**, Monday through Friday. **If your child is not attending on any given day, please call the Center before 10 a.m.**

The center operates on the university academic calendar. The children attend whenever the college classes are in session. Therefore, the children do not attend on holidays observed by the University; break periods or days the university is closed by storms, natural disasters or special occurrences. Unexpected closings will be announced on the WIU emergency system, WKAI and WIUM radio stations. For families not within the University system, the family will receive a phone call or email. Please note, if the Center would close anytime during the day, the Center will not reopen on the same day.

Arrival and Pickup Procedures

Children may arrive any time after **7:45 a.m.** Each child must be brought all the way into his/her room each day. We cannot be responsible for a child dropped off at the building entrance. The state requires that the person bringing and picking up your child sign in and out each day. There is a notebook or clipboard placed close to the door for this purpose. Infant and toddler parents are asked to complete a very short information sheet each morning. If your child will not be attending on any particular day, please call the center to let your child's teacher know (309-298-1250). Staff will greet children/parents in the hallway.

Children must be picked up by **5:00 p.m.** We will not release a child to a person not authorized by a parent or guardian. If someone else is going to pick up your child, we must have a written statement from you telling the person's name and the date. If for some reason the center staff have questions concerning the person who comes to pick up your child, we may ask to see a driver's license or any picture identification. A call may be made to the parents to verify the identity or authorization of another person picking up your child. This is all done for the safety of your child.

Cell Phone Use

We respectfully ask parents to refrain from using your cell phone as you are dropping off and picking up your children. This allows for better communication with the teachers and a chance to greet you.

Use of Photo and Video Images

WIU Infant and Preschool Center would like to emphasize how a child's photo and video image may be used. In the enrollment packet, we request your signature giving us permission to use your child's photo to promote WIU, the Curriculum and Instruction Department and the Infant and Preschool Center. On our website, many pictures are posted for you to enjoy and are protected by WIU's copyright laws. We want to ensure trust and confidence from families that we will protect their right regarding privacy. The individual dignity of children and families shall be respected and protected at all times in accordance with applicable laws. This means that photos and videos of children and families shall not be used on social media, outside of WIU, the Curriculum Instruction Department and the Infant and Preschool Center.

Parents expect a certain amount of privacy when it comes to their child while they are at our center. When there is an event at our center or away from the center, we welcome you to come and participate. You may also take photos or video while you are here. Photos and video taken at the center that only features your child may be used as you wish on social media. However, if photos and videos taken at the center feature **children that are not your own**, please use them for your personal use only and **do not post them publicly**. We want to protect all of the children at the center while they are here.

Late Pickup

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services require that all licensed day cares have a policy regarding the consequences if a child is not picked up from the day care at the agreed upon time. The following are the guidelines for such an occurrence.

Late fees: A \$5.00 late fee will be charged for every minute after 5:00 p.m. when the child is still in the day care center.

After 5 minutes if the parent(s) have not contacted the center with further instructions, the center will then immediately try to contact the parent(s). The center will try to call each parent 2 separate times in the next 10 minutes.

If there is no contact made, the center will then immediately try to contact the emergency contacts listed by the parents 3 separate times within the next 10 minutes.

If the center by 5:30 has had no response from any of the above-mentioned persons, the center will call WIU Public Safety to pick up your child and a note will be placed on the center door telling your child's location. The parent(s) will then be responsible to retrieve the child from the authority.

This in no way will reflect on the child and the matter should only be discussed among adults.

The center will be responsible for the child until the outside authority, parent or the emergency contact arrive.

Emergency Contacts: It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to keep this list up to date. These names and numbers will need to be revised any time there is any change.

If your child is picked up after 5:00 p.m., a late charge of \$5.00 per minute must be paid to the teacher who waited with your child. **This extra charge must be paid within 24 hours or your child will not be allowed to return until it is paid.** Habitual lateness of 30+ minutes after 5:00 p.m., **three** times a semester constitutes grounds for expulsion from the center.

Parking

Fifteen-minute parking will be available at posted parking spaces in the Parking Lot 19 across from the library for families enrolled in the center. Upon enrollment, families will be given a laminated parking sign that is to be placed on the dashboard during the time the car is parked in this area. We are not responsible for tickets received when parking elsewhere.

Tuition and Funding

The WIU Infant and Preschool Center is a **not-for-profit program**. Western Illinois University provides the Center's classroom space, insurance, janitorial services, and maintenance at a nominal charge. The School of Education provides approximately **10% of the Center's total income**, while **parent tuition and fees provide approximately 90%**. The following tuition and enrollment policies are necessary to maintain the fiscal stability of the Center and provide consistent, high-quality care for children.

Tuition Rates

Tuition is based on the child's age group and enrollment schedule.

Age Group	Weekly Rate	Daily Rate
Infant Group (6 weeks–24 months)	\$216/week	\$57/day
Two-Year-Old Group (24–36 months)	\$204/week	\$46/day
Preschool Group (3–5 years)	\$192/week	\$40/day

Tuition and Enrollment Requirements

Parents/legal guardians must sign a **Tuition Payment Agreement before their child's first day of attendance** and complete all required enrollment and parent information forms.

Tuition is charged according to the **days for which a child is enrolled, not the number of days the child actually attends**. Families are responsible for tuition for the full semester enrollment period. Tuition will not be reduced or refunded for voluntary absences, illness, weather-related closures, or other unforeseen University closures.

Full tuition will be charged for weeks that include Labor Day, Election Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Lincoln's Birthday.

If the Center must close because of a **staffing shortage resulting in more than 1.5 days of closure**, families will receive a credit equal to **50% of the childcare cost for the affected closure days**. Families will be notified of the closure and applicable credit.

Payments and Past-Due Accounts

Payments are collected through the Center's Observation Office, **Room 17, Horrabin Hall**. Payment may be made by **check, bank draft, or money order**, and a written receipt will be provided. For security purposes, **cash payments are not accepted**.

Families are expected to keep their accounts current. If payment is not made for a period of **two weeks**, the child will be removed from the Center roster unless prior payment arrangements have

been approved by the Center Director. A payment reminder will be sent at the beginning of the second week of non-payment. Outstanding balances may be referred to the appropriate WIU billing and collection office.

If a child is absent without explanation or communication from the family for **more than two weeks**, the child may be removed from the Center roster.

Withdrawal

Families choosing to withdraw their child must provide the Center with **two weeks' written notice** of the child's last day. Families who do not provide the required notice may be responsible for two additional weeks of tuition.

Child Care Assistance

The Center maintains agreements with the **Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS)** and the **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** for childcare funding available through special application and eligibility requirements.

Parents/legal guardians remain responsible for tuition payments **until funding or assistance has been approved**. Families are also responsible for applicable co-payments, fees, and any remaining balance not covered by the funding agency.

Additional Support for Children

The Center is committed to serving children with a variety of needs. If a child requires additional personnel or individualized staffing beyond the Center's regular staffing structure to safely and appropriately support the child's care, an **additional cost may be assessed to the family**. Any additional staffing needs and associated costs will be discussed with the family.

Annual Supply Fee

A **\$50 supply fee per child, per school year** is assessed to assist with the cost of classroom and care supplies, including paper, crayons, craft materials, bibs, diaper wipes, and other consumable materials.

The supply fee is due during the **first week of enrollment** unless alternative arrangements have been approved by the Center Director.

Birth Certificate

The State of Illinois and the Department of Children and Family Services require all parents enrolling a child or children into a licensed day care facility to provide the facility with an original certified copy of the child's birth certificate.

We will provide a written notice to the parent or guardian of any child to be *enrolled for the first time that within 30 days of enrollment the parent or guardian must provide a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of the child*. If a certified copy of the birth certificate is not available, the parent or guardian must submit a passport, visa or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate.

The Center is not allowed to admit entry to a child without proof of the child's identity. The Center will *notify the parent or guardian in writing that the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement has been notified as required by law, advising the parent or guardian that he or she has 10 additional days to comply by submitting the required documentation*.

The Center will *report to the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency any affidavit received which appears inaccurate or suspicious in form or content; we will flag the record of a child enrolled at the day care who is reported by the Illinois State Police as a missing person, and shall immediately report to the Illinois State Police any request concerning flagged records or knowledge as to the whereabouts of any missing child*. [325 ILCS 50/5]

Health Requirements, Sickness Policy, and Emergency Policies

All these symptoms listed below are outside the realm of a childcare provider's duties.

If your child exhibits any of the symptoms listed below while at daycare, you will be notified and expected to arrange for your child to be taken home. When contacted about the development of a new illness or symptom, you are expected to arrange pickup within an hour. It is very important to have alternative care for your child in the event of an illness. No tuition adjustments are made for child illness.

For the safety and health of all children and staff, sick children need to stay home when ill. If your child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 48 hours, they should not come to the center.

Diarrhea/Lower GI: (2 watery stools at childcare) Child will be sent home and can not return for 48 hours after the last watery stool.

Rash combined with fever: (oral temp of 101 F or under arm temp of 100.4 F or higher) or behavior changes, unless a physician has determined the illness to be non-communicable.

Upper Respiratory Infection: unless the parent provides a note from a physician indicating the child is currently undergoing treatment and is non-infectious.

Mouth Sores: associated with the child's inability to control saliva, such as Hand Foot and Mouth Disease. Will need to be cleared by the Healthcare Provider.

Vomiting/Upper GI: (may return 48 hours after last vomit) and completely symptom free.

Temperature greater than 100.4 F: with behavior changes or symptoms of illness. Can return 48 hours after the child is symptom free and fever reducer isn't used.

Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or other signs of possible severe illness. May return once symptoms have subsided.

Strep throat: (until 48 hours after start of antibiotic treatment)

Severe cough: that includes "barking cough" Croup cough/deep chest cough with wheezing.

Scabies/Ringworm: (48 hours after first treatment) Must be kept covered by clothing/bandages.

Head lice: the child will be sent home and can return the following day after first treatment and attempted nit removal. Any live nits the following ill results in a child being sent home again.

Pinkeye: (until 48 hours after start of treatment)

Impetigo: (until 48 hours after treatment)

Illness that calls for greater care than staff can provide. Such as excessive crying: teething, stomach aches, earaches, separation anxiety. Illness that prevents children from participating comfortably in the program. May return once symptoms have subsided.

Symptoms that may be indicative of one of the serious, communicable diseases.

Any of the following known contagious illnesses: Influenza (48 hours afebrile), COVID-19 (10 days post symptom onset and 48 hours afebrile), Chicken Pox (Varicella, 6 days after rash onset), Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Diphtheria, Herpes Simplex, Whooping cough, and Hand Foot and Mouth Disease.

Please keep your child home when they are sick.

Medical Examinations

- The state requires us to have medical exam forms on file for each child and staff member. These must be updated every two years. **The center must have a current exam form on file the first day of enrollment or the child will be unable to attend.**
- Medical examination forms are available in the center's office.
- When booster/vaccines are received, please bring us verification so that we can keep our records current.
- The state requires that all families provide proof of receiving the HIB vaccine. TB test. and Chickenpox vaccine and of having been tested for lead poisoning prior to enrollment.
- Religious Exemption from Immunization: If a parent or legal guardian requests an exemption from required immunizations based on religious beliefs, the appropriate **written religious exemption documentation required by the State of Illinois must be completed, signed, and submitted to the Center before enrollment or attendance.** The completed documentation will be maintained in the child's health record. Families should be aware that a child who is not immunized may be excluded from attendance in the event of an outbreak or exposure to a vaccine-preventable communicable disease, as required or directed by state or local public health authorities.

Medicines

Center staff is allowed to administer non-prescription and prescription medicine if it is necessary for your child to be given medication at school. Both prescription and non-prescription medications can only be accepted in their original containers. Prescription medications must be labeled with the full pharmacy label. Non-prescription medication must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. The container must be in such condition that the name of the medication and the directions for use is clearly readable. Doses to be given must correspond to the prescribed dosage for the age/weight of the child unless accompanied by a doctors' signed note.

The parent must fill out and sign a medication form, available in each room, before the medication can be given. All medicines are kept in a locked box in each room and must be labeled with the child's name and the dosage to be given. A record is kept in each room of the medicines given with the time of day it is given, the child's name, the dosage, the prescription number, and who administered the medicine.

Sunscreen

Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen before/at arrival in the morning. Teachers will apply sunscreen again in the afternoon before going outside. Parents must fill out a sunscreen form before sunscreen can be applied. Parents will need to provide sunscreen that is labeled with the child's name.

Accidents

The center staff and students take all possible precautions to prevent accidents and injuries. However, in the event one should occur, the parents/guardians/legal custodians will be contacted immediately. Written notification will be given of a minor injury.

It is vital for center staff to have parents' schedules and phone numbers so they can be reached. These must be updated each semester.

If a parent cannot be reached and the accident is serious, the child's doctor will be called and his/her advice followed. If the doctor is not available, the child will be taken to the emergency room at McDonough District Hospital. We ask parents upon enrollment to fill out the emergency consent forms at McDonough District Hospital in the event of an accident.

THE CENTER'S STAFF AND WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CANNOT ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY IN THE EVENT THAT AN ACCIDENT OR INJURY SHOULD OCCUR.

Weather Alerts

The Western Illinois University Emergency Alert System (WEAS) enables the delivery of voice, text, and e-mail messages to members of our campus community in the event of an emergency.

We have a weather radio installed in the office of the Preschool to alert us of any weather-related watches and/or warnings.

Fire and Disaster Drills

The center staff and children practice fire drills once a month and tornado evacuation techniques once a semester so that if these emergencies should occur, we would all know what to do immediately. Instructions for evacuation are posted in each room, along with designated pick up locations.

In case the fire alarm is sounded in the building the children will exit through the playground doors and proceed to the north fence of the playground. When it is determined that there is actually a fire, the children will be moved to a designated building and parents will be called for pickup.

When tornado sirens are activated the children will be moved to a tornado safe area of Horrabin Hall, remaining there until an all clear has been given. Parents will be called if needed. These drills are practiced monthly throughout the school year. The log is posted in the Center office.

Possible Threat on the University Campus

When the center is notified by WIU officials that there is a possible threat on campus, such as a threat of violence to occur or there is an actual incident happening on campus, the center staff will immediately lock the doors to the hallway and check to make sure all the children are safe and accounted for. If the children and staff are on the playground they will be brought inside immediately and the doors to the playground closed. If they are in the gym when notification is given they will be moved into the Military Science weight room adjacent to the gym. They will remain there until they are told to move the children elsewhere by WIU officials.

In the case of a threat given, the parents will be allowed to pick up their children at their own risk and college students will be allowed to exit at their own risk. In the case of an actual incident happening on campus, in close proximity to the center, the doors will be locked and no one will be granted access in or out. Once the center is informed by WIU officials that all is safe, the doors will be unlocked and parents and students will then have access to pick up their child/children and all will be allowed to leave the center.

The WIU Infant and Preschool Center works closely with the Office of Public Safety and the WIU community so we can provide a safe environment for each child and family. Our staff members have completed various trainings to ensure pleasant and secure classrooms. Our Center utilizes the WIU Emergency Alert System to guarantee safety for all of our children, students, and staff.

Insect/Pest Control Procedures

- Control of pests (insect/rodent) will be conducted by a professional pest control agency only.
- Routine pest control application will not be conducted while children are onsite.
- Parents/guardians will be notified at least two days prior to a routine application of pest control chemicals.
- Pesticide application will not be done while children are onsite and for a minimum of two hours before they will be arriving again.
- As much as possible, the childcare center will use non-chemical methods to control pests.
- A record of all pesticides applied by the pest control company will be kept on file for review during normal business hours.

Power Outage

In the event of a power outage, the following procedure will be followed:

- If the power outage is expected to last longer than 2 hours, parents will be called to pick up their children.
- Perishable food will be taken home with staff.

If the power outage is not expected to last very long and weather conditions are favorable, the children either will play outside or be taken to brighter parts of the building, such as the gym.

Curriculum Philosophy

Our curriculum is designed to be appropriate for the age span of the children within the group with attention being given to children's individual needs, interests, and developmental levels. The development of positive self-esteem and a positive attitude toward learning are a primary emphasis.

We view learning as an interactive process between the child and her/ his environment. The curriculum is designed to provide for children's exploration and manipulation of the environment through meaningful interaction with adults, other children, and materials.

The teachers' knowledge of child development will aid them in observing and recording each child's needs, interests, and developmental progress. Materials and experiences are then planned to meet these needs and stimulate learning in all developmental areas-physical, social, emotional, and intellectual - using an integrated approach.

Learning activities and materials are concrete, real and/or representational, and relevant to the lives of young children. As children develop understanding and skills, the teachers will provide a variety of activities and materials of increasing difficulty, complexity, and challenge. Child-initiated, child-directed, and teacher supported play is an essential component of our program. Multicultural and nonsexist experiences, materials, and equipment are provided for children of all ages.

Daily learning experiences include the following:

- **ART:** Use of various art media such as play dough, finger paints, water colors, crayons, and easel paints assist the child in self-expression, creativity, and in the development of fine motor coordination.
- **DRAMATIC PLAY:** Dramatic play gives each child the opportunity to better understand family and community roles.
- **MUSIC:** Ample time is allowed for singing, moving, and experimenting with instruments and rhythm. Listening to music serves as a way to relax the child and provide smooth transitions to other activities. Children are exposed to a variety of music throughout the day.
- **LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE ARTS EXPERIENCES:** Books are readily available to all children. Children are frequently read to individually or in small groups. In addition, special time is set aside for puppets, stories with various media such as flannel boards, videos, and story tapes. Children are encouraged to dictate stories as well as to experience many print-related activities, as they gain an understanding of the alphabetic system of our language and the relationship between letters, sounds, and words.

- **LARGE AND SMALL MUSCLE ACTIVITIES:** Physical exercise and the development of motor skills is experienced daily. A variety of equipment is used. Small muscles are developed through various manipulative materials
- **MATHEMATICS:** Number concepts, measurement, geometry, patterns, and relationships are introduced through hands-on experiences and daily living routines. Children have many opportunities to count, compare and classify throughout the day. Problem solving, reasoning, and communication are emphasized.
- **SCIENCE:** Children are curious about the world around them. By building on this natural interest we can take advantage of events in our classroom as well as outdoors. By taking field trips and providing science projects, we allow opportunities for experimenting, observing, classifying, ordering, measuring, predicting, collecting, and problem solving. Classroom pets are an important element of the science curriculum.
- **SOCIALIZATION:** Small group experiences help children learn how to get along with others. Emphasis is put on assisting the children in the expression of feelings, needs, and ideas. As children grow in social and communication skills, teachers encourage them to solve problems through discussion and negotiations.

Infant and Toddler Group

Very young children learn about their environment through their senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching), through their own actions, and through their social interactions with adults and peers. The staff develops warm, positive relationships with each child, helping her/him feel safe and emotionally secure. The development of a trusting relationship with the staff is critical to the very young child's sense of self and is the foundation for the development of independence. Infants and toddlers learn through their own experiences, trial and error, repetition, imitation and identification. Our staff provides experiences that help children gain confidence in their own abilities, thus helping develop positive self-esteem. Relationships with people are emphasized.

Children this age are mastering and building on their vocabulary. Through their experiences with simple books, pictures, music, puzzles, and tactile experiences, as well as active play such as jumping, running, and dancing, they increase their language as they are learning about themselves and the world around them.

Adults provide a balance of quiet and active experiences for children throughout the program day.

Preschool Group

This room is organized into interest areas where children may become involved in dramatic play, play with blocks and wheeled toys, using small manipulatives such as puzzles, Legos, or board games, listening to book tapes, being creative with items such as paint, markers, crayons, etc., or exploring science concepts. Opportunities for gross motor activities, either outdoors or in the gymnasium, are provided daily. Children are exposed to a print-rich environment that stimulates language and literacy skills. Cooking experiences are done almost weekly, allowing children to taste a variety of foods and exposing them to basic math concepts, such as measuring and counting. Problem-solving skills are developed daily through child-initiated, teacher-supported activities. Occasional field trips are taken away from the building to help the children develop a better understanding of the world and community around them. The goal of the field trips is to expose them to new experiences, cultures, and information beyond the classroom.

Children with Special Needs

When a child has been identified and diagnosed with a disability we would like to have a meeting in which the parents have the opportunity to share important information about the care of their child. This could include available assessments, IEPs, IFSPs, medical evaluations, etc. This will allow us to work together to establish goals and modifications needed in the environment, program and schedule so that children can participate in activities with others. This will be an ongoing process of meeting and working together to evaluate how the program is working for the child. We will work with therapists or other professionals who visit the program in order to provide services to meet the child's identified goals.

Guidance

As part of the curriculum, teachers plan for the children's independence by offering stimulating, motivating activities that encourage individual choices and by allowing children to move at their own pace and interest level. Through opportunities to work independently and as part of a group, children will develop prosocial skills.

Our teachers promote prosocial behaviors and the development of children's consciences and self-control by providing opportunities for helping, cooperating, negotiating and talking with the person involved to solve interpersonal conflicts. By setting clear limits in a positive manner and involving the children in the establishment of classroom and playground rules, we are allowing children to have the opportunity to see alternatives and logical consequences for behavior.

Logical consequences for the child's actions and behavior are discussed with the child when misbehavior occurs. Children are treated with respect by stating the behavior that is expected. If the misbehavior continues, the child will be given the choice of following the expected behavior or sitting out an activity.

When conflicts occur between children, teachers provide techniques for the children to use that will help them be aware of feelings and the possible intentions of others. Teachers may need to help children find appropriate words to express what they are feeling.

We expect children to observe the rights of other children and to respect the property of others. If after several reminders, a child continues to behave in an unacceptable way, he/she may be placed in an area in the classroom where he/she can have some quiet time to regain self-control. If needed, the teacher may sit with the child to help her/him to regain self-control.

When a child's behavior is frequently disruptive and/or harmful to other children, the director or assistant director will meet with parents to establish a mutually agreed-upon behavior management plan. A behavior management plan will be agreed upon by the child, (when developmentally appropriate), the teacher, and the parents, with logical consequences for misbehavior. Parents and teachers will remain in close contact about the situation. If misbehavior continues to occur, our next step would be the development of a clinical behavior management plan to meet the needs of the specific child. This will be developed with the teachers, the parents and a professional clinician.

Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates an inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be discharged from the facility. The child's teacher, center director, and the

faculty director will make this decision after careful study of the child's situation. Parents will be given two weeks to find an alternative facility.

Upon the child's enrollment, the parent(s) will be given a copy of this guidance and discipline policy. The parent must sign a section on the enrollment form stating that the policy has been read and agreed to.

Meals

We provide both a morning and an afternoon snack each day and a nutritious well-balanced meal for lunch. Our snack and lunch menus conform to USDA and state regulations for day care centers. The center has an eight-week cycle of menus and snacks. The week's menu will always be posted on Monday for the coming week. If you would like a personal copy for home, please see our website: <http://www.wiu.edu/coehs/preschool/>

Children are not allowed to bring sack lunches from home, except on special picnic days. If you and your child want to bring something special as a treat (i.e., muffins, crackers, etc.), please consult with your child's teacher so our menu can be adjusted. **These must be in their original sealed packages.**

Children are never forced to eat, although they are encouraged to try things on their plate. Second helpings of food and drink are allowed. During meal times, children are encouraged to engage in polite table conversation and use developmentally appropriate table manners. Children are encouraged to help set the table and clean up afterwards. **If your child has dietary restrictions, please speak to your child's teacher.**

We ask parents to evaluate the meals/snacks served at the Center (what the child likes and what they would like to see added), by completing a questionnaire at the end of each year. This will help us evaluate the meals we currently provide so we can update and improve the quality of our healthy food choices.

Snacks and Meals-Infant and Toddler Room

A flexible feeding schedule for infants will be coordinated with the parents' schedules at home and allowances made for nursing infants. Space is provided for nursing mothers to be with their infants. A child's formula or milk is to be brought in bottles and labeled for each day's use. All children, less than one year of age, who are drinking from a bottle will be held while they drink. Until the child is able to eat table food, all food is to be brought in by the parents, labeled with specific instructions on preparation, and dated. Once the child is eating table food, the center will provide the food. Each child will receive help and guidance during feeding times. Children will be allowed and encouraged to feed themselves when it is developmentally appropriate.

Diapers and Toilet Training

Parents must provide disposable diapers for children who are not toilet trained. You will be notified when your child's supply is low. Commercial diaper wipes are used when the children are changed. If you have special creams, lotions, powders, or sunscreen that you wish to be used, please bring a labeled supply. A medical permit must be filled out by the parent for this to be administered.

There are many ideas about toilet training and about the easiest, fastest method to use. Most children between the ages of 2 and 3 begin to show signs of readiness (sometimes before 2). Staff and parents will maintain communication about these signs and a joint decision will be reached as to the method used and the time to begin. Each child has her/his own biological time clock and we will be alert to that. Specifics will be discussed between each child's parent(s) and the staff.

Naps

State regulations require a nap period for children less than six years of age, who remain five or more hours. This nap period for the group should not exceed two hours. Children staying for naptime may bring a stuffed animal to sleep with. Due to limited storage space, each child should bring a small blanket (and small pillow, if desired) because our rooms do get cool when the lights are off. All of these items must be labeled with the child's name or initials. These must be kept in their lockers until naptime each day. Older children, who do not take naps, will lie quietly on their cots for a short time of rest and then be allowed a quiet activity.

Appropriate Clothing

Opportunities will be provided each day to work with paints, clay, glue, markers, etc., so please dress your child in washable clothing. We use washable paint and markers, but accidents do happen. Children feel more at ease and freer to participate if they don't have to worry about staying clean.

Please bring and leave a complete change of clothes, clearly labeled with the child's initials or name. Children who are toilet training may need many changes of clothes. Feeding times can be messy, things can get spilled, and children fall in mud, or sit in a puddle. All of these things require a change of clothes.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will be offered every day, weather permitting, so please dress your child appropriately. Boots, a heavy coat, hat and mittens or gloves are required for wintertime play. Our rule of thumb is if it is 32 degrees F or above, the children in the infant and toddler room will go out for some fresh air. If it is 25 degrees F or above, the preschoolers will go outside. Of course, this all depends upon wind chill conditions and other such factors.

Studies have consistently shown that children have increased resistance to colds and illnesses because of playing outdoors. Children are much healthier and have a much stronger resistance to illness with exercise outside. In order to maintain our child to teacher ratio, ALL children in the classroom must go out at the same time.

It is important for children to wear sunscreen when outdoors. We ask that you put sunscreen on your child before bringing them to school and we will reapply the sunscreen (SPF35) before afternoon play outside. If your child needs a special type of sunscreen please bring a clearly marked bottle to keep at school.

No open-toed or open-heeled shoes (i.e., sandals, jellies) are to be worn by the children, in order to protect their toes and feet during active play. Children are discouraged from wearing cowboy boots and snow boots inside. They can be somewhat clumsy and hard for the children to walk or climb in.

Please try to mark all clothing with a permanent marker or name tags. This helps the staff sort through clothes when changing the child or when picking up mittens, hats, and coats after outside play.

Transitions

In the fall, we host an Open House, welcoming your child and family to our Center. It is an opportunity for you to meet your child's teachers, fellow classmates, and families. You are able to bring all of your child's items/ supplies that day. The staff will take your child's picture and family picture. They will have activities set up in the room for you to participate in. This will be a relaxed time for you and your child to get to know other families and the staff.

Before your child turns three, there will be a transitional conference. You will have the opportunity to meet with the Lead Teacher from each room. During this meeting, a plan is developed for your child to visit the preschool room and experience different activities throughout the day for 10 days. Everyone will have an opportunity to share, ask questions, and help make a smooth transition to preschool.

Transitioning to Kindergarten

We work with Lincoln School and St. Paul's Catholic School by providing information in regards to Kindergarten Round-Up. We also provide information and tips to support your child and family during this exciting transition.

Special Events

Field Trips

When weather permits, short field trips will be arranged to provide your child with additional learning experiences. You will be informed of each excursion at least two days in advance. Your permission form must be signed and on file. Parents may be asked to volunteer to accompany staff and children on these trips.

Birthdays

We celebrate birthdays at snack or lunchtime. You may send special nutritional treats if you wish. Please notify us ahead of time so we can make necessary menu changes. **The state requires that these special treats be purchased (not homemade) and in their original sealed packages.**

Research and Case Studies, Etc.

The center serves as a laboratory-training site for college students from a variety of disciplines. There will be times your child may be involved in research studies, case studies, photographs, or videotaping. This is to be expected and encouraged. Your permission form must be signed and on file. You will be informed before these studies take place as to the professionals and students involved.

Sharing Day

Once a week, on a designated day, your child may bring toys or something he/she wants to share from home. Your child's teacher will inform you of the sharing day in his/her room. We cannot be responsible for lost or broken items. **We do not permit children to bring toy weapons of any kind.**

Animals may be brought in to share if parents have received prior approval from the child's teacher. Animals **MUST** be healthy and have had their proper shots. Animals will **NOT** be allowed to stay at the center for the duration of the day.

Children may bring and share a favorite book any day. Please be sure your child's name is in the book so it is not misplaced.

If you have a videotape of a children's program or movie you wish to share with the center, please consult with a teacher before bringing it. Because we want children to be actively involved in hands-on learning experiences, we limit the amount of time spent watching videos. In general, videos will be shown only on special occasions. Short videos are more suitable than longer ones, such as feature films. Also, what may be suitable for a child to view at home may not be suitable for showing at the center. Teachers will use their judgment as to the suitability of any suggested video.

Special Celebrations

At different times during the year certain holidays or events will be celebrated at the center. For example, at Halloween the preschool room has a trick or treat parade through Horrabin Hall, visiting various offices. If holidays or events are celebrated, fall on weekends; notification will be given as to the day we will celebrate.

Parent Involvement

Parents have both the right and the responsibility to share in decisions about their children's care and education. During the early years, children are largely dependent on their families for identity, security, care, and a general sense of well-being. Communication between families and teachers helps build mutual understanding and provides consistency for children. Mutual sharing of information and insights about the individual child's needs and developmental strides help both the family and the program. Teachers encourage parents to observe and participate in their child's education

Communication with Teachers

Parents and teachers have the opportunity to exchange information regarding the children twice daily, during arrival and departure. This is important to provide continuity between the child's family environment and the center environment. The staff is available and happy to answer questions, discuss important information, or help with problems parents may be experiencing. Since arrival and departure times are sometimes hectic, we can arrange for more in-depth discussion at a time that is more relaxed. The staff welcomes parents' comments and suggestions.

Communication

We would like open communication with all families. If an interpreter is needed to communicate and understand the policies and procedures of the center we can connect you with the office of International Studies, who often can provide an interpreter.

Professional Relationships and Confidentiality

Parents and Center staff are expected to maintain professional relationships. When a close friendship develops between a parent and a staff member, parents and staff need to be mindful of conversations and sharing of certain information. The boundary lines of friend/ parent/ teachers can become blurred causing miscommunication, confusion, and possible breaches of confidentiality. Confidentiality can be significantly compromised through social networking sites, such as Facebook. Any communication related to the Center needs to go through the appropriate channels. Appropriate forms of communication with staff include calling the Center to talk with a staff member; talking at pick-up and drop-off; and emailing questions or information to the staff member's work account.

"PAWS" itive Parents

The primary role of this group is to coordinate and organize ways for parents to help and support the Center. They coordinate appreciation gifts for the teachers and student workers throughout the year. This group is here to help answer questions and gather ideas and suggestions parents have. This also helps us in choosing topics for a Parents Discussion Group or workshop. TBD

Visit

All parents are welcome to visit their children any time during the day. This helps parents and children feel more secure with the center and the staff. Visitation is especially encouraged for very young children. If separation is a problem, and you feel uncomfortable coming into your child's room, the observation booth provides a good solution. We have several parents every year who bring their lunch and eat with their child or eat their lunch while observing in the booth.

Observations

The center has an observation booth located between the preschool room and the infant/toddler room. Parents, friends and students are welcome to observe at any time. The special one-way glass allows anyone to watch unobserved by the children or staff, as long as the observation room remains dark and the lights remain on in the room being observed. Microphones are set in the ceilings of each room with speakers in the booth to allow those in the booth to hear what is being said in the room. The controls for the microphones are on the south wall. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity.

Parent Conferences

The staff observes and monitors your child's developmental progress throughout the year. Parents and/or teachers may request a conference at any time; however, we do encourage you to attend at least two conferences each year; once in the Fall and once in the Spring. Appointments for all conferences will be arranged at a time suitable to the parent and at a time the teacher has no other responsibilities. Child care can be provided if needed. Conferences are held for the purpose of discussing your child's development and learning. The first conference will include an informal sharing of your expectations for your child in our program. At following conferences, we will share with you developmental information about your child that has been observed by our staff, as we continue to learn more about your child through information and insights you share with us.

We also ask for parents to evaluate the program, (i.e., what they like, what they would like added, and any concerns they may have), by completing questionnaires provided at the end of each year.

After we compare and assess the collected information from the questionnaires and evaluations, we will update the parents regarding the new and changing improvements within our program.

Parents are invited to talk with classroom teachers or the director at any time concerning Center matters or your child's development. Appointments can be made if you would like to speak privately with a teacher or director. It is best to talk directly to your child's teachers if you have concerns regarding your child or your child's classroom, and to the director if you have concerns about a staff member, center policy, or procedure.

Due to COVID-19, we can set up Zoom conferences to speak with you. Just call ahead so we can arrange the Zoom meeting.

We want you to feel free to come and talk with us at any time throughout the year when you may have a concern.

You can contact Michelle at:
mr-franzoni@wiu.edu

Website

Our website is: <http://www.wiu.edu/coehs/preschool/>

Keep checking the website for updates, menus, announcements, photos and happenings.

You will receive login information to view weekly photos of the many experiences in which your child participates.

Assessment

Center staff engage in assessment of the children throughout the year. The Infant & Toddler and Preschool Rooms use the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System. This documentation provides parents with valuable information about your child's overall growth and development. Teachers will provide you with information relating to this assessment at the first parent teacher conference, and your child's progress will be shared at the next parent teacher conferences.

Newsletters

Weekly newsletters from the child's teachers will be posted on our website. These newsletters contain information concerning the day-to-day events and activities ongoing in the classroom. In addition, a monthly newsletter is distributed. These monthly newsletters contain short informative articles and tips for parents, as well as news pertaining to all children in the Center. Parents are welcome to submit ideas for the newsletters.

Family Social Events

We hold several events throughout the year to give our families an opportunity to meet informally and to come to know the families of their children's friends, as well as the staff's families. This allows everyone the chance to get better acquainted. These events may include, but are not limited to, an open house before school opens for the fall session, a family potluck in the fall, a family event

in November, ice cream social, or a brown bag lunch the last week of school. Some of our family nights are planned and implemented by early childhood methods classes. This provides the college students with valuable experience, as well as offering families a night of unique learning activities. We usually have a large number of families participating in these events. We encourage parents to offer ideas for other events.

Participation

We frequently need volunteers to help with field trips or special events. In addition, we encourage parents to share with the children a special skill, hobby or information about their culture or their job. Please let your child's teacher know of ways you would like to volunteer your time. All parent participation is valued and appreciated.

Parent Library

The center has a resource library housed in the observation booth. We have books, magazines, videotapes and pamphlets available for check out. These cover a wide variety of parenting topics. A list of materials available for checkout can be obtained from the office. To check out an item, simply ask your child's teacher. Our staff will be happy to show you to the Parent Library or answer any questions about it. Housed in our Parent Library there is a binder providing you with contacts and phone numbers for additional supports you may need or find helpful.

Parent Discussion Groups

Discussion group meetings are offered periodically. These are planned and facilitated by staff and Early Childhood Education faculty with suggestions from parents as to the topics. Meetings are offered at various times so that all parents have the opportunity to participate. The number of meetings will depend upon parent interest and participation.

Children's Books and Toy Lend Library

In our observation booth, we have a variety of children's books and toys available for you to check out. Simply ask your child's teacher. Our staff will be happy to show how to check things out.

Procedures for Child Care Centers Reporting Abuse

Who Reports?

Daycare teachers and directors are required by law to report child abuse and neglect. They need only suspect child abuse or neglect to make a report. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is responsible for determining if the abuse report is unfounded or indicated. All persons who are

mandated to report suspected abuse and neglect are presumed to be acting in good faith. Thus, they are immune from legal liability as a result of a report.

Procedures We Follow

If one of our staff suspects child abuse or neglect, a written report is made which includes specific details, date, time, and the name of the teacher making the observation. This information is kept private but can be shared with the parent. A call is made to the Illinois Child Abuse Hot Line. The observation is shared with the caseworker that takes the call. We also must send written confirmation of the call to the appropriate DCFS field office within 48 hours.

Help Available

If you are experiencing difficulty with parenting or other family responsibilities, the center staff is knowledgeable about available resources. We will do what we can to help your family by making referrals to the appropriate agencies.

Concluding Comments

We hope this booklet will be of use to you, both as an initial orientation to our program and for future use. Parents are encouraged to keep in close contact with their child's teachers and discuss questions, concerns, or suggestions they may have. The WIU Infant and Preschool Center is committed to providing the highest quality of care for each child through close collaboration with his or her family.