

Family Information Handbook

*The
EARLY LEARNING and
DEVELOPMENT CENTER*



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The organization of this booklet conforms to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 110-300-0455.

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1. Goals and Philosophy of the Center

The Early Learning and Development Center is a private, nonprofit Preschool and Childcare Center established in 1981.

Our mission at The Early Learning and Development Center is to serve children and families by providing an inclusive high-quality early childhood education program; one that supports the social, emotional, and developmental growth of each individual child.

ELDC's goals are:

- To share with families the responsibility for promoting learning and growth in a period when growth is rapid and significant.
- To encourage each child's self-esteem, curiosity, spontaneous energy, and inventiveness from which a lifestyle of learning habits can develop.
- To provide a developmentally based program that will meet the child's emotional, intellectual, and health needs, as well as providing for their physical care.
- To recognize the individuality of each child, foster the child's growth to their full potential, and understand that they are also a part of the larger community.
- To be a leader in high-quality childcare in the Seattle area.

The goals of the Center are to provide high-quality care for young children in a warm, caring, and learning environment.

We recognize the primacy of the family in each child's life and strive to respect and support each family in raising and educating their children. We strive for open communication with families to help us understand the significant events in each child's home life and to share with families the significant events that occur while children are in our care. We strive for a diverse staff that care about young children and have the necessary tools to provide a developmentally appropriate environment in which children can learn and grow. We try to help the staff in their quest for excellence, with ongoing training and professional support.

a. Child Growth and Development

Educational Philosophy

The educational philosophy of the Center is based on the Piagetian model. This is known as Genetic Epistemology. It is that children learn in developmentally appropriate stages. For example, a child of two years may be taught colors by rote memory if it is presented to them often enough for a long enough period. A child of three years who is developmentally ready however, may learn this information in 10 minutes, when it is presented to them. These stages of developmental readiness, Piaget taught are genetically determined.

Piaget stressed the need to utilize all senses for the most efficient learning. For example, to teach about apples and their properties, you may tell the student about them, describing their shape, weight, taste, color, the fact they grow on trees, their uses, and their varieties. This utilizes the sense of hearing. Further, you may provide the student with pictures of apples, apple trees, apple pies, apple juice, etc. This utilizes the use of sight, but only in two dimensions. You may provide examples of wax apples to hold and see, thus utilizing another sense, feeling. Ideally, though, you would be able to provide pictures of apple trees and apple orchards; real apples for the student to see, hold and taste; apples to be pressed for apple juice, to be baked, or made into a pie, and later eaten; samples of apple juice, apple sauce, different varieties of apples, and any other information related to apples available. This way a student learns through all of their senses, one complementing the other, what apples are and how they are used. This is called epistemology. Thus, the theory of Genetic Epistemology.

b. Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

Curriculum Philosophy

At The Early Learning and Development Center, we believe given adequate social skills, conflict resolution skills, a strong foundation for empathy, and an introduction to academic concepts, children are much more successful in an academic environment in later years. We use learning goals from The Creative Curriculum, anecdotal notes, and a portfolio system to track the children's development and set goals for them based on individual and group needs.

We use an emergent weekly lesson plan, which focuses on the children's interests while providing opportunities for children to work on multiple skills throughout the day and weeks. Activities are provided throughout the day to meet a variety of learning styles. For example, during circle time the teacher will read books and ask open-ended questions for children to further understand the subject matter. These books are made available for children to look at independently or with a friend. During other times of the day, art and/or science projects are facilitated in small groups to provide an opportunity for children who learn best through one-on-one instruction. Teachers take notes throughout the week regarding children's interactions with each other or interest in certain subject matters to develop goals for individual children and the class. By creating these opportunities children participate in activities that not only help develop social skills, but also around literacy, gross/fine-motor work, and cognitive development.

An equal amount of structured and non-structured time is offered to the children, so they are given every opportunity to build new skills and gain further understanding of the world around them by using the environment as well as teacher support to do so.

Center Lesson Plan

Each classroom's lesson plan is posted on the classroom bulletin boards along with the learning goals of The Creative Curriculum, the "Today We.." board, and the daily schedule. The weekly theme is emergent and based on teacher observations and children's interests. Each lesson is broken down into small concepts. Music, books, and stories at circle time should relate to the concept.

- Science activities are experiments, nature displays, color, senses, charts, cooking projects, and any other activities or displays.
- Math is puzzles, shapes, numbers, sorting, classification, measurements, matching, counting, patterns, and anything pertaining to numbers.
- Art activities should be teacher-planned, and child executed. Most art projects should follow the weekly theme. It is important that the art reflects the child's feelings and ability rather than the teachers. The emphasis should be on the experience or the process, rather than on the result, or product. There is no right or wrong in art for children. Teachers are responsible for the inside decoration of their classrooms, the art on the walls in the classroom should be changed on an average of a 2-week period.
- Movement consists of group games, dancing, exercises, using props such as scarves or streamers to music or rhythm, or any planned large motor activity.
- Food and cooking projects should follow the theme and the Center food policy. It should be a learning experience for the children. Food can go along with science if it is an experiment or tasting activity. It can also go along with math if it requires measurements or figuring out different amounts/portions. Cultural exploration can be done through cooking. Try to let the children be involved from the start in preparing the food. Always be aware of the degree of supervision necessary, such as when using knives or hot plates.

- Special activities are any projects or events that are not part of the daily or weekly routine. Field trips, parent involvement requests, visitor to the Center, or any other activities parents must be informed of should be listed under special activities.

- Sensory activities are planned, dealing with one or more of the senses. The best example is use of the water table, smelling containers, playdough, or anything else involved with using multiple senses.

The Center is not affiliated with any religious philosophy and no religion is taught or included in any of our activities.

Assessments

At *The Early Learning and Development Center* we use a variety of methods to assess the children's progress and development during their time in the program.

We take anecdotal notes throughout the week on individual children, use portfolios, and an online assessment program. The anecdotal notes are entered in the online assessment program, which compiles data on the children and the classroom. The teachers then use this information to develop individual and group goals. In the portfolios families will find a monthly write-up on their child, work samples, and photo documentation. These methods help us track the children's overall development, peer relationships, and play preferences, as well as aid us in setting goals for the classroom.

c. Non-Discrimination

This Center does not discriminate in its hiring practices or enrollment of children on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation, creed, marital or veteran's status, or the presence of a disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of age with the exceptions noted on the Department of Early Learning license. You must be over 16 years old to work with supervision at the Center. You must be over 18 years old to have sole charge of a group at the Center. For a child to be enrolled, they must be one to five years old. Once a child is has been enrolled into Kindergarten or is 6 years old, they are no longer eligible to attend.

Employment or volunteer service at the Center is conditioned on a background check completed by the Department of Early Learning.

▪ Anti-Bias Policy

The Early Learning and Development Center promotes and implements an anti-bias curriculum in each classroom. The Center and staff are committed to providing an inclusive environment that reflects and affirms all families and cultures. Our curriculum is designed to support children's pride in their family and cultural identity and to provide activities that build self-esteem in children. All Center staff members receive ongoing training in diversity and anti-bias education.

▪ Anti-Harassment Policy

We are committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and maintain a strict policy prohibiting unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment. Engaging in any act that discriminates against another person because of race, color, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, religion, creed, marital or veteran's status, age, the presence of a disability, or any other basis prohibited by local, state, or federal laws will not be tolerated. This policy prohibits harassment in any form, including verbal, physical, and visual harassment. The policy applies to all persons on and about the premises of *The Early Learning and Development Center*.

▪ **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)***

The ADA allows children with mental or physical disabilities the opportunity to participate in all the activities and opportunities of community life. Part of community life is the opportunity to benefit from being in a childcare setting. Children may not be excluded from childcare based on a disability.

The Early Learning and Development Center has always worked closely with families to accommodate the individual needs of each child. We have many resources, both within and outside of the Center, available to families at little or no cost. The Center will assess, on an individual basis, whether a child with a disability (whether visible or hidden) can be cared for in our setting with reasonable accommodation.

Examples of this include:

- The revision of Center policies to be inclusive to all children.
- The removal of physical barriers and/or addition of adaptive equipment.
- The provision of additional staff training.

These changes are required of childcare Centers if they are readily achievable and do not create a burden to the program.

* This policy was developed in cooperation with King County Child Care Program and Public Health of Seattle and King County, Child Care Health Program (May 1999).

d. Child Protection and Behavior Guidance Techniques

The Center's Three Rules

While each classroom is different in its developmental needs, and therefore, its rules, there are three basic rules followed throughout the entire center which support our behavior guidance policy and teach social-emotional skills:

1. Children keep others safe.
2. Children keep themselves safe.
3. Children keep the equipment the environment safe.

Non-Violence Policy

As educators, we have a responsibility to provide an environment that promotes positive social behaviors in young children and where they can adapt and manage learning acceptable behaviors or alternatives to them. The Center's curriculum and classroom activities place a strong emphasis on violence prevention. Physical space is designed to create pleasant surroundings that minimize crowding and lessen potential conflicts between children. We do not purchase materials that promote violence (toy weapons, action figures, etc.) nor do we allow the children to use the materials at the Center in violent ways, whether real or pretend. If children start playing a violent game you can say, "*It's time to play a different game.*"

Behavior Guidance Policy

Behavior management is something that does not just happen. It is the result of careful planning and an ongoing awareness of what is happening in the group and anticipating the results of current behavior by the children.

1. We believe in a positive, proactive approach to guidance and behavior management based on nurturing and responsive teacher-child interactions. We believe that this occurs in all of the activities that happen throughout the day. The consistencies of the predictable daily schedule, the clarification of rules and expectations, as well as the understanding of the consequences of mistaken behavior are all a part of a positive approach to discipline and support children's social-emotional well-being.
2. The staff does not administer corporal punishment in any form at any time (WAC 110-300-0331). The staff never uses physical punishment, such as shaking or hitting, and does not engage in psychological abuse or coercion. The teaching staff never uses threats or derogatory remarks and neither withholds nor threatens to withhold food as a form of discipline.
3. The teacher will use simple, clear statements about what is acceptable behavior with choices when possible and by teaching developmentally appropriate, social-emotional skills. We want to provide children with what they can do as opposed to what they cannot do as much as possible to prevent challenging behaviors. Example: If a child is running in the classroom. Instead of saying, "*stop running*," you could say, "*Walking feet inside. When we go outside, we can run safely.*" If a child hits another, you could say, "*We use gentle touches here.*" Statements about what is not acceptable may be used if this clarifies the situation.
4. If persistent mistaken behavior occurs, the child is given the choice of either discontinuing the behavior or leaving the area to find another, more successful place to play.
5. The teacher will give children an opportunity to take responsibility for their action and encourage better decision-making by accepting any restitution the child may make and then leaves the incident behind.
6. The behavior guidance is immediate, consistent, of short duration, and without humiliation.
7. The most important aspect of the guidance approach is preventing mistaken behavior and respecting the child and their abilities. We guide the children to develop and use their own personal strength and understanding in making ethical and intelligent decisions and to be able to take responsibility for their own actions.

Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving

While playing, children are also learning social skills. One of the roles of a teacher is to assist children in learning appropriate social skills and conflict resolution. The amount of involvement that a teacher decides to have should vary depending on the age of the children, what the conflict is about, which children are involved and other criteria. Teachers should observe the situation before stepping in. This helps the teacher to know why the conflict is happening rather than only responding to the children's reaction to the conflict.

With all children, it is important to acknowledge the feelings of each child and to say aloud what is happening. "*I hear shouting and it looks like both of you want to play with that toy. You seem pretty angry.*" As children's verbal abilities grow, encourage them to use their words. "*I am playing with that.*", "*Don't hit me.*", or "*I want to be alone right now.*" Older children will be able to brainstorm resolutions, while with younger children; a teacher may need to provide them. "*I can play with it when you are done.*" "*Here is another toy you can play with.*" "*We can share it!*"

If a child is hurt in the conflict, attention should be given first to the hurt child to make sure they are comforted. Once the children are calm, resolution can start. If one or all children involved are too upset to stop crying or screaming, wait on the conversation until they are ready. It is important for all involved to know that we keep ourselves and each other safe. Children always need to use gentle touches. If they get upset, they can use their words to express their feelings; involve the child in asking their view of what happened with respect to their feelings and perceptions. If that doesn't work, then have a teacher help. At times, a child will need help redirecting their energy into another activity to help them move on from the conflict.

e. Religious, Equity, and Cultural Responsiveness

The Center is not affiliated with any religious or other organization. We recognize the individuality of each child and family. We also recognize the unique role that spirituality and religion can play in each person's life. We, therefore, believe it would be presumptuous for us to attempt to define that spirituality or religion for the children of the families we serve.

f. Confidentiality Policy

At hire, all staff sign a pledge of confidentiality, stating that they will maintain strict standards of confidentiality and professional ethics. Information regarding other employees and current and former families will be respected and protected under all circumstances in order to ensure privacy. Personal telephone numbers and/or addresses will not be given out unless authorized by the individual whose number or address is requested. Any families or staff who would desire to have information shared with other agencies or individuals must stipulate in writing exactly which information is to be released. Information will not be released without such written authorization.

2. Enrollment, Requirements, and Center Operations

a. Enrollment Process and Paperwork

Touring the Center

The first step in enrolling a child is to schedule a tour of the Center. The Center does have an open-door policy and appointments are not required for visits to the classrooms for enrolled families. However, scheduling a visit gives families an opportunity to meet with Center staff to discuss any questions they may have regarding the program. When the decision to enroll has been made, a family orientation meeting with the Center's administrative staff is necessary to complete the required registration forms.

Classroom Visits

Families are strongly encouraged to visit their child's classroom prior to the child's starting date. During these visits you and your child will have the opportunity to become familiar with the teachers and children of the classroom, the routine, and the physical space. Discussing the classroom environment, daily routine at home can also help to ensure that the transition into care will be a smooth one. Families may visit any area of the Center at any time during regular hours of operation. We find that when children and families have the opportunity to visit the classroom before their first day of school it makes those first drop-offs, more successful for the whole family.

Registration Forms

Required registration forms must be filled out completely and returned to the Center before or on the child's starting date. These forms give us vital information regarding the child's health, who to notify in the event of an emergency or illness, and other persons who have permission to pick-up children from the Center. Registration forms are kept current and updated annually.

Immunizations

The State of Washington requires that all children enrolled have a current immunization form completed and on file at the Center. Failure to do this may result in a child being denied admittance to the Center (WAC 388-150-220).

b. Tuition Policy

The Center charges a toddler rate for tuition that includes meals and activities and diaper service. The toddler rate changes to the preschool rate on the month after the child turns 3 years old. The preschool tuition rate includes meals and activities.

Tuition payments are due on the first of each month in which care is provided. Payments may be made by one half on the 1st of the month, and the remainder by the 15th of the month. On the 20th day of the month, late fees will apply at the following rates: for balances under \$200.00, the late fee is \$25.00 and for balances over \$200.00 the late fee is \$50.00. Any balance that is unpaid by the last day of the month in which care is provided is subject additional \$25.00 fee. For balances over 45 days past due, children may not attend until payment is received in full.

We give a 50% sibling discount on registration fee and \$100 off youngest child's tuition.

Tuition rates increase annually. The Center does its best to keep the increase as minimal as possible, reflecting the projected operating costs for the new school year. Offering competitive salaries and excellent benefits, including medical, vision, dental, IRA, and educational reimbursements to our staff is the main purpose for our yearly tuition increase.

c. Absences

If a child is absent for part of a week the full, tuition is charged. This includes both vacation and illnesses. Absences cannot be traded for additional days. Additional days that a child attends the Center will be charged at the daily rate from the current tuition schedule.

Families are to call and notify the Center when a child is going to be absent.

d. Clothing and Supplies

Children are required to keep the following supplies at the Center at all times:

- Diapering supplies: disposable diapers or cloth diapers with plastic wraps. (at least 4-5 per day).
- Extra clothing: two sets, including pants, shirts, socks, and underwear (if toilet trained).
- Coat or jacket with hood.
- Fitted crib sheet (standard size) and small blanket. Our sleeping mats are roughly 54x23 in size.

All items left at the Center **must** be labeled with the child's name, including socks. Families are asked to dress children in washable, comfortable play clothes (pants with elastic waists, slip-on shirts, etc.). While every effort is made to protect the children's clothing from art and play materials, the Center will not be held responsible for lost or soiled items.

Clean diaper cloths, diaper wraps, crib sheets, and blankets must be brought in at the beginning of the week and taken home again at the end of the week to be washed or as needed. If supplies are not left at the Center, we will provide them from our extra supplies. We ask families to please wash and return any items from ELDC. Cubbies and art folders should be checked on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

e. **Hours of Operation**

The Center is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Children may attend up to five hours per day for part-time care either in the morning or afternoon. Children attending part-time in the morning must be picked up prior to 12:00 p.m. Children attending part-time in the afternoon must arrive after 12:00 p.m.

Late Charge

The Center closes at 6:00 p.m. Children must be picked up prior to this time. The late charge is \$1.00 per minute, as indicated on the clock hanging in the office. This charge is payable immediately to the staff who have had to remain after hours at the Center. For children attending half days the drop off and pick up time is 12:00 p.m. Parents who pick their child up after 12:00 will be charged \$1.00 per minute. The charge will appear on the monthly billing statement.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off

Children must be signed in and out each time the child enters or leaves the Center by a responsible adult (18 years or older). Parents and guardians with access to their Brightwheel account will scan the ELDC Greenwood QR code, posted along the fence to check their child in and out. Children must be brought into the Center, turned over to a staff person, and then checked in through Brightwheel.

Please do not leave cars running, or leave valuables in the car, when coming into the Center. Children must be checked out on the app before leaving the Center. When the children are outside, the responsible adult must enter the playground and get the child themselves. Children may not be handed over the fence, and they may not enter the building alone to meet an adult. Parents may utilize our valet service by calling the Center and requesting valet pick up or drop off. We will pick your child up from your car in the morning or bring your child out to your car at the end of the day. Any person picking up a child from the Center may be asked for identification at any time.

Holiday, Emergency, and ELDC Closures

The Center is closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

The Center closes at 3:00 p.m. on Thanksgiving Eve, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve. Late fees apply on early closure days. If the child is enrolled over a legal holiday, families are required to pay for that day. Reminder notices are posted at the Center prior to any closure. If the holiday should fall on a Saturday, the Center will close on the Friday prior. If the holiday should fall on a Sunday, the Center will close on the Monday following.

The Center will make every attempt to stay open during and after severe weather conditions. However, we typically have many staff members who are not able to attend work. When this occurs, we ask that families keep their children at home unless they are absolutely required to be at work or have an unexpected emergency. The safety of our families and staff members is always our first concern, so we ask that you follow local news, weather and traffic advisory information and warnings closely during any severe weather or other emergency conditions.

f. **Withdrawal or Schedule Changes**

Families must give a written 30-day notice for withdrawal from the Center or for any schedule changes. The full, current rate of tuition must be paid for one month from the day of written notice, whether or not the child attends the Center.

3. Classroom Environment, Planned Daily Activities, and Routines

a. Classroom Environment

The Center is divided into four groups, based loosely on age. Koalas and Kangaroos are considered toddler groups. Children range in age from 12 to 38 months, with the older children being in the Kangaroos. Kookaburras and Wombats ages ranging from 30-71 months are pre-school groups, with the older children in the Wombats. Children are not necessarily transitioned to the next group based on age. A holistic approach to the child is considered when it is time to transition a child to the next classroom. Such items as developmental level, physical size, temperament, and even siblings attending the Center are considered.

▪ Capacity of Center and Rooms

The total capacity of the Center is 58 children at any one time. Generally, they are divided thus:

- Koalas: 10
- Kangaroos: 12
- Kookaburras: 18
- Wombats: 18

▪ Required Staff to Child ratio

The required staff to child ratio is 1:7 for children under 30 months. The maximum group size is 14 children. For children 30 months and older, the staff-to-child ratio is 1:10. The maximum group size is 20. The maximum group size of the classrooms differs due to room dimensions.

b. Daily Schedule

This is a general schedule for the entire Center. Specific schedules for each group are posted outside the classrooms. The daily routine of the Center allows for flexibility and variations throughout the day in order to provide developmentally appropriate activities for the children. For example, the toddler groups have shorter concept and outside times, while the preschool groups allow more time for group projects and field trips.

7:00 - 9:00	Arrival, free play, 1 st circle
9:00 - 9:30	Breakfast
9:30 - 10:30	Cognitive activities, art, small group, outside time/large motor
10:30 - 10:45	Morning snack
10:45 - 11:30	Cognitive activities, art, small group, outside time/large motor
11:45 - 12:00	2 nd circle
12:00 - 12:30	Lunch and clean-up
12:45 - 2:30	Nap/Rest Time
2:30 - 3:00	Put beds away, clean up
3:00 - 3:30	3 rd circle, music, language development
3:30 - 4:00	Afternoon snack
4:00 - 6:00	Outside time/large motor activities, close

▪ Circle/Concept Time

Circle time is performed in every classroom before every meal. Each starts with a welcome song where children say their names or are assisted by the teacher. The welcome song acknowledges each child as a part of the classroom community and encourages patience when waiting for their turn. The facilitating teacher has a variety of songs, activities, and books to share from their circle time box. At times, children might lose interest in the chosen activity. It is okay to stop reading a book or performing a felt board and start singing a song or doing a dance that grabs the children's attention and works out some of their energy. You can go back to the original activity or move on to a new one.

There are a variety of goals for Circle Time: building attention span, introducing new information or concepts, discussing classroom rules or recent classroom events and conflicts, building literacy skills through new vocabulary, practicing verbal skills, incorporating math concepts, and having fun. The length of Circle Time gets longer as children develop. In the Koala room, a 10-15 minute circle would be the norm. In the Wombat classroom, their Circle Time is about 30 minutes.

▪ **Free Play Time**

During free play time, teachers are to make sure that all children are in visible range of at least one teacher. Teachers should be available for children to approach and interact with if the children are interested. Teachers can read books, build with blocks; engage at the free art area or any other area where the children are located. It is important to remember that even if you are engaged in an activity, make sure you are aware of what else is going on in the classroom. The purpose of being down in the play area is to be available if the children require assistance or guidance in a conflict, as well as, encouraging dialog between children by providing vocabulary during play. This is the time when teachers can really get to know children on an individual basis, learning their likes and dislikes. When the children are comfortable with a teacher, they will share what is important to them, either at school or at home, and if anything new is happening in their lives. This time can also be used to facilitate small group activities depending on the interest of the children.

c. Meals and Nutrition

The Center provides two meals and three snacks each day for the children.

7:00 - 7:30	Early morning snack
9:00 - 9:30	Breakfast
12:00 - 12:30	Lunch
3:30 - 4:00	Afternoon Snack
5:30 - 6:00	Evening Snack

Menus are made up by the cook and approved by the Center Director. The Center operates on a six-week cycle of menus. Specific items may vary depending on the weekly shopping by the cook.

All meals are prepared at the Center and are designed to meet the nutritional needs of young children and meet the requirements of the U.S.D.A. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and are also approved by the Public Health Child Care Teams' Nutritionist. Employees of the Early Learning and Development Center are restricted from any employment that interferes with the U.S.D.A. Child and Adult Care Program in operation at ELDC. The Center utilizes the Family Style Dining Method, in which children are encouraged to try a variety of foods and to serve themselves.

The Center will provide equivalent substitutions for children with diagnosed food allergies or other documented medical conditions, when accompanied by a written physician's order. All staff members are made aware of any allergies and allergy lists are posted in the kitchen and classrooms. Substitutions based on family preferences cannot be made. No food from outside the Center is permitted without being approved by the office. Please see our food policy for more information.

d. Outdoor Play

The same ratios apply on the playground as in the classroom. The children should go outside everyday whenever possible. If it is too wet to go on the playground, but is not actually raining, take them for a walk. The staff must protect children and adults from exposure to high levels of air pollution from smog or heavy traffic by limiting outdoor and physical activity as a precaution during smog or other air pollution alerts. Ensure that if one teacher leaves the playground that the other teachers are informed so that only one is gone at any time. Many of the worst accidents at childcare facilities occur on the playground. It is important then that the staff is especially conscious of their responsibilities at these times. It is very easy to get involved with the other staff that you may not usually get to talk to at the expense of keeping track of the children. The children may not do anything that may hurt themselves, another person, or the equipment.

- The sand must be kept low and only used for building or tunneling, not eating or throwing. The buckets and shovels are for the sand box only. The children cannot dig in the grass or woodchips.
- The children are to stay away from the windows, from behind the bushes, and planted areas.
- The climbers are for the children to climb on. The children are not to take any toys on the climber. Their hands must be free at all times when they are on the climber, as it has the potential for serious injury from a fall. Only one child may be on the slide at a time, and they must go down on their bottom, not knees or head first. A staff member must be supervising the slide when being used.
- No rocks are to be thrown. The children are not to pull on branches or climb on the trees. Items are not to be thrown over the fence.
- Staff is required to move about the playground and to ensure that all areas are supervised. The staff are not to sit down to supervise the children, even at the sand box, and must be able to respond to any emergency immediately.
- No food or drinks are allowed on the playground, with the exception that a group may opt to have their snack or lunch outside occasionally. Water is available to any child or staff person who is thirsty.
- Children must not be carried about or held on the playground. If a child is crying, they are given some positive attention, and then are given something to play with. The Teacher may stay near the child, but they cannot carry them around for an extended period of time.

e. Naptime

Nap times and rest periods are a regular part of the children's schedule, and a necessary component in their development. Children are not required to nap, but must rest quietly on their mats, following lunch, for a short time. If they then are not sleeping, they are allowed to engage in quiet individual activities.

f. Field Trips and Walks

Blanket permission is given at the time of enrollment for short walks about the neighborhood of the Center. This often is an opportunity for the children to make spontaneous and directed discoveries about their immediate environment as well as the older children going on field trips in the area that will have them back in time for lunch. Field trips away from the neighborhood of the Center require individual permission of parent/guardian for each field trip. These are handed out close to the time of the field trip. Often family members volunteer to accompany the group on field trips. It can be a rewarding experience for both the child and adult to join the group on these occasions. Any time a classroom leaves the Center, at least one teacher will be carrying a cell phone so they can be reached at any time.

g. Diapers and Toilet Training

Cloth Diaper Service

The Center will provide children with cloth diapers. Children may be brought to the Center in a disposable diaper in the morning and will be changed back into a disposable in the evening. Families must provide all disposable diapers (labeled with the child's name or initials). There is no reduction of tuition for families who choose to use disposables throughout the day.

Toilet Training

The staff will work with each individual child to develop good toileting habits at the child's own pace. Toilet training will begin when the child's family and Center staff observes indications that the child is ready and willing to participate. It is not developmentally appropriate to assume that all preschoolers should be toilet trained; therefore this is not a requirement of our preschool program. Positive reinforcement is always used to encourage good toileting and hand washing habits in all children. For more information, ask about our Toilet Training Policy.

4. Health Care Plan, Infection Control Procedures, and Safety

a. Illnesses

Families are required to notify the Center if their child has contracted a contagious illness. The Center will post notices of any illnesses that children may have been exposed to with information on symptoms and recommended treatment.

According to the Department of Early Learning, children with the following symptoms should not be brought to the Center or remain in care if symptoms occur during the day:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher, accompanied with one or more of the following symptoms: earache, sore throat, rash, diarrhea or vomiting, or signs of atypical irritability or confusion.
- Vomiting on two or more occasions within a 24-hour period.
- Diarrhea in three or more occasions within a 24-hour period, or any bloody stool.
- Draining rash or sore. Children with open, oozing sores that cannot be covered will be readmitted after sores are properly covered or after a 24-hour antibiotic treatment.
- Eye discharge or conjunctivitis (pink eye). Children will be readmitted after medical diagnosis to rule out bacterial infection, or after 24-hour antibiotic treatment.
- Head Lice. The Center has a no-nit policy, and children must be treated and checked out for nits by a staff member before they will be readmitted.

A fever of up to 100 degrees, without other symptoms will not automatically result in a child being excluded from care. If a parent/guardian is unsure whether a child should attend the Center, the Director or Assistant Director should be contacted.

In the event that a child becomes ill or is injured while at the Center, first aid will be administered. All staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR. An assessment will be made and the child may be isolated from the other children. The parent or guardian will be notified and may be asked to take the child home. If the parent or guardian cannot be contacted, all efforts will be made to reach the child's emergency contact. In extreme emergencies, the 911 emergency numbers in Seattle may be called prior to contacting the parent or guardian.

When a child is excluded from care due to illness or injury, the Center reserves the right to request a note from the child's physician stating the child's ability to safely return to the Center.

b. Medication Management

The Center has strict policies regarding the administration of medication to children while they are at the Center. All medications must be given to a staff member when the child arrives in the morning (they may not be left in the cubbies, diaper bags, etc.). The “*Permission to Administer Medication*” form must be properly completed prior to the child receiving the medication, and families must provide applicators for the medication that indicate the proper dosage amount. All medications must be taken home daily unless the medication is ongoing; for example, diaper ointments or some medications for severe allergies. Families will be notified of any medication that has expired and the medication will be properly disposed of.

Non-prescription medications (including diaper cream and sunscreen) may be administered by a designated staff member only under the following conditions:

- The parent/guardian must complete and sign the “Permission to Administer Medication” form; a physician’s signature may be required in some instances.
- Medication must be in the original container and properly labeled with the child’s first and last name.
- Medications can only be administered at the dose, duration, and method of administration specified on the manufacturer’s label for the age of the child requiring the medication. Any other instructions that vary from the manufacturer’s label must be accompanied by a written physician’s order.

Prescription medications may be administered by a designated staff member only under the following conditions:

- The parent/guardian must complete and sign the “Permission to Administer Medication” form, and must give the specific times for the medication to be administered (“3x per day” is not sufficient).
- All medications must be in the original container and the prescription label must indicate the following: the child’s first and last name, date the prescription was filled and the expiration date, and the prescription number.

For children who require medications for chronic conditions or serious illnesses, a medication management plan will be set and followed by the child’s family, the Center staff and the child’s physician. All staff are trained on the proper administration on medication.

Medical Emergencies

We will call 911 immediately, and then continue to give care until medical help arrives. The child will be transported to the nearest hospital with a staff person. An ELDC employee will stay with your child at the hospital until you or someone on your Emergency Release Form arrives. If the emergency happens at school it will most likely be Children’s Hospital. All efforts will be made to reach you immediately. Please refer to the Emergency Release Form.

c. Implementation of Child's Individual Health Care, Special Needs, or Behavior Support Plan

Childcare personnel are in a unique position to evaluate the needs of the children in their care as they have experience with a large number of typically developing children with whom to compare any specific child. The behavior of the children should be evaluated informally, and any concerns addressed to the Director for more in-depth evaluation. Any other needs observed by the staff should be referred to the Director for further evaluation and action.

The Early Learning and Development Center does not expel children; our goal is to make sure each child’s learning needs are met in an environment that will ensure their success. Ours, however, is not a therapeutic center. In cases where there is concern about our ability to meet the needs of an individual child, we will work with the family and make every attempt to engage all resources to determine the best way to support the child.

Steps to develop and Individualized Support Plan:

1. Teachers observe children who have challenging behavior. They identify events, activities, interactions, and other contextual factors that predict challenging behavior and may contribute to the child's use of challenging behavior.
2. Staff will discuss the concerns and devise strategies, involving family members in establishing a plan of action that both teachers and families can implement into the child's routine. Actions can include eating and sleeping habits, or consistency and predictability in schedule, or the use of social-skills curricula. The plan will be given a reasonable time to be implemented and weekly consultation with the family will occur.

If these steps are not successful, written consent may be obtained to have outside specialists, such as King County Public Health consultants, or other professionals in our community, observe and assist in developing a plan of action or offer additional recommendations. Action may include, shorter days, less days per week, or inclusion in part time Developmental Preschool with SPS.

d. Reporting Child Abuse

Child abuse and neglect is a violation of children's human rights and an obstacle to their education and development. Childcare staff in the State of Washington is required to report suspected signs and/or suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services (CPS) immediately. The Center does NOT investigate, question, or elicit information to determine whether or not the suspected child abuse and/or neglect signs or claims are valid. The Center provides ongoing training on child abuse reporting and documentation for all staff members.

e. Substance Abuse

The Early Learning and Development Center is a Drug-Free workplace and is committed to protecting the safety, health, and well-being of its employees and all people who come into contact with its workplace(s) and property, and or/use the products and services.

▪ Drug, Marijuana and Alcohol Prohibitions

The Center strictly prohibits the illicit use, purchase, possession, sale, conveyance, distribution, or manufacture of illegal drugs, intoxicants, or controlled substances in any amount or in any manner, including having a detectable presence of illegal drugs in the body systems. In addition, ELDC strictly prohibits the use or being under any influence of marijuana or alcohol during work hours.

▪ Smoking and Vaping

Any smoking of cigarettes, or vaping of any kind, must be out of sight and smell of children and may not be on school property. After a staff member finishes smoking, they must wash their hands before returning to the classroom or kitchen. There are no specific, designated smoking areas.

Firearms, personal knives, and other significant hazards are not allowed at the Center.

5. Staff Qualifications and Training

All staff are required to have current Child CPR, First Aid, Blood borne Pathogen/HIV, Food Handler's cards.

All staff are also required to take the 30-hour Basic MERIT (Managed Education and Registry Information Tool) class within their first 6 months of hire and continue to take a minimum of 10 hours of MERIT classes a year. These classes go over child development, behavior management, classroom activities, and other important information to help the Teachers in their classrooms. Some teachers choose to take college classes in early childhood development and education instead of taking MERIT classes.

At hire, all staff go through an extensive orientation during their first week. The first two weeks of hire is on a trial basis to make sure each employee is the right fit at the Center and that the Center is the right fit for the employee. After the two-week trial, the employee makes an at least one year commitment to our Center.

6. Parent Communication

Communication between the child and their family, and the Center is of paramount importance. Events in one setting will often affect the child's experience in the other setting. With staff working staggered hours and the Center being open for eleven and a half hours of each day, we have instituted a number of avenues for this communication to occur.

- Parent Pouches

In each of the classrooms, along the wall, are pouches labeled with the child's name. Any notes for the family are placed in the child's pouch near the classroom entrance. There is also a pouch in each classroom for the families to leave notes for the staff.

- Check-Ins

At any time, and as many times as a family member wishes, they may call the Center to check on their child and/or to have a phone conversation with a lead teacher about any questions or concerns they might have. Administrators and teachers can also be reached through email or by sending messages through the Brightwheel app.

- Newsletters

A monthly newsletter is distributed to each family with general news of the activities occurring at the Center. The lead teachers also write a brief summary of their particular class activities and special events.

- Portfolios

In each classroom, we keep a portfolio for each child. The portfolio includes pictures of the child, art projects, drawing samples and a monthly report including highlights of the child's social experience. We also include writing samples and self-portraits for children in the preschool classrooms. A Child Progress and Planning Report is done three times a year in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. This report helps the teachers and families learn what a child has been able to accomplish and what they need help working on. It allows teachers to see what the children in the classroom need as a whole, in addition to the individual needs of each child. A copy of the report will be given to the family of each child at the Parent-Teacher Conference and a copy will be included in the child's portfolio as well.

▪ **Conferences**

Once a year, in the spring, we have a Parent-Teacher Conference sign-up sheet put out in all the classrooms to set up a time to talk with you about your child's growth and development on social and cognitive levels. We find this is also a great time to review the child's portfolio and marvel in how wonderful each individual child is. Conferences can be held in-house, virtual, or over the phone. A parent-teacher conference can be scheduled at any time during the year when requested.

Families are encouraged to contact the Center Director, their child's teacher, or any other staff member if they have any items they believe will help us in providing a better experience for their child. This is also true if you have any concerns that you wish to convey.

a. **Transitions**

Once it is time for your child to start transitioning into the next classroom, we will have them visit either for parts of the day or for the whole day. The Center will let you know when these visits are going to happen. We welcome any feedback you may have about the transition. The Center will notify you, with an official move up notice, and welcome letter for the next classroom. In each classroom your child will have a parent pouch for all important notifications and communication from The Center, i.e newsletters, daily reports, monthly billing, forms, move-up notices, etc.

b. **Kindergarten**

We make the transition from ELDC to kindergarten as smooth as possible for the children. This can be a stressful time for the whole family and we want to be as much of a support as possible. As children move closer to going to Kindergarten, the Center will have a Kindergarten Information Meeting for the parents of our prekindergarten children. At this meeting families can learn about enrollment procedures, potential schools the children will be attending, and kindergarten readiness. We use a variety of methods to assess the children's kindergarten readiness in the spring to set goals for the rest of the year. If a family needs help finding resources for the child's move into Kindergarten, contact the Center Director and they will assist. Upon graduating from the Center, families are given their child's portfolio as well as their most recent conference notes in an envelope labeled kindergarten teacher.

If you withdraw your child, before they graduate from The Center. Your child's teacher will provide you with: up to date portfolio, recent/current conference notes in an envelope labeled with your child's name, for their future teacher. Exit conferences are set up, on individual basis. We always strive to give your child a nurturing send off on their last day of school, wishing them all the best on their new adventures.

c. **Community and Family Involvement**

We are committed to partnering with community-based programs and local businesses in order to receive support services and resources for both the Center and our families. There are many opportunities for families to become involved in the Center's program.

Volunteer

We encourage family members to be involved in parent board meetings and/or volunteer in the classrooms.

Parent Meetings

There are six Parent Meetings a year: Ice Cream Social, Art Fair, Preschool Graduation, Summer Potluck BBQ, Harvest Festival, and Winter Holiday Party.

Fundraisers and Donations

The Center holds at least one annual fund-raiser, and we ask all families participate if it will not cause a financial burden. Funds raised are used for improvements to our physical space and to purchase new equipment, toys, and classroom supplies. In the past, families have also donated many services and supplies to the Center, ranging from technical assistance with computers, to donating extra clothing, art supplies, or toys to our classroom. It could also be anything from donating plastic bags for dirty clothes to go home in to making a yearbook for the children graduating into Kindergarten, to organizing a fundraiser. Families are encouraged to contact the Director if they are interested in helping the Center in any way.

d. Family Grievance Policy

If at any time a family has a grievance that they feel has not been resolved by the teaching staff or administration, they should fill out a Grievances or Concerns Form and submit it to the Center Director.

At that point, the grievance or concern will be discussed, and a plan of action will be set. If the family, at that point, feels that there has not been an agreeable resolution, they may contact ELDC's Executive Director in writing at the following address:

Ngair Strickland, Executive Director
225 North 70th Street
Seattle, WA 98103

The decisions of the Executive Director are binding on all parties.

We thank you choosing *The Early Learning and Development Center* for your child. We are confident that ours is the best care available and encourage you to contact us at any time about the Center, program, or any other matter. We have an open-door policy, and parents/guardians have free access to all areas of the Center, used by children, at any time the Center is open.

The Early Learning and Development Center is licensed by the State of Washington, The Department of Early Learning. We also participate in and comply with all requirements of the City of Seattle and King County Comprehensive Child Care Programs (Department of Health and Human Resources). We participate in and comply with the requirements of U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Programs (Child and Adult Care Food Program).