

PSU Early Childhood
Preschool Lab
“Little Gorillas Preschool”
Family Handbook



Department of Family & Consumer Sciences
College of Arts & Sciences
Pittsburg State University

Fall 2020-Spring 2021



Little Gorillas Preschool

2020 - 2021 Calendar

August 2020						
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Enrollment Packet Due

Open House Options

First/Last Day

No Preschool

Spring Tuition Due

NAEYC Conference—No Preschool

Holiday/PSU Break—No Preschool

Quick Facts about the Little Gorillas Preschool

Tax ID Number: 22-3981479

Preschool Director

Dr. Amber Tankersley

- B.S.E. Elementary Education, Early Childhood, Missouri Southern State University
- M.S.E. Elementary Education, Missouri State University
- Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville

Office Location: 108 FCS

Office Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-4460

E-Mail: atankersley@pittstate.edu

Supervising Lead Preschool Teacher

Ms. Kari Cronister

- B.S. Family & Consumer Sciences, Early Childhood Development, Pittsburg State University
- M.S. Career & Technical Education, Pittsburg State University

Office Location: 109 FCS (Preschool Observation Room)

Preschool Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-4461

E-Mail: kcronister@pittstate.edu

Family & Consumer Sciences Administrative Staff

Dr. Duane Whitbeck, Chairperson Department of Family & Consumer Sciences

Holly Viets, Administrative Assistant, Family & Consumer Sciences

Office Location: 101 FCS

Office Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-4457

E-Mail: hviets@pittstate.edu

Student Staff

The preschool classroom is also staffed with PSU students who are enrolled in a practicum experience for our one of our early childhood programs or in their preschool student teaching experience. All students are under the supervision of the preschool director and supervising lead teacher.

Introduction

We welcome you and your child to the Little Gorillas Preschool program at Pittsburg State University! We are housed on the south side of the Family and Consumer Sciences building on the campus of PSU. We have been in operation since 1964. We are committed to providing high-quality care and education for your child in a warm and supportive environment to help foster your child's growth and development.

This booklet provides information about the educational program at the preschool and the policies that govern it. We hope that you will find this information helpful.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk them over openly with your child's teacher or with the director. We look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with you and your children.

Our History

The preschool laboratory program at Pittsburg State University began in the fall of 1964, in the basement of the old Chandler Hall, with a group of five boys and five girls between the ages of three to five years old. The program was open from 9:00 am to 11:30 am for two days a week.

The lab was discontinued for a short period sometime after 1968 and then was reinstated in the fall of 1971. At that time there were six boys and six girls enrolled.

The enrollment was increased in 1998 to sixteen and the program was licensed to be able to accept up to 24 children. The schedule also expanded from two to four days a week (Tuesday - Friday) to serve the increase in students needing to take courses associated with the labs. The program has continued to the present day and has served many children from the Pittsburg community.

In the spring of 2001, the Family and Consumer Sciences Department including the preschool program were relocated to other facilities on campus. The preschool was moved to a temporary location in a farmhouse on the east end of campus while the old building was torn down and a new building constructed.

During the fall of 2003, the Family & Consumer Sciences Department and the preschool lab moved into our new facility on the site of the old Chandler Hall. We continue to be licensed for 24 children per session but we now have two sessions with an enrollment of no more than 18 children per session. Both preschool sessions meet Monday through Thursday with families selecting either 3 or 4-day attendance option for their child.

Our Mission

The mission of the PSU Early Childhood Preschool Lab is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children of the Pittsburg community including PSU students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Children are treated with warmth and respect at all times. The staff works within a developmentally appropriate curriculum to develop socially responsible children.

Our Philosophy

The philosophy of the Early Childhood Preschool Lab is grounded in the principles of best practices in programs for young children. We believe in meeting children's individual and group needs. We support children to reach their potential as learners, as well as to help them enjoy their childhood. We believe that the family is the most important component of a child's life. We ask families to be partners with us as we work with their children.

Purpose of a Lab School

Early childhood laboratory schools are a common fixture at many university campuses across the nation. These programs have leadership roles in four major areas:

1. Developing, demonstrating, and defending the rationale for developmentally appropriate practices
2. Preparing leaders...through their undergraduate education and work experience in an early childhood classroom
3. Conducting research in child development, early childhood education, and related fields
4. Providing community service through teacher training and public advocacy

Your child will be enrolled in a program where it will be our privilege to work with him or her. College students enrolled in laboratory courses will be scheduled as both observers and teaching assistants working with the children. Students in the preschool lab are at different points in their academic programs but all of the students who assist in the lab are in the process of learning about the growth and development of children and how to plan and implement curriculum in a classroom setting. They are under the direction of the supervising preschool teacher or the preschool director at all times. These students are majoring in Family and Consumer Sciences – Child Development, Early Childhood Unified, Elementary Education, Nursing, Psychology, Sociology, and other related fields.

Licensing & Accreditation

The Little Gorillas Preschool is licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). A licensing agent from Child Care Licensing and Registration inspects the preschool each year. A copy of *Kansas Laws and Regulations for Licensing Preschools and Child Care Centers* is available from the director or on the KDHE web site for your review www.kdheks.gov.

The preschool program is accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org.

To become accredited the preschool has completed requirements and submitted to NAEYC validation and promises to remain committed to promoting the best practices in regards to the following areas:

- Relationships
- Curriculum
- Teaching
- Assessment of Child Progress
- Health
- Teachers
- Family & Community Relationships
- Physical Environment
- Leadership and Management

The preschool is up for re-accreditation every five years; the preschool's accreditation status is valid through April 1, 2022. Accreditation materials are available for review; please see the preschool director for more information.

Enrollment Process

1. The Little Gorillas Preschool is open to all families regardless of race, creed, and disability, ethnic, or cultural background. Children, ages 3 to kindergarten eligibility, who are on the waiting list are accepted. Children are enrolled in accordance with the program, training, and research needs of the university.
2. Applications for the waiting list may be obtained from the FCS webpage, FCS Department (FCS 101), the program director, or at the preschool office.
3. Applications for the waiting list may be submitted at any time after the child's second birthday. The child's name is placed on the waiting list for upcoming openings. Parents may be asked to update their application occasionally if the application was submitted more than a year prior to the potential date of enrollment.
4. Enrollment for each year begins in February. Parents whose children are currently enrolled have priority to guarantee their child's placement for the following preschool year.
5. Families on the waiting list are notified of openings after current families have re-enrolled.
6. Generally, all families accepted into the program are notified no later than April.
7. The program enrolls children for the full year (two semesters - fall and spring). Payment is due for the entire semester before the first day of class as specified in the preschool contract. Tuition payments are non-refundable.
8. A \$50 holding fee is required to confirm acceptance of a spot in the program. This deposit is non-refundable and will be applied to the child's spring semester fee payment.
9. Once children are enrolled in the program they are welcome to continue as long as they are in the 3 – 5 age range at the start of the fall semester.
10. An enrollment packet containing all the necessary forms is sent to families after the office has received their completed contract and fall tuition payment. All forms must be completed and returned prior to the child's first day of attendance.
 - ✓ Medical Record/Child Health Assessment
 - ✓ Preschool Emergency Information
 - ✓ Authorization for Emergency Medical Care
 - ✓ All About Me
 - ✓ Photo Release
 - ✓ Permission for Off-Premises Trips
11. Questions regarding enrollment procedures should be directed to the preschool director.

Hours/Days of Operation

The preschool will be in operation Monday through Thursday morning from 8:15 to 11:00 am and Monday through Thursday afternoon from 12:00 to 2:45 pm during the weeks that university classes are in session except of the first week of classes and during finals week. During the first week of PSU classes, the new student teachers and practicum students are preparing the preschool environment for your children.

The laboratory will not operate during scheduled university holidays (Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Labor Day, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Day, and the Friday after Thanksgiving) during breaks (between fall and spring semesters, spring break, fall break) or final exam week. The preschool is also closed for several days each fall (typically in November) to allow staff to attend the NAEYC Annual Conference and Expo. The preschool calendar for the academic year is located in the front of this handbook. Reminders of special dates will also be included in newsletters.

Fees & Financial Policy

When children are enrolled in the program it is expected that they will complete the entire academic year. If circumstances do not permit this, parents are expected to notify the program director at least four weeks before the start of the next semester so that efforts can be made to reassign that spot. The program does not take children for only a portion of a semester. After parents pay for the full semester and then choose for their child not to attend for a portion but there is no reduction or reimbursement of cost. Formal withdrawal requires written notification to the program director.

A \$50.00 holding fee is required at the time the child is accepted for enrollment for the year. This reserves the child's place in the program for the year and is applied toward the spring semester's tuition payment. The holding fee is non-refundable.

Preschool tuition fees are used to support the programs of the preschool lab. Each family is required to sign a tuition contract indicating their understanding of the two-semester commitment, the number of days enrolled and that they intend to fulfill their financial obligations to the program. The laboratory fee for the 2020– 2021 school year is **\$550.00 for three days a week** and **\$600.00 for four days a week** per semester payable by the due dates specified in the preschool contract. There is a sibling discount of \$50.00 per semester for siblings that are concurrently enrolled. Please make your checks payable to Pittsburg State University.

Parking

Parking slots for families dropping off and picking up children are located south of the playground. Parents may also pull into the entrance of the alley to the west of our playground to drop off or pick up children. Please follow the posted traffic and parking signs. These spots are for temporary parking only, violators will be ticketed. Please do not leave your car running or leave unattended children in your vehicle when arriving at or leaving the preschool.

Arrival

It is expected that children will arrive on time for each session. The lead teacher and students in the preschool arrive early to prepare the preschool for the day's activities; however, children who arrive early will not be supervised or accepted into the program until the session start time. The playground is available for use before each session providing there is parent/guardian supervision. Children who arrive late often find it difficult to become involved in activities.

Upon arrival, a member of the preschool staff will meet you and your child either at the playground gate, the curb, or at your car. The lead teacher, a student teacher, or parent must escort each child to the playground. We will begin each day outside on the playground (weather permitting). The preschool has numerous umbrellas to retrieve and escort children through the playground on rainy days.

Separation

Some children jump into coming to the preschool with both feet; others are hesitant to have parents leave them. We encourage parents to develop a routine when dropping off their children such as developing a special kiss or wave. When it is time to leave, always say goodbye and leave decisively. Please do not try to sneak away. Children who cry when their parents leave almost always settle down quickly and begin enjoying their day. Parents are encouraged to call the preschool or use the observation booth to check on how their child is doing if they are concerned. Our teachers will also call families to let them know when their child has settled and is involved in the day's activities. We have found that separation can be equally upsetting to parents. If you have concerns, speak with the lead preschool teacher or the preschool director. Separation is often easier when children arrive on a consistent schedule.

Departure

The preschool staff will release a child to only the enrolling parent or to other adults authorized in writing on the *Enrollment Form*. Children will be released only to adults. For your child's safety, the teacher on duty will ask for identification from those that we are unfamiliar with who wish to pick up children. Parents may either come to the playground gate and your child will be released to go home or preschool staff will bring children to their parents' waiting cars.

If your child must leave before the end of the preschool session, please come to the preschool office and we will alert your child that you are there and help gather his or her belongings.

Late Fee

It is expected that children will be picked up within 10 minutes of the end of their child's session. Families that are more than 10 minutes late will be notified that their child has not been picked up, please be sure to clearly communicate pick up instructions to others who may be picking up your child. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be applied for families who arrive late to pick up their children. This policy is in effect even if the family notifies the preschool they expect to be late in picking up their child.

Our Staff

The preschool employs one full-time lead teacher and a director. Our lead teacher must hold at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood or a closely related field. Our director must hold at least a master's degree in early childhood or closely related field. The lead teacher and director also must complete many hours of workshops and continuing education in the field of early childhood. Licensing regulations require staff members must obtain a minimum of 16 hours of annual in-service training.

The center is also staffed with students majoring or minoring in child development. Some students in the preschool are students enrolled in *FCS 591 Supervised Teaching in the Preschool Lab*. Student teachers are in attendance every day of the week for their assigned session. Each student teacher is assigned a portion of the semester where they are in charge of basic preschool operations and planning learning experiences for your children.

We also have students who are enrolled in preschool practicum labs. These students spend between 30-45 hours each semester in the preschool working with the teachers and children. Practicum students attend one session per week. The students enrolled in *Developmental Planning* create learning activities and actively participate with your children. The *Interacting with Children* lab students practice observation, documentation, and interaction techniques.

With the number of staff and students, we are able to easily maintain an appropriate adult to child ratios. We are required to maintain ratios 1:12; however, we are fortunate to often have more adults than required providing more attention for the children.

Curriculum

The teachers and their assistants in the preschool realize that young children learn by doing, therefore, the curriculum is a constructive curriculum where children interact with their own thinking and experiences through learning centers and activities. The teachers prepare a stimulating environment that is conducive to learning.

Our curriculum is based on the developmental theory of Jean Piaget, which identifies the characteristics of the young child's thinking, his emerging abilities, and developmental limitations. Our curriculum emphasizes active learning, in which the child chooses an activity or task, carries it out, and then reflects on what he or she has done. It promotes the development of a child's thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.

The preschool program also follows guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices. In our planning, we design experiences that are: age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally/socially appropriate for each child.

Goals/Developmental Domains

Our curriculum focuses on your child's development in the following domains:

- **Affective**: The affective domain focuses on a child's developing self-awareness, emotions, self-esteem, independence, autonomy, self-efficacy, and self-discipline.
- **Aesthetic**: A child's aesthetic development centers on discovering and appreciating the world of art around them through the visual arts, dramatic arts, music, literary arts, and usable arts/crafts.
- **Social**: The social domain focuses on a child's social skill development, socialization, social responsibility, and social studies. The social domain allows children to discover more about themselves, their friends, and others in the world around them.
- **Cognitive**: The cognitive domain is the realm that includes children's understanding and processing of knowledge. Children gain physical/scientific knowledge about the world around them, they develop mathematical knowledge, they learn how to represent thoughts and ideas, they learn about cultural and social conventions, as well as, learning about their own thinking.
- **Language**: The language domain encompasses children's growing expertise in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- **Physical**: The physical domain includes children's development of fine and gross motor skills, health and safety knowledge, and nutrition.

The Importance of Play

Our program is based on the philosophy that children learn from the world around them—through play.

Children need many opportunities and experience with real objects and events before they are ready to understand the meaning of symbols such as letters and numbers. Learning takes place as young children touch, manipulate, and experiment with things and interact with people. The teachers' role is to create an environment that supports the ideas and experiences of children and invites them to observe, be active, make choices, and experiment. Children spontaneously engage in activities such as block building, painting, or dramatic play, adding pieces of information to what they already know and thereby generating new understandings. Children learn simple concepts and then build on these concepts to grasp more complex ideas. The teachers observe the children's interactions with others and the environment and make changes and modifications to suit each child's needs for exploration and learning. For example, if children have mastered putting together simple puzzles then more complex puzzles with more pieces and shapes would be introduced to provide a challenge.

Our Daily Activities

Each day's activities are planned by the lead preschool teacher, student teachers, and/or practicum students. While the preschool follows the same general schedule each day/session, we are flexible to accommodate the interests of the children, weather, and special events. The following descriptions of activities are not necessarily listed in the order of occurrence during the preschool day.

Arrival: Teachers will greet families at the playground gate or in the alley to retrieve children before each session. During this time, children come on to the playground and stack their backpacks by the playground door.

Outside Activity Time: As weather permits, children begin their day on the playground. There are many learning opportunities on the playground (planned and unplanned) as well as ample time for free exploration and movement.

Transition: During this time, children bring backpacks in from the playground and put their belongings in their cubbies. We encourage them to use the bathroom at this time as they wash their hands before snack.

Snack: Snack is served family-style with teachers sitting with the children, engaging, and facilitating conversation. Snack time is a prime opportunity to practice math concepts, social conventions, self-help skills, and language skills—this is accomplished as we take turns passing items, identifying the number of snack items to choose, saying please and thank you, and participating in conversations. **Please notify us of any food allergies or restrictions for your child.**

There is another **transition from snack to our group meeting**--as snack time begins to wind down; an adult at each table begins to dismiss children to clean up their snack (again a self-help skill). Each child picks up his or her cup and plate, empties any trash into the wastebasket, and proceeds to a washing station. Each child will wash and rinse his dishes before proceeding to the meeting time. Dishes are then taken to the dishwasher in the foods lab to be washed.

Group Meeting: Many things happen at this time. It is the one time each day where whole group instruction takes place. It is a time when the children gather as a group with the teachers. Group meetings include activities such as singing songs, creative movement, reading books, as well as special events, take place. The format of our group meeting varies each day.

Sign-In: During this time the children get practice in identifying their names as they “sign in” with the assistance of a teacher. “Sign in” is our way of keeping attendance, but it is also another way to foster emergent literacy in preschool age children. Our “sign in” routine varies from semester to semester and sometimes week to week as our student teachers experiment with different ways to accomplish this task.

Small group activities: This is an opportunity for our teachers to work with small groups of children and provide more direct teaching and evaluating of children’s knowledge and skills. Activities are planned by the lead preschool teacher, student teachers, and practicum students, therefore, the activities vary daily. Activities target a variety of developmental domains. Lesson plans for individual group activities are kept on file in the preschool. Each plan details the activity, its objectives, and the expected outcomes.

Center Time: During this time, the children choose to participate in activities within the learning centers available in the classroom. The teachers plan for a variety of activities/materials that target all areas of development such as physical experiences, literacy, mathematics, science, visual and musical arts, and social interaction in their play. The teachers will also determine how many children-teachers should be involved in a center or activity at a time for each child to receive maximum benefit from the experience.

Ending Group Meeting: The children gather as a group again with the teachers. This meeting signals the end of the session and is used to review the day’s events and to bring closure to the day for the children.

Dismissal: Children are dismissed to their cubbies to get jackets, backpacks, etc. Then they go out to the playground again to wait to be called to leave with their parents.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will be provided daily unless it is raining, the temperature or wind chill falls below 32 degrees or during periods of extreme heat. All children in attendance will be expected to go outside. If your child is too sick to go outside, they should be kept at home until they can participate in all preschool activities including outdoor play. The preschool does not have adequate staff to supervise children indoors when all others are outdoors. Most health professionals recommend a daily dose of fresh air for growing children, and if children are dressed appropriately, weather conditions should not pose an illness risk to them. The preschool staff will use sound judgment in deciding whether to go outside.

Rainy days: Teachers plan additional indoor activities on rainy days. When it is only damp or misting the children may go outside depending on the temperature, for at least a short time. Parents should plan on their children going out every day regardless of the weather, and dress accordingly.

Snowy days: If the wind chill factor is below 24 degrees the children will remain indoors. However, on most snowy days children will go outside. Please send appropriate clothing, coats, gloves/mittens, and hats.

Hot days: On days when the temperature and/or heat index rises, we will limit time outdoors. When possible, we incorporate water play on warmer days to help cool the children on the playground. We also make sure drinking water is readily available when it is hot outside.

Field Trips

Occasionally the preschool will take a field trip to learn from experiences outside of what can be brought to the children in the preschool setting. We are fortunate to have a wide variety of resources located on campus; therefore, the classes will not take field trips that are not within walking distance of the preschool. A permission slip for excursions is included in the enrollment packet. Families will be informed when field trips are planned. Trips are only planned when there will be adequate supervision for the trip to run smoothly. Children will be accompanied by the lead preschool teacher, student teachers, and practicum students. Parents may be invited to join the group for these experiences. When the classroom leaves on a field trip, notices are placed on all preschool doors to inform families of our whereabouts while we are gone. Preschool staff will also leave a mobile contact number. Emergency information for each child and a first aid kit is required to be taken with the group on their field trip.

Holiday Celebrations

Our program believes that holidays are an important aspect of cultural and family growth and learning. However, for very young children the anticipation, build-up, and experiences of the events when integrated into all aspects of children's lives can be overwhelming. For this reason, we have chosen to not celebrate holidays as a part of the instructional experiences within the preschool. Through doing this we can focus more on teaching and providing a consistent, rich environment for your child. With our philosophy in mind, we ask that families refrain from sending treat bags and other goodies at holiday times.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are a special time that we enjoy sharing with your child. Treats may be sent for your child's birthday; however, we request that all treats be pre-packaged or prepared in a commercial facility. We cannot serve homemade goodies. Please give advance notice to your child's teacher if you intend to bring treats. The teacher will inform you of the number of children who will be in attendance on the day you plan to bring treats and of any food allergies or special dietary restrictions. The snack planned for the day will also be served unless the birthday treat meets our snack guidelines.

Please keep in mind that although we are happy to share in the excitement of your child's birthday by sharing a special snack and singing to your child, this is not the appropriate setting for a full-blown party. In fairness to all, we want all children to have a similar birthday experience in the classroom, so we ask that celebrations during preschool sessions be kept simple. If you intend to invite children from the center to an outside birthday party, the preschool teacher can send home invitations with each child. We ask that if you are distributing invitations at the preschool that you invite all the children from your child's classroom. Otherwise, contact parents individually and do not bring invitations to preschool.

Personal Belongings

Each child will be assigned a cubby in the classroom. Children may use the cubby to store jackets, backpacks, etc. Please check your child's backpack for announcements, messages, and your child's work.

Since our teachers prepare many activities for your children to engage in while at preschool, we request that toys remain at home to avoid conflict, loss, or damage. Weapons, real or pretend, are never permitted at preschool. Please check with your child's teacher if your child has something unique to share with the class such as a book or other activity that may be enjoyed by the entire group. All personal items should be clearly and permanently labeled to minimize loss or confusion over belongings.

Clothing

While at preschool, the children will be involved in messy art projects, water/sand play, and outdoor play. Please dress your child in clothing appropriate for active play. We recommend that children not wear sandals or other open shoes. Sandals also fail to offer adequate toe protection from trikes and other outdoor equipment.

We request that each child have a complete set (underwear, shirt, pants, and socks) or two of season appropriate clothing in his or her backpack at all times. Some families prefer to send a set of extra clothes in a ziplock baggie marked with their child's name to be kept in the preschool for the semester. Parents will be notified if we do not have a change of clothing for their child. Please label your children's belongings with their initials or name.

Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather—a coat, warm pants, boots, hats, and gloves/mittens are necessary during the winter months; shorts are appropriate when the weather is hot.

Health Policy

Each child must have on file (before their entrance), the completed medical form signed from their physician stating that he/she is free of communicable disease and has been immunized, or is in the process of receiving required immunization. No new health form is necessary if your child is continuing from the previous year, but immunizations need to be up to date.

The staff of the preschool informally monitors the health of the children each day. For the protection of each child's health, children who show signs of illness or infection will not be accepted for preschool. Any health concerns will be discussed directly with the parent. Every parent must cooperate fully with our health policy. Our policies are designed to protect the well-being of all children and to guard, as much as possible, against avoidable absences for health-related reasons.

Proper care at the beginning of an illness can often shorten its duration and severity. If a child shows signs of illness or infection while at preschool, the parent will be notified immediately. The child will be provided a quiet place to rest until he or she can be picked up. Parents will be asked to make arrangements to have their child picked up within 30 minutes of notification. Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours and able to fully participate in all activities before returning to preschool.

Health Policy Disclaimer: The preschool will follow recommendations regarding children's health and program procedures from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) during times of public health emergencies. These policies and procedures may differ from what is outlined in this handbook. Families will be notified of any changes as they are made.

Preschool staff will notify parents if their child:

- Has a fever (100° or above)
- Has diarrhea
- Vomits
- Shows signs of chickenpox, impetigo, or other rashes
- Shows signs of “pink eye”
- Shows signs of head lice or nits

Please let us know if your child has been sick and you have questions about whether he/she should attend preschool. Check your child each morning before he/she comes to the lab. Keeping your sick child home protects well children and staff. We depend heavily on you to keep your child at home if he or she shows signs of illness. Parents will be notified if their child has been exposed to a communicable disease or illness. Please call the preschool if your child will be absent due to an illness. Refer to the following chart for more guidance when determining if your child is well enough to attend preschool:

Symptom	Keep child home until:
Fever	fever registers below 100° without medication for at least 72 hours.
Runny nose	thick yellow or green discharge clears up.
Earache	a physician examines the child and recommends the child return to school.
Rash	a physician determines the cause and recommends that the child returns to school.
Sore throat	a physician determines the cause and that no strep infection exists and the throat is healed.
Cough	coughing subsides
Pale or flushed skin	color returns to normal
Red or watery eyes	eyes return to normal or until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment for pink eye has begun.
Yellow discharge from the area around the eye(s) (Pinkeye)	a physician treats the child and recommends that the child is ready to return to school with no health risk to other children. Typically, the child may return 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun.
Lice	the child has been treated, examined and found lice/nit free for two days.
Upset stomach or diarrhea (within 24 hours or less of departure for school)	no further problem exists and the child is eating normally without experiencing an upset stomach or diarrhea.
Draining sore	until draining stops and/or a physician determines the child may return to school with the sore covered.

Hand Washing

Frequent hand washing is the single best way of preventing disease and illness. Please join us, if you're not already, in helping your child develop the habit of frequently washing his or her hands. Children should learn to use soap and warm water and to vigorously rub their hands together for at least 20 seconds while washing. Hands should be washed before eating, after toileting, after playing outside, as well as throughout the day as needed. Hand sanitizers are readily available and are good in a pinch but hand washing with soap and water is the preferred method.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of the Little Gorillas preschool to refrain from administering medication to the children enrolled in its preschool program except for a child who has a condition that may necessitate emergency administration; such as an inhaler or Epi-pen on orders of a physician. When a child has such a prescription it would only be administered by the lead preschool teacher or the preschool director. A permission form, available from the lead teacher or director, would be filled out by the parent/guardian and the medication in its original container would be provided with the following information: child's name, name of the medication, dosage, dosage intervals, the name of the physician, and the date the prescription was filled. The label shall be considered the order from the physician. A record shall be kept in the child's file as to who gave the medication, and of the date and time, it was given.

Sunscreen

There is always some shade available under the picnic canopy and play structures of our outdoor playground. It is the policy of the Little Gorillas Preschool **NOT** to apply sunscreen to children. If sunscreen is needed, the parent and/or guardian are to apply it to their child before being brought to school.

Special Diets

Please inform the director and teachers of any food allergies or restrictions at the time of enrollment. If your child has a food allergy or requires a substitution, we need a statement for our files. If you have religious convictions against any particular food items, we ask for a written statement specifying the fact to include in your child's file.

Accidents

If a child is injured while at preschool, the staff will take the following steps:

- Administer necessary first aid. There is always at least one person trained in first aid and CPR on duty at all times.
- Parents will be notified at pick up time or with a phone call. A *Notification of Injury, Illness, or Critical Incident* form will also be completed. In the event a parent cannot be reached, the director will secure proper medical attention as indicated by the parent on the child's *Enrollment Form*.
- If the staff decides this is an emergency, campus security and/or 911 will be contacted to provide emergency assistance. If necessary, the emergency medical service will transport your child to a medical facility as designated on your *Enrollment Form*. A parent or alternate listed will be contacted as soon as possible. An attempt to contact your child's primary health care provider may also be made.

When a child receives a bump or scrape, the lead teacher will complete the *Notification of Injury, Illness, or Critical Incident* form. This form describes the nature of the injury what first aid was administered. This form will be kept in your child's preschool enrollment file.

Child Passenger Safety

Kansas law requires all children to be properly restrained in a motor vehicle. For children ages 1, 2, and 3 it is recommended that you keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. It's the best way to keep him or her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, your child is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

All children ages 4, 5, 6, and 7 are required to ride in a booster seat unless:

- The child weighs more than 80 pounds
- The child is taller than 4 feet 9 inches
- Only a lap belt is available

Children who meet the above height and weight criteria must be protected by a seat belt. Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat. For the safety of your child, please comply with this law. The law specifies that, as the parent, you are responsible for providing a child safety seat to anyone who transports your child. We expect families to use the safe practice of placing children in a car seat in the back seat of your car and buckle them in before you leave. Remember, it's the law.

Child Abuse & Neglect

Children need a safe, nurturing environment that assists them to grow, learn, and feel loved by their caretakers. In order to grow and learn, children's minimum needs for good nutrition, shelter, medical care, bathing, clean clothes, intellectual stimulation, appropriate discipline, love, a feeling of importance, and a safe, non-violent home setting must be met. When these needs are not met, a child cannot grow and learn as easily. If you are temporarily unable or unwilling to meet your child's minimal needs, as described above; our staff is mandated to report it to the county child protection agency. It then becomes the role of the child protection unit to work with your family to ensure your child's needs are being met.

All staff members of the Little Gorillas Preschool are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Anything suspicious in nature will be reported. The Child Abuse Hotline number is 1-800-922-5330.

Should you have difficulty in providing for your own child's emotional or physical needs, or safety, you are encouraged to ask for help. Our staff can help you find a community resource that can help.

The program expresses a commitment to provide an environment that encourages the child's safe growth and learning. If you feel that our staff is not meeting your child's needs, we encourage you to talk with the lead teacher or director.

All staff members submit to a Kansas Bureau of Investigation screening upon employment and a background check is obtained as outlined by our licensing requirements.

Emergency Plans

The preschool has plans in place in the event of a fire, tornado, and other emergencies. The preschool staff will help in preparing the children for such disasters through monthly fire and tornado drills (April-September).

If we need to evacuate the children and staff to an off-campus location, we have made arrangements to relocate to the First Church of the Nazarene (816 E. Quincy Street) which is exactly one mile from the preschool. Parents will be notified if an emergency arises; the sign-in book and children's emergency contact information will be taken to our relocation area so that we may contact families.

The following are the procedures to be followed for each type of emergency:

Fire

In the event of a fire, the alarm will ring and staff will quickly escort the children through either the playground door or interior exit to the hallway and then proceed outside to the east wall of Whitesitt Hall. Campus security and the fire department will be notified. The preschool director or lead teacher will take the sign in book upon evacuation which also contains the children's emergency contact information. A headcount will be done to determine that everyone is accounted for. If the need to move further from the building arises, the staff and children will move to the lounge area on the second floor (west end) of the Overman Student Center. Parents will be contacted as soon as children and staff are settled in a safe place.

Tornado

The preschool staff monitors the weather more closely when there is a threat for severe weather. Information regarding the weather conditions come from campus announcements, local news, and weather warning systems. Should a tornado warning be issued for our county, the children and staff will relocate to the director's office (FCS 108) which has been designated an "Area of Storm Refuge". The director or lead teacher will bring the sign-in book and children's emergency contact information upon evacuation. A headcount will be done to determine that everyone is accounted for. Parents will be notified when it is safe to do so. When the warning expires we will return to the preschool.

Winter Weather Closing

In case of severe winter weather (heavy snow or ice), the preschool lab will be closed only if Pittsburg State University or USD 250 Pittsburg Public Schools are closed. If due to winter weather, PSU decides to delay the start time of university activities, the preschool will remain closed for that day. Notification of closed classes for PSU will be posted on the PSU web page and announced on local television and radio stations. Families may also be notified by email in the event of a closing that is not announced through other media outlets. The preschool voicemail message will also reflect any closing of the preschool. Parents will be notified if the campus closes early and will remain open until all children can safely be picked up.

Health-Related Closing

In the event of a public health emergency, the Little Gorillas Preschool will follow the guidance of local health department officials and our licensing agency, Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). The preschool will also close if Pittsburg State University or USD 250 Pittsburg Public Schools are closed due to a public health emergency. Information regarding the closing of the preschool will be shared with families as soon as possible.

Utility Failures

In the event of a power outage, adults are to remain calm and notify the physical plant that there has been a loss of power. If the weather is nice, the children and adults will evacuate to the playground if the preschool classroom is too dark or too warm to use. If necessary, we can relocate to a neighboring building that has power. The children's emergency contact information will be taken if we leave the building or playground. If the physical plant believes that power can be restored fairly quickly we will keep the children as close to their normal preschool schedule while being flexible in the location it may occur. If the physical plant determines the power will be out for an extended period and the preschool classroom would not be conducive to remaining open then families will be notified to pick up their children and the preschool will close. Parents should arrange to pick up their child as soon as possible.

If the preschool experiences a loss of water, the physical plant will be notified. The preschool must meet minimum requirements regarding temperatures, hot water, flushing of toilets, running water, etc...in order to operate. After the problem is evaluated, the director or physical plan will decide whether or not the preschool should close. If necessary, preschool staff will take the children to the bathrooms in Whitesitt Hall for short-term use until all children are picked up and the preschool is closed. Parents will be notified to pick up their children.

Lock Down

In the event the preschool needs to protect children and staff from an intruder, a lock-down may be initiated. Children will remain quiet and seated in the preschool storage room or director's office (if possible). As quickly as possible, lead staff will determine the best course of action based on what would be the safest option for the current situation. All exit doors will be locked if possible. The director or lead teacher will notify campus police and/or dial 911 when it is safe to do so. If the situation warrants, staff, and children will evacuate the building and relocate off campus to the First Church of the Nazarene (816 E. Quincy Street). If evacuated, the sign-in book and children's emergency information will be brought along and families contacted as soon as it is safe to do so. The lockdown procedures are reviewed each year.

Missing Child

If a preschool child is missing from the preschool, the entire staff will be notified to be on alert. Immediate attempts will be made to locate the missing child. The other children will never be unattended when trying to locate a missing child. If unable to locate the missing child within ten minutes, the University Police, the Pittsburg Police, and the child's parent/guardian will be notified.

Social Development & Guidance Practices

Part of the role of an early childhood program is to help young children develop appropriate social behaviors. It is the philosophy of the preschool to provide meaningful opportunities to foster and enhance social relationships while developing self-esteem, confidence, curiosity, and creativity. We believe these behaviors are developed through positive social relationships.

Social relationships consist of the following:

- Mutual trust and respect are formed when consistent boundaries are set by warm and caring adults.
- Resolving conflict with peers by using words, adults will model and help children find the words when needed.
- Looking at situations not only from one's own perspective but from that of others.
- Being able to negotiate and apply rules with peers and adults.

The staff feels that children learn by doing and allows them the opportunity to work out their problems. The staff will use positive methods of guidance, which encourages self-control, self-direction, and self-esteem. We believe that when children are actively involved in developmentally appropriate learning activities, misbehavior is least likely to occur.

Guidance techniques that are both age and developmentally appropriate include redirection, physical soothing, modeling appropriate behavior, encouragement of reflection, and talking over feelings and possible solutions. Time-out is used occasionally to allow a child a chance to calm down before resuming activities or talking things out.

Respect for children is shown at all times. All actions that are humiliating or frightening to a child are strictly prohibited. Corporal punishment is not considered appropriate and therefore, not used at the preschool.

When we determine that we have an on-going behavioral problem with a child, we may request a conference to discuss our concerns. We believe attempts to modify a child's behavior are more successful when parents and teachers work together toward a common goal. On rare occasions, after a child is enrolled in the center his or her behavior might become disruptive or harmful to others or his or herself. In such situations, the preschool reserves the right to dismiss a child from the center or require the parents to seek additional professional help in order for the child to continue in the program.

Parent Involvement

You are welcome in the preschool at any time. We encourage parents to come to observe or participate with the children. We especially enjoy having parents share a skill, interest, or hobby. We will talk with you, through the coming year, concerning these experiences.

Parents are encouraged to participate in family events scheduled throughout the year. Each fall/spring we host an “Open House” and invite all families to visit the preschool and meet the student teachers before the semester begins. Educational meetings and social events may be planned to provide speakers on topics of interest to families. We also enjoy visiting with and sharing information with our families daily.

Newsletters

The preschool newsletter will be sent via email weekly. Newsletters are prepared by the lead preschool teacher and student teachers. Please read the newsletter carefully and clarify any items with the staff. Newsletters will contain classroom news regarding current activities, notes about upcoming events, and brief information about child development, discipline, and home learning activities. If you do not have email access or prefer a paper copy of the newsletter you will be able to receive your newsletter in the preferred format—you will be asked your preferences at enrollment.

Book Orders

Each month families will receive a packet of Scholastic Book Club flyers. The book club flyers offer families the opportunity to order high-quality books and other educational materials for their children at a reasonable cost. Ordering instructions will be included with each packet. Ordering books is purely optional. The preschool does receive “points” for each order that can be used to order books and materials for use in the preschool classroom.

Observation & Research

Parents are welcome to visit the preschool at any time to observe their child in the classroom or through the observation window in the preschool office. When visiting the observation booth, parents are asked to observe quietly so children in the classroom are not disturbed. Please enter the building through the west entrance and observe in the preschool observation booth. Observing allows you to note age and individual differences related to behavior patterns and to watch your child as he or she interacts in a social environment. Keep in mind when observing you are only seeing a “glimpse” of a situation, so feel free to talk with your child’s teacher or the director if you have any questions or concerns about an observation. Parents are asked to respect the confidentiality of what they see while observing. Avoid carrying tales about children or their parents to others inside or outside the classroom. Special permission must be given by the supervising teacher for any photographs or videotaping done of the children while in the preschool.

The preschool operates as an educational laboratory for other academic programs at PSU. Child development majors, as well as other students from other departments, use the preschool for observation throughout the year. When a student needs to work one on one with one of our children we will not let them do so without explicit permission from the parents. Families are not obligated to allow their children to participate in any educational or research projects. Families will receive a permission slip requesting permission before any student works directly with one of our children. All research activities are supervised by PSU faculty and preschool staff. All research activities will be conducted within the Little Gorillas Preschool.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information about children and their families will be maintained. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the parent/guardian, director, lead teachers, and licensing agents. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone, by any means, without the expressed written consent of the parent/guardian.

Child Assessment and Screening

We do not provide preschool or kindergarten screening, as it is available through your local school district, typically your local Parents as Teachers organization will also provide these services. We recommend children be screened by their school district as they are the ones who would provide any needed services.

Preschool screening is a brief check of developmental milestones. It can be a good way to identify areas in which a child may need additional assistance. The areas of development that are assessed include speech and language, hand and body coordination, and general readiness for school.

We suggest that families visit with their child's pediatrician about referrals for other screening such as for vision and hearing.

At the Little Gorillas Preschool, we collect information on your child's growth and development through daily observations. We have a *Progress Report* of basic skills typical for preschools that we use as a checklist to note your child's progression. Our practicum students and student teachers also participate in gathering information about your child's growth and development. If we observe development that is not typical, we visit with families about the observations. Suggestions and resources are then discussed with the families.

Conferences

Formal parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled at the end of each fall and spring semester to discuss your child's progress and any concerns of the parent or teacher.

We try to avoid talking to parents about their child in front of the children, except in general ways. Please be sure to ask a teacher to step out of the classroom for a moment if you need to talk about your child. Or, we encourage you to schedule a conference with your child's teacher or director anytime during the semester when you have a question or concern about your child or the program.

Parents have access to their child's development records obtained by any outside agencies (if applicable) as well as general observations made by the teachers. These observations are typically shared at formal conference time. You will also receive a copy of your child's *Progress Report* during a parent-teacher conference. Student teachers may also participate in the conference with the families of the children they are assigned to assess as part of their student teaching experience.

Change in Family Information

If there is a change in your address, home or work telephone number, emergency contacts, or family status, please notify us so that we can make a change in your child's file. We must have correct information on file in the event of an emergency.

It is especially helpful to know of new family situations such as separations, divorce, remarriage, a new baby, family illness, etc.; as such changes may affect your child's mood or behavior. We can often help your child deal effectively with a new family condition if we are informed in advance. If your child has special health problems, unusual stresses, or obsessive fears, please let us know.

Family Questionnaire

At the end of each spring semester, families are asked to complete a *Family Questionnaire*. The information gained from this survey helps us make changes in the classroom or program as a whole. We appreciate the input we receive from our families.

Parent Concerns & Conflicts

As an early childhood program, we are a community of children, parents, and staff all interacting and sharing our lives. In a community, people work closely together, and hopefully, interactions are positive, helpful, kind, and understanding. Yet it is to be expected that from time to time, people will experience some conflict, concerns, or difficulties.

We recognize that parenting is one of the most difficult, intense, and rewarding experiences in your life. We want you to share your thoughts, hopes, and dreams for your child. You want what is best for your child, and we know it is your job to advocate and protect your child.

We, the staff, may make mistakes, create misunderstandings, and occasionally miscommunications may occur. As a staff, it is our goal to offer your family the best child care services possible. To meet our goal, we need your input, suggestions, your questions, and concerns.

When you have a concern, please remember:

- Teachers want parents to feel very satisfied with the early care and education their child is receiving.
- Talk to the teachers directly whenever possible. The teachers would prefer that you talk to them directly, but they do understand if you would prefer to talk to the director.
- Realize that if you have a concern with a teacher, the director will need to investigate and talk with the teacher directly about your concern and straightforwardly deal with the issue so the teacher can improve her performance and/or correct any mistakes.
- Be assured that teachers do not hold a “grudge” against your child or “take it out” on your child after you have expressed concern. We would not hire anyone who would react in such an inappropriate manner. Actually, after expressing a concern, your child’s teacher will be more conscientious about your issues and try to improve.
- Don’t allow serious concerns to build up. As concerns occur, share them with teachers. It is disturbing to find out later that a parent had some concerns and never expressed them.
- Sometimes we cannot make the changes you request due to other restrictions, but we always want to hear your suggestions. We promise to consider them seriously and respond to you in a professional and timely manner.

If the staff of the Little Gorillas Preschool is not satisfying your concerns, please speak with the Chairperson of the Family and Consumer Sciences Department (Dr. Duane Whitbeck) to voice your concerns.

Transition to Kindergarten

Preschool is often looked at as a transitional time before children begin kindergarten. The goal of our preschool program is to prepare your child for kindergarten by providing opportunities to build skills often seen as “requirements” for kindergarten entrance—beginning number concepts, colors, shapes, alphabet, problem-solving skills, communication, social skills, etc.

Each spring the local school districts begin kindergarten enrollment. While we often have information from local schools it is a good idea to contact your local school for specific information regarding kindergarten entrance and enrollment. Most schools plan “roundup” events where children and families can visit the school, fill out enrollment paperwork, and participate in screening tests. The “family resources” section of this handbook provides some contact information for area schools.

What Families Can Expect from Us

We believe that families play a central role in every child's education and development. It is in the family context that children gain their primary socialization experiences and their basic values. A quality preschool program assists in this process by providing a stable predictable environment with trained staff that knows and understands the development of children.

Because of this, you can expect the following:

1. We will do everything in our power to maintain the health, safety, and well being of each child in our care.
2. We will not release them to anyone that has not been authorized by their parent.
3. Teachers and staff will keep information shared about children and families in strict confidence.
4. We will not discuss the children in their presence. We understand the sensitivity of young children to messages concerning them and we will not discuss them with staff or parents in their presence.
5. Children will be treated with respect. We value each individual's ethnic background, race, and gender.
6. We will strive to enhance the development of each child in the program. This will be addressed through planning, observation, interaction, and participation in all levels of the program.
7. We will provide a variety of activities to both enhance children's development in all areas as well as to assist in estimating children's progress through the program.
8. We will communicate with families about children's progress in the program through newsletters, phone calls, conferences, parent meetings, and daily interactions when children are arriving and leaving.
9. We will use sound professional judgment in deciding when and how to intervene in particular situations based on children's levels of experience and skill.
10. We will provide opportunities for parents to increase their understanding of child development in general and their own child's development in particular.
11. We will assist families in locating appropriate child and family resources available in the community.
12. We will provide programming based on what is considered to be best practices in the field of early childhood development - based on theory, research, and practice.

What We Expect of Families

1. Send your child to school each day healthy, fed, rested, and dressed appropriately for the weather so that he/she can become fully involved.
2. Assist your child's learning by bringing him/her to each session on time and pick him/her up as soon as the session is over.
3. Bring children directly to a staff member in the drop off area rather than letting children enter the building alone or letting them play on the playground unattended.
4. Inform the program director in writing of any changes in who will be picking up your child.
5. Communicate with teachers about events at home that may influence a child's behavior (such as changes in a child's routine, a move, separation, hospitalization, etc.)
6. Talk with either the Supervising Teacher or the Program Director if you have any concerns about your child or any aspect of the program.
7. Make tuition payments directly to the Family & Consumer Sciences Office rather than to the lead preschool teacher or director.
8. Remember that the Preschool lab is a training facility for students who vary in skill and experience.
9. Treat staff with consideration and understanding.
10. Offer suggestions and ideas for program improvement either informally or within the context of the various evaluation procedures provided (year-end evaluation, parent conferences, meetings, etc.).
11. Participate whenever possible on walks and on-campus field trips. Spend time with your child discussing what he/she has done in terms of projects, artwork, or play.

Family Resources

- Kansas Department of Health & Environment is the state agency that oversees our operation as a licensed preschool center. You can access more information about KDHE at www.kdheks.gov.
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with a particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8. We follow NAEYC guidelines for our practices in the preschool. They are the organization behind our accreditation endeavors. You can find out more about NAEYC at www.naeyc.org.
- Parents as Teachers is an early learning program designed to provide practical and timely information to all families including single parents, first-time parents, and expectant parents. The program is available to anyone who has a child under the age of three and lives within a participating school district. You can find out more about the local Parents as Teachers program by contacting Cassandra Elsworth at Greenbush, sandy.elsworth@greenbush.org, 620-724-6281.
- The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC), federally funded under Title V of No Child Left Behind, is the official Parent Information Technical Assistance Center for the state of Kansas. KPIRC promotes meaningful parent involvement at all levels of education and provides information and resources to help parents, educators, and other organizations promote the educational success of every Kansas child. www.kpirc.org

Pittsburg Area Kindergarten Programs

Covenant Harvest—620-231-6881

Countryside Christian—620-232-5911

St. Mary's—Colgan—620- 231-4690

USD 250

George E. Nettles Elementary—620-235-3160

Meadowlark Elementary—620-235-3130

Lakeside Elementary—620-235-3140

Westside Elementary—620-235-3170