



Early Learning Division
Family Handbook
2022-2023

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Introduction

Welcome to the Parent Infant Center (PIC)

We are pleased to have your family as part of our PIC community and we look forward to a long and rewarding association. This PIC Family Handbook is provided to all families, to give you a better understanding of what we do, our expectations, and to hopefully answer questions that you may have. Please read it carefully and ask about any area(s) that you may have questions.

Nondiscrimination Policy

The Parent Infant Center values diversity among our families and staff. The center enrolls children and employs staff regardless of race, religion, sex, age, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, family composition, gender identity or structure.

PIC Mission Statement

PIC works to provide and increase access to high-quality early childhood education and school-age programs that:

- give children opportunities to learn through play.
- are led by valued, professional educators.
- actively engage and support parents and families.

PIC Values

COMMUNITY as the basis for child, family, and educator growth, development, and learning

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY as our foundational approach

NATURE as a home for children's play and learning

BEST PRACTICE APPROACHES based on solid research in the fields of education and child development

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION in classrooms and on educator and leadership teams

EQUITY through practice and advocacy, in education access and educator compensation

Philosophy

PIC provides an enriching environment of love, security and community to children from the age of 6 weeks-5 years in our Early Learning Program, and children from Kindergarten through 4th grade in our School Age programs. Through developmentally-appropriate experiences, our children learn respect for others, self-confidence, social skills, to develop curiosity about the world and to appreciate people who are different from them. They grow emotionally and physically, and they build a foundation of competence and confidence that prepares them for everyday situations and, ultimately, for school.

All of us connected with the Center think that PIC is a pretty special place. The years of early childhood are formative ones for children and their families. PIC believes that quality child care is a learning experience for parents and children alike, and it is from this philosophy that our Center derives its name and its unique approach.

We hope this handbook will be a useful resource as you get acquainted with the Center. It will provide you with a guide to the Center's structure, policies, and procedures. We hope it answers all of your questions, but if it doesn't, ask a Room Parent, Teacher, Program Coordinator, the Assistant Director, or the Executive Director.

PIC is licensed by the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS). We are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Council on Accreditation (COA). PIC holds a 4-star designation, the highest level, within Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS quality initiative.

We select staff for their education, experience, creativity, sensitivity in working with young children and skill in communicating with families. All staff members undergo required background checks and Mandated Reporter Training as required by law, and all classroom staff are trained in pediatric first aid, CPR, as well as in water and fire safety.

PIC History

The University of Pennsylvania opened the Parent-Infant Center (PIC) in 1978 to serve infants and toddlers who were too young for its campus preschool program. A year later, when the University decided to close PIC, parents incorporated the center as an independent, nonprofit organization. Housed on the grounds of the former Episcopal Divinity School of Philadelphia, we have been at our present location since 1986.

In 1983 we began serving children in publicly financed care, and in 1986 we established a scholarship fund to assist families whose income is too high for public funding, but who cannot manage the full cost of child care. Responding to the need for school-age child care, we opened the After School Center in 1992 for grades K-6.

Throughout its history, PIC has worked on community-based programs to meet the current needs of families in the neighborhood. We have collaborated with other organizations to supervise a play program in area health clinic waiting rooms. We have provided technical assistance and training for area family day care providers. We piloted a program to provide child care for women in job training programs at a nearby homeless shelter and we have hosted parenting education programs.

In June 2007 longtime Executive Director Marni Sweet retired due to illness. During her tenure (1982-2007), the Center quadrupled in size and raised more than \$1 million for child care and special programs working with families. When Marni lost her battle with brain cancer in September 2007, the Center launched "Sweet Dreams," an ambitious campaign to raise another one million dollars to meet the rapidly growing demand for child care in University City.

In April 2010, following the success of "Sweet Dreams," PIC opened the Sweet Building, which expanded PIC's capacity by 30 percent to serve 50 additional families. The addition of 9,000 square feet of newly-renovated space resulted in six classrooms, administrative offices, and indoor and outdoor play areas. The Sweet Dreams campaign also provided for center-wide improvements including renovation of the infant playground, a state-of-the-art resource room for teachers, a parent lounge, and a children's library.

In June of 2012 we launched the *Magic Circle* nature playground initiative. This innovative project is inspired by a growing body of research that confirms the value of nature-based learning in healthy child development. With seed money from the Sweet Dreams expansion campaign, an entry arbor was designed and built to welcome families into a wonderful world of outdoor learning and exploration. In September 2012 the arbor was dedicated to outgoing Executive Director Cindy Roberts whose vision and commitment has driven this project forward from its inception.

In July of 2013, Debbie Green joined PIC as Executive Director. Debbie, a seasoned early childhood professional with over 30 years in the field has brought her enthusiasm to the organization which she has maintained close ties with over the course of her career.

At the end of 2013, PIC contracted with the landscape company *ThinkGreen* to continue the work and the completed *Magic Circle* nature playground was officially opened in June of 2014.

In the Spring of 2017, we secured a new building at the corner of 43rd and Spruce Streets that was named the Aviary. The two older groups of children in our AfterSchool Center (the Hawks and the Eagles) moved into the building and the two younger groups of children (the Dragontails and the Starlights) moved into the Stucco Building.

In the Fall of 2017, after several months of extensive renovation to the former AfterSchool Center classrooms, we opened two new preschool-age classrooms that added 32 additional children to our program, and increasing the number of children who attend PIC free-of-charge through the state-subsidized PreK Counts program to 45.

In the Fall of 2019, The AfterSchool Center again reorganized the age groups to accommodate additional Kindergarteners (Dragontails.) At that time the Starlights (renamed the Falcons) moved to the Aviary Building and joined the Hawks and the Eagles

March 13, 2020 was the day that PIC (along with most of the country) closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program remained closed for nearly 4 months and reopened in July of 2020.

As of September 2022, we are back to operating at full capacity in all classrooms, with some COVID policies and protocols still in place.

Code of Conduct

All members of the PIC community are expected to exhibit and promote productive and respectful behavior. As an integral member of the Center community, all parents and guardians agree to maintain appropriate written and verbal communication with teachers, administrators, fellow parents/guardians and children at all times.

Program Oversight and Quality Initiatives

PIC is “certified” (the term that has replaced “licensed”) by the **Department of Human Services** (DHS, formerly DPW) and must meet the state requirement to receive the annual state Certificate of Renewal. The DHS regulations for certified child care centers can be found here.

<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/055/chapter3270/chap3270toc.html&d=>

PIC has been an accredited program by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (**NAEYC**.) since 1999. Our last accreditation was in 2021. NAEYC administers the largest and most widely recognized national, voluntary and professionally sponsored accreditation system for early childhood programs. More information on NAEYC accreditation can be found here.

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/value-naeyc-accredited-program>

Our Early Learning Program also participates in the **Keystone STARS** Quality Improvement Initiative and follows those guidelines. PIC has been designated a STAR 4 (highest level) program and as such, we receive funding from the state that is used to continually improve the quality of our program. More information on Keystone STARS can be found here.

The PIC Campus

Our Buildings and Spaces

PIC is housed in several different buildings including the Sweet, Spruce, and Stucco Buildings, and the Aviary. The **Sweet Building**, on your right as you walk down the driveway at the corner of Locust and 42nd Streets, houses six classrooms, the **A-Z Room** (indoor gym space), and **administrative offices** of the Assistant Enrollment Coordinator (on the ground level) and the Executive Director, Accounts Manager, Enrollment Coordinator (on the lower level).

The Spruce Building, east of the Penn Alexander School, houses nine classrooms and **administrative offices** (the Assistant Director, the Infant-Toddler Program Coordinator, the Preschool Program Coordinator, the Operations Manager and the Managers of Development and Communications).

Our shared indoor gross motor spaces are the **Small Gym**, located on the ground level of the Spruce Building, and **Big Gym** located on the third floor between the Sweet and Spruce Buildings (can be accessed from either building).

The Tot Lot, our outdoor play space for infants and young toddlers is located on the north side of campus and can be accessed from Locust street. When inside the Spruce building, enter at the end of the lower-level hallway that houses the infant/young toddler classrooms.

The Magic Circle Nature Playground is our certified outdoor classroom nestled in between the Spruce and Sweet Buildings off of the blacktop. It is a wonderful playspace used by our toddlers, preschoolers, and younger afterschoolers where they interact with nature and natural materials in a variety of ways.

The Stucco Building, south of the Spruce Building, houses our younger school-age classrooms. The *Dragontails* are our kindergarteners in our Afterschool and Summer Camp programs.

The Aviary, located at the corner of 43rd and Spruce Streets, is the new home of the *Falcons*, *Hawks*, and *Eagles* classrooms (1st through 4th grade) in our Afterschool Center and Summer Camp programs.

Our Classrooms

Our four infant/young toddler classrooms are the *Bumblebees*, *Caterpillars*, *Wild Things* and *Doodlebugs*. In September, the children in these classrooms range from 6 weeks of age through two years.

Our three older toddler classrooms are the *Rainbows* and *Sunshines* and the *Moonbeams*. In September, the children in these rooms range in age from 20 months-3 years.

Our 3-year-old room is the *Fireflies*. In September, the children in this room range from 3-4 years of age.

Our two 4-year-old rooms are the *Grasshoppers* and the *Roadrunners*. In September, the children in these rooms range from 4-5 years of age.

Our five mixed-age group rooms are the *Chipmunks*, *Leapfrogs*, *Blue Jays*, *Butterflies*, *Hummingbirds*. In September, the children in these rooms range from 3-5 years of age. Most of the children in these rooms will be in the room for two years. The *Chipmunks* and *Leapfrogs* rooms are part-day rooms for families who opt for their children to be picked up by 2 p.m.

Our Kindergarten-4th graders are part of our School Age program and are the *Dragontails*, *Falcons*, *Hawks* and *Eagles*.

Early Learning Division Classroom Locations

Infants/Young Toddlers

Bumblebees ... Spruce, first floor

Caterpillars ... Spruce, first floor

Doodlebugs ... Sweet, first floor

Wild Things ... Spruce, first floor

Older Toddlers/Two's

Moonbeams ... Sweet, first floor

Rainbows ... Spruce, second floor

Sunshines ... Spruce, second floor

Preschoolers

Blue Jays (3-5 year olds) ... Spruce, third floor

Butterflies (3-5 year olds) ... Spruce, third floor

Chipmunks (3-5 year olds) ... Sweet, third floor

Fireflies (3 year olds) ... Spruce, third floor

Grasshoppers (4 year olds) ... Sweet, second floor

Hummingbirds (3-5 year olds) ... Spruce, third floor

Leapfrogs (3 - 5 year olds) ... Sweet, third floor

Roadrunners (4 year olds) ... Sweet, second floor

School-age Division Classroom Locations

Dragontails (Kindergarten)... Stucco Building (building next to the chapel)

Falcons (1st grade), Hawks (2nd grade), Eagles (3rd & 4th grades).... Aviary Building (at the corner of 43rd & Spruce Streets)

Hours and Closings

Our regular program hours are from 8 am until 6 pm, Monday through Friday.

PIC's Early Learning and School Age Programs are closed on the following days:

July 4, 2022	Independence Day
August 24,25,26	All-staff Inservice Days
Monday, September 5, 2022	Labor Day
Friday, November 11, 2022	All staff In-service Day
Thursday, Friday November 24-25, 2022	Thanksgiving holiday
Week of December 26, 2022	Winter Break
January 2, 2023	New Year's Day holiday celebrated
Monday, January 16, 2023	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, February 20, 2023	President's Day
Monday, May 29, 2023	Memorial day
Monday, June 19, 2023	Juneteenth

We also closed for three In-service Days around Labor Day and one In-service day in the fall.

PIC Administrator Contact Information

Executive Director	Deb Green	dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org
Assistant Director	Jessica Carter	jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org
Enrollment Coordinator:	Morgan Jimenez	mjimenez@parentinfantcenter.org
Ass't Enrollment Coordinator	Jerri Torrence	jtorrence@parentinfantcenter.org
Accounts Manager	Safia Abdullah	sabdullah@parentinfantcenter.org
Operations Manager	Julie Wesenberg	jwesenberg@parentinfantcenter.org
Development Manager	Karen Stachelek	kstachelek@parentinfantcenter.org
Communications Manager	Rachel Isaacson	risaacson@parentinfantcenter.org
Infant-Toddler Program Coordinator	Kharma Hicks	khicks@parentinfantcenter.org
Preschool Program Coordinator	Lia Wilson	lwilson@parentinfantcenter.org
School Age Director	Anjali Gallup-Diaz	agallupdiaz@parentinfantcenter.org

Financial Information

2022 - 2023 Monthly Tuition Schedule

Ages/Program	5 days	4 days	3 days	Drop In-Day*
Infant	\$2,145	\$1,920	\$1,565	\$125
Toddler	\$1,925	\$1,710	\$1,390	\$125
Pre-school	\$1,555	\$1,370	\$1,230	\$125
Part-Day Pre-School	\$935	\$835	\$710	\$125
Pre-K Counts Extended	\$500	n/a	n/a	n/a
After School Center	\$600	\$540	\$525	\$65 afternoon / \$110 full day

The budget of the center is based on 12 months of operation and takes into account the holiday closing days, the week before the New Year holiday and staff in-service days. Tuition is due on the first business day of the month and is payable in advance. A late fee of \$10 per week may be assessed on all payments not received by the 5th business day of the month. You will receive a mid-month reminder if you have forgotten to make a payment. All families receive emailed statements at the end of the month.

Tuition checks should be made payable to the Parent-Infant Center (or PIC) and placed in locked tuition mailboxes designated for that purpose in the Spruce Building (on the second floor or by the ground floor reception desk) or outside of the Sweet Building entrance door.

PIC accepts debit or credit card payments for all tuition and other Center expenses (minimum charge \$10). Tuition payments made by debit or credit card, or automatic withdrawals from your debit or credit card, will be assessed a 2% surcharge to cover banking fees. We also have a "click to pay" feature which shows on your

emailed tuition bill.

There is no surcharge for automatic withdrawals from checking accounts. Use a bank account for the click to pay feature to avoid a surcharge.

If circumstances require a special payment plan, please discuss this with the Accounts Manager.

Publicly-funded Programs

PIC is committed to building a community that represents a diversity of socio-economic levels and we accept applications from families who receive state subsidies to help meet their child care expenses.

Child Care Works (CCW)- formerly referred to a “CCIS”

PIC accepts applications from families who receive CCW. If you have a child who needs child care while you work or go to school, and your total annual family income is 200% or less of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, you may be eligible for this subsidy.

To speak to someone about how CCW can help you and your family, call 888-461-KIDS (5437) or visit the [Child Care Works page](#) on the PA DHS website.

Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts Program

PIC partners with the School District of Philadelphia to offer PA's Pre-K Counts program, which provides no cost pre-kindergarten education for eligible children ages 3 to 5. The program is free for those who qualify and operates on an academic calendar year (September - June). [Read more about Pre-K Counts at PIC.](#)

PIC Tuition Assistance Fund

In addition, PIC fundraising efforts support a modest [Tuition Fund](#) to help currently enrolled families who cannot meet the full cost of care. Applications are due May 31 for the next fiscal year and families are notified about financial awards by June 15. We understand that individual circumstances change and assistance requests are accepted throughout the year.

Security Deposits

Tuition deposits are held in escrow and returned by the Center upon withdrawal, less any outstanding tuition payment or PPP obligation. **Families must give a 60-day written notice of withdrawal from PIC in order to have their deposit returned.** Your deposit may be forfeited without this 60-day written notice.

You will get a letter about your escrow deposit towards the end of your enrollment. **You are required to return the signed letter within 90 days in order for your deposit to be returned.** The deposit is \$750 per child for children in the full-day program; \$350 per child in the part-day program; and \$250 per child in the After School Center. Families with more than one child enrolled at PIC pay the full deposit for the youngest child and one-half of the usual deposit for each additional child enrolled. The deposit is \$100 for families receiving child care subsidy.

Facilities Fee

Families are billed an annual fee in the amount of \$100 (\$50 for families receiving child care subsidy.) Families will see this charge in the September billing. This fee goes directly to funding PIC facilities needs and improvement projects. The PIC Finance Committee works in conjunction with the Executive Director to determine which projects take precedent each year.

Late Fee Policy

Any child who has not been signed out by 6 pm (2 pm in the part-day program) will automatically be charged \$15 for any part of the first 15 minutes and \$5 for every part of each additional five minutes thereafter. Remember that cell phones are an accurate timekeeper if there is a question about lateness. You, along with the staff member waiting with your child, will be asked to sign a “late fee” form, and the fee will be billed to your account.

Child Care Expenses and the IRS

Many employers have programs that enable employees to tax shelter their child care expenses. Ask your employer, as it will be a significant savings. IRS rules may also allow you to deduct childcare expenses on your federal tax return; check with your tax preparer for current deductions. Your monthly statement from PIC should satisfy any need to document child care expenses. Our **PIC Employer Identification Number is 23-2151143**.

Your First Day at PIC

Before you Begin

Please be sure that we receive ALL of your child’s required paperwork before the first day. **Families will not be able to enter the classroom without their paperwork.** You should receive an introduction to the classroom teachers and other important information before your child’s first day. Please reach out to the classroom teachers via email with any questions.

What to Bring

Families are responsible for bringing the following LABELED items on the first day at PIC:

- two changes of clothes
- diapers and wipes, if age appropriate
- bottles and formula, if age appropriate
- water bottle, if age appropriate
- rubber boots to stay at school (if age appropriate)
- sheet, blanket for nap time
- photo of your child and one of your family

Dropping off Your Child

Dropping off your child on the first day (or first week) can be difficult for both children and families. Our teacher will support you and your child with this process in a variety of ways.

Teachers will greet you and your child at the door or inside of the classroom. Please note that all Infant/Young Toddler classrooms have a “shoes off” policy and we request that you remove your shoes or wear the disposable “booties” provided in the classroom. They will help you locate where to hang your child’s belongings and put their nap items. Bottles should be placed in the classroom refrigerator.

Allow your child a few minutes to look around the classroom with the reassurance that you are there. Due to current COVID protocols, we ask that you do not stay in the room for more than 10 minutes. Always let your child know when you are leaving and remind your child that you will return at the end of the day.

Please note that all Infant/Young Toddler classrooms have a “shoes off” policy and we request that you remove your shoes or wear the disposable “booties” provided in the classroom.

The PIC “Push”

It is a longtime PIC tradition for children to “push” their parent or caregiver from the classroom in the morning. Perhaps this provides some closure for the child whose adults are leaving for the day. Perhaps the children are

saying “Now, I have my work to do, and you should go and do yours” or “Don’t worry, folks, I’ll have a good day and will see you later.” Whatever the case, for many children at the center, this is a helpful ritual that you may want to adopt. Or your child may devise his or her own!

New Family Orientation

PIC can be a big and often confusing place when a family first starts. Each September we welcome new (and not-so-new) families at an orientation where they have a chance to hear from the Executive Director about PIC's history, new initiatives, events for families, parent participation opportunities, and more. Please watch for the announcements of dates for these sessions.

Every Day at PIC

Handwashing

We ask that families assist children with handwashing at the classroom sink when arriving for the day.

Food and Nutrition Program

Good food habits are learned at an early age! PIC provides healthy snacks and warm lunches for all children. All meals are served family-style with milk and water offered, and children are encouraged to be independent in serving themselves.

We follow the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that children under the age of four should NOT be served popcorn, grapes (unless cut in half), nuts, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, hot dogs or baby carrots.

Our lunch program is offered to all age-groups and is included in the cost of tuition. All lunches are prepared and delivered daily by *Smart Lunches* and follow USDA guidelines. You can find information about food and nutrition guidelines on the USDA website: <http://www.nal.usda.gov>.

CACFP

PIC participates in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP.) This allows us to provide free meals to all children, regardless of income level. In order to be in compliance with the CACFP regulations, we need ALL families to complete CACFP required forms. Please keep an eye for any notices of forms needed and return the forms to our Assistant Enrollment Coordinator Jerri Torrence in a timely manner.

Every Friday is Pizza Day

Pizza Day continues to be a beloved PIC tradition. Each Friday, pizza is served with a fruit or vegetable option and water and/or milk and is a part of the lunch program. Pizza is included in the PIC tuition.

Nursing

Nursing parents are welcome to come and nurse their babies. Some enjoy sitting in the classroom to chat with the children and staff, while other parents prefer a quiet, private visit with their children.

Our Family Resource Room on the second floor of the Spruce Building is available for nursing when not in use. The door can be closed to create a quiet space and there is a comfortable chair for seating.

Naps

We provide cribs and cots for napping, and children are supervised when sleeping. You are expected to bring bed linens, including a crib-sized sheet, seasonally appropriate covers. Infants under a year must sleep in a “sleep sack” if covers are needed. If your child over 12 months has a special blanket, or stuffed toys that will help in

settling down to sleep, send that along, too. Bed linens should be taken home and washed weekly. **Please label everything.**

In keeping with recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics to reduce the risk of SIDS, babies are placed on their backs when napping. If your pediatrician recommends another sleeping position, you must provide a written note from the doctor.

Diapers

You may bring your own diapers and wipes, or sign up for our Diaper Program which provides disposable diapers and wipes in our Infant/Young Toddler and Older Toddler classrooms for a monthly fee. If you would like us to use other diapering products, please bring them along. If you bring your own, your child's teachers will inform you when supplies are running low. If you use cloth diapers rather than disposables, please make arrangements with the teachers for storing and picking up soiled ones.

Clothing

Your child will have his or her own "cubby" for storing extra clothes. Children of all ages have occasional accidents. Two complete changes of clothing should be brought to the Center on the first day and should be replaced as needed. This supply should include a warm layer like a sweater and extra shoes and socks. Many children will need to have extra pairs of pants and underpants. The type of clothing should be appropriate to the season. **Please be sure to label all articles of clothing clearly with first and last names.**

Children should wear sturdy, comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing in which they can play. Please remember that our play is sometimes dirty. **The children go outside all year round**, so be sure they are dressed warmly in the winter and that they have mittens and waterproof boots. In summer, don't forget a hat and sunblock. All children should keep a pair of rubber boots at PIC (and consider investing in rain pants, too!) for outdoor puddle jumping or mud play.

All children who are walkers should keep a pair of rubber boots at PIC.

Parents of walkers or crawlers should send children in sneakers or other soft-soled shoes. Closed-toed shoes are best as sandals are not good for climbing. Waterproof beach shoes should be provided for summer, when children are playing in the sprinkler.

We welcome donations of gently-used children's clothing to keep on hand when someone runs out of clean clothes. If your child comes home in unfamiliar clothes, please launder and return them. We also collect stray mittens for children to use when they've lost theirs.

What NOT to bring to PIC

To avoid problems, children may not bring candy, gum, money, or toys to the Center. Sharing is so hard when you are young! Even when meant to be left in the cubbies, toys mysteriously find their way into other children's pockets or may get broken or lost. Toys from home are just too hard for children to deal with and for grownups to keep track of. The only exceptions to this rule are soft toys for naptime, or items brought to share that are related to a special classroom project.

Lost and Found

PIC's lost-and-found box is located by the water fountain on the ground floor of the Spruce Building and near the stroller corral on the first floor of the Sweet Building.

Remember that you will be more likely to find lost items if they are labeled with your child's name. When classes

are closing outdoors, children's belongings are often placed along the fence. Check those locations before you leave to be sure you have everything.

Drop-off Procedures

Children should arrive before 9:30 am. Children enrolled in the Prek Counts Program need to be dropped off by 8:30am. This allows parents and staff a chance to exchange information and gives the child some important free-choice play time. Children who arrive in the middle of an activity often feel out of sync with their friends. If your child will not be coming to school, or if he/she will be dropped off after 9:30 am, please call the teachers and let them know. Occasionally the teachers will let you know that children need to arrive at an earlier time for a class trip or neighborhood excursion.

The drop-off and pick-up person must sign-in and sign-out each day using the sign-in/sign-out sheets that are located outside of each classroom. For our staffing purposes, it is very helpful to write in the approximate time you will be picking up your child.

Adults must always accompany their children to the classroom or to the outdoor area (if the classroom is opening outside) to be sure that they safely reach their destination and so that you can sign in for the day.

Pick-up Procedures

The Center closes promptly at 6 pm. This means that you should arrive by 5:45 pm to allow adequate time to hear about your child's day, see his or her latest accomplishment, collect belongings, and chat with staff and other parents. Please plan to leave the building by 5:55 pm in consideration of our staff who must complete classroom closing procedures before they leave. You are welcome to stay and play on the playground as long as you like.

If, because of an emergency, you cannot arrive before 6 pm, please call ahead. Staff can reassure your child by explaining what has happened and can adjust their own plans, if necessary. Children who have not been picked up in their classrooms by 5:55 pm will be taken by a staff member to the blacktop area or the Small Gym to wait with an administrator.

At 6pm if we still have a child and we have not heard from a parent of the child, we will attempt to reach the parents via phone. If unsuccessful, we will contact each person listed on the Emergency Contact Form. An administrator will wait with the child until someone arrives to pick up the child. The family will be charged the late fee as outlined in the Late Fee Policies in the Financial Information section.

The part-day program ends at 2 pm. Please understand that teachers have a scheduled break or other commitments after that time, so we ask that you respect the closing time and arrive on time to pick-up your child.

Only parents/guardians or those listed on the emergency contact form are permitted to pick up children. We require that the pickup person be at least 16 years of age. Verbal release of a child to someone not on the emergency contact list is possible only through approval of a PIC administrator. All unknown persons picking up child must present valid identification.

Parents must sign their children out at the end of the day. When you arrive for pick-up, please sign your child out of the classroom.

Sign-out is still required when picking up children outside.

As many families congregate after hours on the blacktop and playground, staff must be assured that your child is in your care. Remember that when you are on PIC grounds with your child, you are responsible for your child, even though staff members may be present.

Snow or Emergency Closings

PIC works hard to stay open in inclement weather. However, we will typically use these protocols in making the decision to close:

- We will follow the decision of the University of Pennsylvania. If they close, we will also close (Penn is our landlord and responsible for our snow and ice removal).
- If the Mayor closes city buildings due to snow/ice, we will consider following that lead. Often that decision is made because Septa routes are out of service, which has a huge impact upon PIC staffing.
- We do not follow the decision of the School District to close, as their benchmarks for closing are different than ours.
- PIC uses an automated communication system for snow closings and delays. This system will send text and e-mail messages to all PIC families for whom we have updated contact information.

In addition, we post information about closings or delays on the homepage of our website, PIC's Facebook page, and leave a message on the Center's voicemail. *PLEASE NOTE: We do not use the TV announcements to announce closures.*

PIC may also close due to other emergencies such as loss of power or water or other weather-related events. We will send text and e-mail messages to all PIC families for whom we have updated contact information.

Specific Information Regarding Snow Closings and the After School Center

- When the School District of Philadelphia closes for the day and PIC does not, our After School Center will be open.
- If the School District closes early, our After School Center will be open for care IF the district gives us ample notice to bring in ASC staff, and as long as our Early Learning division remains open. We will pick up the children when the schools close.
- If enough notice is NOT given by the school District for us to have adequate staffing of the After School Center, we will communicate with families that we cannot open before our regular afternoon start time.

Emergency Preparedness & Parental Notification

As part of our responsibility to assure the safety of the children in our care, we have developed an Emergency Response Plan that provides for all types of emergencies – weather, utilities failures, or catastrophe. Depending upon the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions for which we have occasional drills:

- *Building evacuation:* All children and staff will be evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, smoke, or related emergency.
- *Evacuation away from Building:* If grounds are not safe, all children will be taken to another building nearby. The evacuation locations are the adjacent Penn Alexander School and St. Mary's Church, located at Locust Walk at 40th Street.)
- *In-place sheltering:* Sudden weather occurrences, or hazardous materials may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- *Active Intruder:* The presence of an active intruder on our grounds may dictate the need for taking cover in locked classrooms.
- *Modified Operations:* Circumstances may dictate cancellation and/or postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building issues, however,

they may be necessary in a variety of situations.

In an emergency we may communicate in a variety of ways, including our website (parentinfantcenter.org), via e-mail and text notification (if possible), and telephone calls (if possible). We ask that you **not** call our main number during an emergency. This will keep the telephone lines free to contact the local emergency response support. We will call you to let you know if we've taken one of the protective actions and when it is safe for you to pick up your child.

We will release your child only to persons whom you have listed on this form. **Please check to be sure that your telephone numbers and escort lists that we have on file are always up-to-date.** *You must verify and sign this form at least every 6 months.* The safety of the children in our care is our first priority.

Special Enrollment, Move-ups, and Withdrawals

Part-week care

Though PIC primarily provides full-time care for working parents, we recognize that many families need only part-week child care. We want to support such arrangements as much as possible. However, in order to maintain a balanced budget, we have to maintain careful control over part-week enrollments so that all our classes can be filled.

Several policies apply to part-week enrollment:

- There is a minimum of three days a week for part-week enrollment. When enrolling your child, please specify which three days you prefer. While we strive to honor your request, we cannot guarantee that those specific days will be available.
- You may not change those days from week to week, or even month-to-month.
- You may not “swap” one day for another in any given week. If it becomes necessary to make a change to your schedule of days for an extended period of time, please check with the Enrollment Coordinator to see whether there is a space available on your preferred days. This policy is in effect to assure a comfortable routine for the children, as well as to maintain classroom routines.
- If your child is absent, due either to vacation or sickness, you may not make up those days by coming another day and you are required to pay for your regular days.
- If you need to add an unscheduled day, you may do so IF there is room in your child's classroom that day. You must consult with the Lead Teacher to see if your request can be accommodated. If you add a day, you will be billed at the drop-in rate for an extra day.
- If you expect to need extra days with any frequency, you may want to consider adding a day to your regular schedule to simplify record keeping, and to be sure those extra days are available.

Because the Center counts on a reasonably steady income, children may not ordinarily be switched back and forth from full-time to part-time during the fiscal year, and the number of part-time days may not be changed from month to month. If a family seeks to switch from part-time to full-time, every effort will be made to accommodate that request. **A decrease in the number of days requires 30 days' written notice.** Exceptions can be made, at the discretion of the Executive Director, if a change in parent's job status or the birth of a sibling suggests that a switch is appropriate.

Our part-day program is designed to accommodate families with children ages 3 to 5 whose childcare needs are limited to the hours of 8:00 am to 2 pm. The same policies regarding part-time enrollment outlined above apply for part-day children.

Leaves from PIC

The Center depends on tuition to meet its operating expenses and cannot afford to hold open unpaid slots. Families must, therefore, pay fees as usual during vacations and all other absences. Nevertheless, it is a great help to the Center to know of absences in advance and we urge you to give us as much notice as possible whenever your child will not be in attendance.

Extended Leaves

Extended leaves-of-absence may be taken under the following circumstances:

- Four- to ten- week leave of absences require a 30-day written request and prior consent from the Enrollment Coordinator.
- During the leave of absence, families are responsible for payment of one-half of their current monthly tuition for each month of the leave.
- An effort will be made to return a child to the same classroom, *although space in the same classroom cannot be guaranteed*. Occasionally, this transition time is used as the time to move the child to the next classroom.

Moving to New Classrooms (“Move-ups” at PIC)

What are “Move-ups?”

“Move-ups” is the term we use at PIC to refer to the process of moving children to the next age group.

What is the age range in each of the classrooms?

See page 6, Our Classrooms section.

When do children move-up to the next age group?

Occasionally spaces will become available during the school year, if a family moves away or leaves PIC for another reason. However, most often children start to move-up at the end of June, when spaces become available as the oldest children move onto summer camp. The next “wave” of move-ups usually happens in early September, again as our oldest children move on to kindergarten. We begin to move the oldest children in the infant/young toddler rooms to the older toddler rooms, the oldest toddlers to the preschool rooms, and so on, as spaces open up.

This means that there will be children over 2 years in the infant and young toddler rooms, over 3 years in the older toddler rooms, and over 4 years in the 3’s rooms over the course of the school year. The children move in “rough” chronological order as space becomes available in the next age groups.

What does “rough” chronological order mean?

Our Enrollment Coordinator and Program Coordinators consult with the classroom teachers about each child’s individual needs, temperament and other factors that may influence when a child moves up. For example, some children will do better when moving with a specific peer or will do better when being separated from a specific social group. Some children may have developmental or home needs that make it best to wait a little longer or move a little sooner (this might include the birth of a new baby or a move to a new home). Any of these decisions may affect the order when a child moves.

Other factors also need to be taken into consideration in planning for move-ups. In each classroom, we need to balance gender and child schedules. And we need to consider the ages of the children in all the classrooms that are the same age range, not just one at a time. **This means that often it is not the oldest child in the classroom that moves before the others.** To balance all of the factors we need to take into account, it is very possible that children

will move somewhat out of chronological order. Be assured that once the summer move-ups begin, all of the children age-eligible for moving up to the next age group will do so in a relatively short period of time.

What is the move-up transition like at PIC?

Children moving into our preschool classrooms generally move in groups to their new room. The children seem happiest and most comfortable when they know they are moving with at least one friend.

With our younger children, the teachers will discuss a “transition plan” for each child’s move-up to the new classroom.

It is helpful for you to talk about the move to the new classroom at home and use the teacher’s names as well as the names of any of the children in the room that your child may already know.

How are decisions made as to what classroom children are placed in?

There are many, many factors that go into classroom placement decisions when children move up and this process is probably one of the most complicated things that we do. As much as possible, we want each child to move into a new classroom where there are other children whom s/he knows. We want there to be a balance of gender, and of part-week and full-week children. Again, teachers know which children will do better if moving with a peer group or being split from a specific peer group. We also take into account which classroom culture may best fit each child’s individual personality and temperament. Teachers know the children in their class very, very well and we ask parents to trust us in this process.

Can parents request specific classrooms?

Many of the children moving up are siblings of children who were in classrooms before them. Often these parents have an established relationship with a teaching team and would like their younger child placed in the same room. We do our very best to honor these requests. However, other than the sibling example, *we ask that families not request specific teachers* as usually the only information that they have about a teacher or a classroom is hear-say, and every child and family’s situation is different.

Kindergarten Transition

As children prepare for kindergarten, teachers and children frequently engage in class conversations about what changes may be coming. Sometimes “veteran” kindergarteners may come to share their wisdom, or a visit to the kindergarten classrooms at a nearby elementary school may be arranged.

PIC doesn’t have a graduation, since there is no single time when all the children leave for kindergarten. However, each classroom finds special ways to wish departing classmates, “Good Luck!” on their new adventures.

We know that from PIC, children go to many different schools, from their local public schools to independent schools in the city. Some schools ask for teacher recommendations as part of the application process, and your child’s teacher is happy to help with that. Once you know where your child will be attending, please let your classroom teacher know, as we like to support each child in the next step of their journey.

Withdrawing from PIC

Though we hope you will stay in touch with your PIC friends for a long time, the day will come when you outgrow us or are moving away. Tuition deposits are held in escrow and returned by the Center upon withdrawal, less any outstanding tuition payment or PPP obligation. **Families must give a 60-day written notice of withdrawal from**

PIC in order to have their deposit returned. Your deposit may be forfeited without this 60-day written notice.

Upon notification of withdrawal, you will receive a letter about the return of your deposit, which you are required to sign and return. Your deposit, minus any fees and a charge for uncompleted PPP obligations or unreturned key fobs, will be returned about a month after receipt of this signed letter. When children leave the Center, some families choose to designate their tuition deposits as a contribution to our fund for tuition assistance—a thoughtful farewell gesture that is always appreciated.

Termination of Services

PIC may terminate services upon two weeks' written notice if the Executive Director determines that the best interests of the Center are served by such termination.

PIC may decline enrollment or may require the withdrawal of an enrolled child at any time if the Center determines—at its own discretion—that legitimate safety standards necessary for the safe operation of the Center and/or for the child's own safety are unable to be satisfied.

The Center may terminate or suspend its obligations and duties under this Agreement upon 24 hours notice to the child's parent/guardian when the parent/guardian materially breaches their obligations or duties under the Family Agreement and/or the PIC's Family Handbook.

The following situations are examples of child or adult behavior that may result in ending enrollment at PIC:

- PIC decides that the actions of a parent or guardian are disruptive, threatening or inconsistent with the Center's best interests. This may include physical or verbally abusive threats toward staff, children or other adults.
- A child poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others preventing PIC from meeting DHS's safety and supervision guidelines.
- Non-payment for services and/or lack of adherence to our fee payment policies.*
- Failure to comply with health and immunization requirements.*
- Repeated failure to pick up a child by closing time.*
- Lack of parent cooperation with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings, conferences or need for early intervention.

* Excludes children enrolled in the PreK Counts program.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies to all verbal and written information about potential enrolling, currently enrolled and previously enrolled children and their families. All staff are briefed on the need for confidentiality and are expected to fulfill their obligation to respect the protection of privacy. Written records are stored in a secure location with access limited to the Enrollment Coordinator, the Assistant Enrollment Coordinator, the Program Coordinators, the Executive Director and the child's teacher(s.)

No information will be released about a child and the parent/legal guardian during enrollment or transition to another receiving program or school without first receiving the written permission of the parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility held by teachers as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect as outlined in Pennsylvania law or when information is subpoenaed by the court.

Raising Concerns

There may be times when you have a specific concern regarding something happening with your child, with the classroom, or with the program. Open communication usually solves most problems. If you are comfortable

talking with the Lead Teacher, that is the place to start. In general. It is best not to address such issues in front of children, or at a time when the teacher is in-ratio and responsible for the children. It is helpful to give details of a situation or specific examples of the issue you wish to discuss. Hopefully, a plan will be reached to address the issue.

If you would prefer to speak with someone outside the classroom, or if the issue remains unresolved after speaking with the classroom teacher, it is best to schedule an appointment to talk with the Program Coordinator who is responsible for supervision of your child's teachers. They can help you think about how best to address the issue or speak directly with relevant staff members. They know the children in the classrooms, and they provide oversight, mentoring and coaching to the classroom teams.

If after speaking with the Program Coordinator, you still believe the issue or concern has not been resolved, please schedule a time to speak with Assistant Director Jessica Carter or Executive Director Deb Green.

If you have a concern that goes beyond what you would like to speak with any PIC administrator about, the following are places where you can raise a concern or complaint.

Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)

Southeast Regional Office
801 Market Street Suite 5132
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-560-2541

PA Human Relations Commission

Philadelphia Regional Office
110 N. 8th Street
Suite 501
Philadelphia, PA 19107

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Office for Civil Rights
Suite 372, Public Ledger Building
150 S. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Civil Rights
Suite 372, Public Ledger Building
150 South Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Educational Program

General Information

The goal of our Early Learning Program is to provide a supportive and caring environment that allows children to play and learn at their own developmental rates and to prepare for school success. By establishing good communication with families, we try to establish consistency between the Center's approach and home practices.

Teachers plan a curriculum that is geared to the specific needs of our children. There is a balance of active and quiet play, with both individual choices and planned teacher-directed activities to promote skill development. A mix of ages reflects family life and provides younger and older children a chance to learn from one another. The children develop trust through responsive and consistent interaction with our staff in a safe and secure environment. Lesson plans are posted in the classrooms so that you know what your children will be doing during the day. For our older toddler and preschool classrooms, the first part of the morning consists of free choice time, a morning meeting, morning snack, and outdoor play. Lunch is followed by a rest time, afternoon snack, often another group meeting, and more free choice or outdoor play.

The rooms for our infants/young toddlers are designed to provide lots of hands-on activities through individual and group play, as well as spontaneous and planned activities. There is plenty of time for building secure attachments through one-on-one and small group interactions including picking children up, reading stories, and playing outdoors on our Tot Lot. The routine is intentionally flexible and can be adapted to each child's needs, although the children 14 months and older tend to follow a more set routine.

Children move to a two's classroom at about age two, or a few months younger or older. Children most often move to the next age group in the summer or early September. In these classrooms, a more structured day is planned. Activities help foster independence, socialization, cooperation, and decision-making. While there are group activities, a child who prefers not to participate in the planned project may choose to play with other toys or books nearby. Many children begin or master toilet learning during this year.

For preschool-age children activities are planned to encourage independent dramatic play, block building, and manipulative activities. Art, music, and movement activities encourage creative expression. Through their play activities, children develop fine and gross motor skills, pre-reading and writing skills, and social skills that are important to school success. Children learn to use books for pleasure or learning. Planned activities help children learn about the ways people are different and alike. Excursions become an important part of the curriculum.

Through all these experiences, the important thing is that children view learning as a wonderful adventure.

Curriculum Overview

The focus of our Early Learning Program builds upon the sense of joy and curiosity that children bring to their first school experience. Young children are natural learners - their curiosity and pleasure in discovery sets the stage for exploration of all kinds. Small group, large group, and individual learning experiences take place in a creative learning environment where the individual pace of a child is honored and respected. Trusting relationships encourage the development of self-confidence and independence. A child's growing independence fosters a greater awareness of the self as a valued individual and a competent learner. Children learn to be responsible members of a family, classroom, school and community. Families are included as important partners in the life of the classroom and the Center.

Emphasizing a **developmentally appropriate** approach in a child-centered, project-based curriculum, children are given many opportunities to expand their cognitive abilities through hands-on, open-ended exploration.

Children develop their thought processes leading to greater understanding, awareness, and curiosity through investigation, research and exploration, utilizing a variety of resources and references. Experimentation with tools, materials and manipulatives encourages children to observe, compare, describe and to explore questions and discover solutions.

Children learn to appreciate literature for pleasure and knowledge, as well as develop and understand the relationship between the spoken and written word. Engaging in meaningful conversations with peers and teachers, children develop respectful listening skills. Children develop language skills to convey wants, needs, ideas, thoughts, and feelings by expressing themselves through words, drawings, stories, and dramatic play.

Through a variety of visual arts, music, drama, literature and creative movement activities, children learn to appreciate the expressive arts and cultures of diverse people, places, and times. Children engage in creative movement activities using music and drama to develop coordination and rhythm.

Children have many opportunities to develop physical coordination, fine and gross motor skills, and explore with the five senses. Daily outdoor play and community walks allow children to develop stamina and strength. Children are also encouraged to develop good habits in the areas of health, nutrition, safety, hygiene, and manners.

Continuity of Care

At PIC, we engage in a system of primary caregiving that establishes an environment in which meaningful and lasting relationships can develop between teachers and children.

Continuity of care means that children and teachers remain together for more than one year, often for the first two years of the child's life. Children remain together in the same room in a mixed-age group in which children who enter as infants gradually become the "big" kids, and are often over the age of two by the time they "move up" to the next age group. Even moving a cluster of children to the next age group, rather than moving children individually, contributes to some continuity of care.

Keeping children and teachers together for two years has several benefits. Close relationships between children and their primary caregivers can flourish. The classrooms resemble more of a family-like setting with children of different age groups.

Lesson Plans/Activity Schedules

Lesson plans and activity schedules for each classroom are posted on the family bulletin board outside of each classroom.

Classroom Communication

Classroom teachers will let you know how to best communicate with them. All teachers have PIC email addresses and are used to email communication with families.

Teachers regularly take photos or videos to communicate with internal families. These images may appear in the classroom, on bulletin boards, in professional development materials, e-mails or e-newsletters written by PIC teachers and shared with all classroom families.

The Creative Curriculum

At PIC, we use the Creative Curriculum (published by Teaching Strategies, Inc.) as the foundation of our curriculum and then build upon this foundation with other ideas and approaches. The Creative Curriculum follows the philosophy that children learn primarily through play and through ongoing interaction with the

environment. The Creative Curriculum guides our thinking about room arrangement and thus, each of our classrooms are separated into “learning centers” that include the following areas: dramatic play, blocks, sensory, art, writing, library/literacy, science and math manipulatives. The core element of the Creative Curriculum is that children freely move about these learning centers and that these areas are regularly changed to reflect the current classroom theme or study.

Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach

In the Early Learning Program (specifically with our preschool-age rooms,) we follow an Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach and accordingly, our themes, projects and studies most often come from the ideas and interests of the children in each class. Therefore, seldom are classrooms all engaged in the same topic of study at the same time nor do classrooms repeat the same themes year after year. For example, a project on transportation may emerge after teachers initially observe the children playing with vehicles in the block area, and this theme continues to emerge in other aspects of their play. A study of birds may emerge as the children notice and discuss many different birds on walks around the neighborhood. Project study ideas may also be introduced by the teacher. The general idea is that the curriculum is not planned far in advance by the teacher, but “unfolds” based upon the children’s interests. The theory of the Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach is that children will be far more interested in a topic that is meaningful and important to them. A particular topic is studied in great detail and thus, children cover fewer themes over the course of any given year, but learn much more information about the topics they are involved in (often referred to as “depth rather than breadth”). Teachers are seen watching and listening to children, documenting their play with photos and notes, and offering resources to support and extend the topic of study. More information on the Project Approach can be found at www.projectapproach.com.

Reggio Emilia Inspiration

The Reggio Emilia philosophy has inspired thinking about quality early care and education throughout the world. Reggio Emilia is a small region in Northern Italy that has become internationally known for its philosophy and approach to early childhood education. Notable among the many features of the Reggio Emilia approach are:

- A deep respect for the potential of young children.
- Environments that are engaging, welcoming, organized, beautiful, and supportive of the work of children and teachers.
- Many forms of documentation to make visible the learning and the voices of the children.
- Emergent curriculum and small group work based on both children and teacher interests.
- Long-term studies of the topics with periods of uninterrupted time throughout the day for exploration.
- Children and teachers construct knowledge together through exploration and problem solving (not a pre-set curriculum with little room for such exploration.)
- The use of many expressive “languages” to represent ideas, questions, and learning, such as clay, paint, wire, drama, play, music, graphic arts materials and many more.

In the Early Learning Program we are continuing our learning about the ideas from the schools of Reggio Emilia as we further our commitment to providing the highest quality care and education to young children. More information on the Reggio Emilia approach can be found at www.reggioalliance.org or www.narea.com

Documentation : Making Learning Visible

A key component of the Reggio Emilia Approach and the Project Approach, teachers regularly document children’s activities and classroom projects. Our goal is to show the life of the Early Learning Program through careful observation, reflection, and documentation of each child and his or her classroom experiences. You can find this documentation posted on bulletin boards inside and outside the classrooms.

Diversity/Anti-Bias Approach

At PIC we believe that when children are taught to appreciate diversity and spend time in a diverse environment, they will develop respect for and value the differences among us and feel comfortable being themselves.

In June of 2021, the Board of Directors put out a Diversity and Equity Statement:

A commitment to social justice and diversity have been core values at PIC since our founding. This past year’s social, health, and economic injustices have brought renewed attention to the systemic racism, white supremacy, and other forms of inequity and violence experienced by BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized communities—which has also brought a renewed urgency to responding to these profound challenges within our community. You can read the complete statement on our website

at:<https://parentinfantcenter.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-board-statement>

We incorporate non-sexist, multicultural, and anti-bias learning experiences in our classroom life and in our curriculum. We continually strive to provide materials, activities and an environment that reflect a respect for, and celebration of diversity. Our goal is for every child and family to feel welcomed, reflected and supported in our program. Throughout the curriculum and the Early Learning Program, we engage the children in the active exploration of themselves, their families, and their communities.

The PIC Diversity and Equity Committee meets regularly at PIC and consists of both board members and teachers interested in advancing this important topic.

Religious and Cultural Holidays

The words “holiday” and “celebration” mean different things to different people. For purposes of defining our holiday practices at PIC, we define “holiday activities” in the following way: Holiday activities can be as simple as a group discussion about a holiday after reading a book, or more elaborate as inviting a parent to come in to share the family’s cultural celebration.

We believe that holiday activities at school can serve the following goals and functions:

- to validate children’s and families’ holiday experiences and traditions at home;
- to expose children to different ways of celebrating the same holiday;
- to expose children to celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own;
- to foster respect for celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own;
- to build a sense of community, family and togetherness;
- to provide accurate information about holidays in a developmentally appropriate manner.

We take a low-key, community-based approach to the celebration of holidays, recognizing that families may or may not choose to celebrate various holidays in their homes. For various holidays, we focus on the value at the core of the holiday- community, peace, togetherness- and down-play any commercial aspects (for instance, Santa at Christmas or witches at Halloween). We want to take time to reexamine any holiday celebrations and make decisions that make sense for the entire PIC community. For example, we moved the celebration of Halloween to a celebration of fall and held our first Fall Family Festival.

We look at the winter holidays (Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanza) as an opportunity for children to learn about the holidays and traditions celebrated by others in their classroom community. We invite families to come to our classrooms and share something about their own holiday celebration or winter tradition i.e. sharing a favorite holiday book or cd, making a family favorite snack, creating a craft with the children, lighting the menorah, or

telling the story of Christmas or Hanukkah.

During other holidays such as Diwali, Easter, Rosh Hashanah, Passover, Ramadan, St Patrick's Day, Lunar New Year etc., teachers may choose to read a book about the holiday, but it does not make sense from an inclusiveness perspective to celebrate them as a community. At PIC, we have a very diverse community of families, and many of our families do not celebrate these traditional North American holidays. Similarly, we leave the celebration of Mother's Day and Father's Day to each individual household. We have children from alternative family structures that do not celebrate these days in their homes, and instead of encouraging the commercialized aspects of the holidays, we prefer to foster the children's engagement in our classroom studies.

We invite families to come to our classrooms and share something about their own holiday celebration or winter tradition (i.e. sharing a favorite holiday book or CD, making a family favorite snack, doing a craft with the children, lighting the menorah, or telling the story of Christmas or Hanukkah.) During other holidays such as Eid, Easter, Rosh Hashanah, Diwali, Passover, Ramadan, Lunar New Year, St Patrick's Day, etc., families may choose to share their traditions or teachers may choose to read a book about the holiday, but it does not make sense from an inclusiveness perspective to celebrate them as a community. **If you are interested in sharing your family's holiday or cultural traditions with your child's classroom, please speak with the teachers to arrange how to best make this happen while we are still navigating COVID protocols (ie. a shortened visit or an outside visit.)**

Both children and teachers honor every group represented in the classroom. This respect does not require that every holiday of every group must be celebrated; otherwise, classrooms would be celebrating holidays all the time. It does require, however, that when classrooms do acknowledge holidays, none should be treated as though they are unusual. Children should recognize that everyone's holidays are culturally significant and meaningful.

If you are not comfortable with your child's participation in any PIC activity, please discuss this with your child's teacher.

Birthdays

Perhaps there is no day more exciting than your very own birthday! We appreciate the celebration of birthdays as landmark events. We ask that you discuss your child's birthday observance with the classroom staff, respect classroom routines, and keep things simple.

We ask that families NOT send hats, balloons, candy or party favors for birthday celebrations. We also ask that special or costumed personalities are not brought in for a birthday celebration, as they often frighten small children. Birthdays will always be special occasions for our children, but a simple and low-key celebration in a loving and caring setting will be best for all the children.

We ask that you not distribute invitations to home parties at the Center unless your plans include all the children in the classroom. Hurt feelings happen among even very young children and can easily be avoided.

We also know that some families do not celebrate birthdays for religious, cultural, or personal reasons. Speak with the classroom teacher so that plans can be made to best accommodate this.

Some families like to observe our tradition of giving the classroom a book in celebration of a birthday. This tradition promotes the importance of reading and sharing while helping to build the classroom library. The celebration can then focus on sharing and reading the birthday book. Teachers can make suggestions about appropriate books for the classroom

Environmental Stewardship

At PIC, we want to be good stewards of the Earth and want to teach our children to do the same.

Children learn to love and care for the Earth through sustainable and green practices center-wide at PIC. This starts with developing an appreciation of nature. We are so fortunate to be located in an urban neighborhood in West Philadelphia and located on a beautiful green campus with the opportunity to grow a variety of trees, plants, flowers, and vegetables. We strive to create opportunities to educate children and families about green and eco-healthy practices.

Along with our children's garden in the *Magic Circle* nature playground, PIC also has native plant beds tucked away for the After School Center, a butterfly garden facing our neighbor, the [Penn Alexander School](#), and numerous small garden beds for planting flowers or herbs. On the Tot Lot playground planters bring nature to the children's level.

Every classroom and common area has a blue recycling bin. We recycle mixed paper, cardboard and plastic. No food debris is discarded in blue recycling bins.

Many of our classrooms have a strong commitment to recycling and "less-trash" lunches. Children gather leftover vegetable scraps from lunches for our compost and worm bins, which produce castings to enrich soil in the gardens.

From time to time, classrooms may initiate a recycling drive to collect non-recyclable, post-consumer waste, such as toothpaste tubes, diaper packages, and dried markers. The classrooms help *to turn trash into useful objects!*

Through partnerships with our property management company [Jones Lang LaSalle](#) and PIC vendor W.B. Mason, we have held shredding and electronic recycling events at PIC and maintain a printer cartridge recycling program. At those times, families and staff can contribute items from home, while PIC works to responsibly handle materials used for business.

We have created a **PIC Loose Parts Room** on the 2nd floor of the Spruce building. In this room are collections of various items that are either recycled, upcycled or natural materials. Teachers use items in their classrooms as either "loose parts" in the various learning centers or as materials for use in the art center. We welcome families to collect items to place in the various containers in the Recycleteria. Items of specific interest that we invite families to bring in: *ribbons, yarn, baby food jars, styrofoam or cardboard meat trays, wooden spools or spindles, old cd's, corks, wood scraps, paper towel rolls,, seashells, pine cones, pieces of bark, interesting rocks, plastic and metal jar and bottle caps, and jewelry boxes with lids. Basically if it looks interesting to you, it is probably interesting to our children.*

We ask that families do not leave cars idling while dropping off or picking up children. Even if someone is waiting in the car while a second person goes into PIC to drop off or pick up their child(ren,) idling vehicles are a great environmental concern.

English Language Learners

We have many children and families in our PIC community who speak languages other than English and at any given point we typically have approximately 25 different languages spoken by PIC families and staff. When children are immersed in a classroom culture with language that they do not speak or hear at home, they are immersed in English-language learning. It is our priority to support the development and retention of children's home language whenever possible.

We welcome families to share their home languages in many different ways in the classroom, from reading or sharing stories to providing written examples of the home language.

Families who need any PIC documents translated into their home language should notify Communications Manager Rachel Isaacson at risaacson@parentinfantcenter.org to discuss translation.

Television

At PIC, we support the philosophy that children learn best through active exploration of their environment. This knowledge, coupled with the understanding that television, as a rule, is not an interactive medium, is the foundation for the policy that *we do not provide open television viewing for children*. A wide variety of other opportunities and activities are available for children when they need quiet or restful time.

Teaching Children about Physical and Sexual Development

The children in the Early Learning Program will grow and experience many physical changes during their time at PIC. We recognize and respect family members as the primary source of education in a child's life. Children also need adults to be accurate and honest about sexual development issues. The information that children receive should be factual and developmentally appropriate. If the discussion involves judgments of a moral nature, teachers are careful to provide an unbiased response and support children in addressing these questions with their families. We use correct names for all of the body parts and functions so that children receive accurate information. Teachers also explain differences between private and public behavior, appropriate touches such as back rubs as rest time and inappropriate touches. Teachers help children establish personal physical boundaries and teach them that it's ok to say "no" to touch.

At certain ages it is developmentally appropriate for children to explore sexuality, sexual development, and differences through touch, observation, and play. Teachers respond to these situations in a respectful, open and non-shaming manner. This may include answering children's questions, redirecting behavior, bringing in resources such as books and visitors, and confirming personal choice and boundaries. Teachers, Program Coordinators, or the Executive Director are available to answer questions families may have and give further information. When appropriate, families are notified of these discussions and explorations.

Outdoors at PIC

Outdoor Play

At PIC, we strongly believe in the value of outdoor play and schedule it as an integral part of our day. We believe that our outdoor environment is an extension of our classrooms. The outdoors supports children's physical movement, sensory stimulation and allows them an opportunity for fresh air. Children are growing, moving, multi-sensory individuals that need to experience the sense of freedom playing outdoors can bring. When our children are outdoors, they are able to run, shout, sing, jump, roll, stretch, kick and throw. They are able to connect with the community, learn about nature and develop a sense of respect and appreciation for the natural environment. These experiences are invaluable for children.

Outdoor Play Supervision

Teachers are alert outdoors at all times and position themselves in locations where all children can be observed. Teachers frequently count children, when moving in and out of the classroom, in and out of the building and frequently while outside.

Weather Permitting

Weather permitting, children go outdoors daily. The American Academy of Pediatrics has published findings that children incur less illness when they are allotted time to play outside in the fresh air. PIC follows the PA Position Statement based on the AAP's findings. "Children are expected to go outside when **the forecast temperature/wind chill are above 25 degrees, the forecast temperature/heat index is less than 90 degrees and**

there is no current air quality alert at the orange level or greater, as reported by the Air Quality Index.” It is understood that given these parameters, there may be portions of some days that do not meet the conditions of weather permitting.

Outdoor Clothing

There is a saying that “There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing” and we adhere to this at PIC. Children go outside in all kinds of weather and need to come to PIC with weather appropriate clothing. This means appropriate outerwear that includes hats, gloves and snow pants in cold weather. We ask that a pair of rubber boots stays on site for each child.

Magic Circle Nature Playground

PIC’s nature playground Initiative was a multi-year project to renovate our main playground to include areas where children can build with outdoor blocks and branches and logs, perform on an outdoor stage, jump on tree stumps, contemplate the complexities of nature as they draw or paint, play in the large sandbox and dig to the dirt. Children also love our large climbing structure and the wonderful wooden boats.

We are very proud that our nature playground is one of the first of its kind that is located in an urban neighborhood in the United States. It is designated as an outdoor certified classroom by [Nature Explore](#).

Excursions

One of the many wonderful things about PIC’s location is that there are so many interesting places nearby that provide exciting adventures for young children. All groups and classrooms are encouraged to take advantage of the library, fire station, various ethnic stores and restaurants, the bio-pond, Woodland Cemetery, Clark Park and the University of Pennsylvania and University of the Sciences in Philadelphia campuses. The PIC community plays a large part in our curriculum and these destinations may be part of your curriculum planning or simply spur-of-the-moment adventure.

The destination is not always the emphasis of the outing. The actual journey can offer an abundance of interesting and exciting experiences for young children. Outings provide children with a chance to form perceptions of the world, become acquainted with different types of people and activities, and to begin to piece together an understanding of how the world operates and their relationship to it.

Outings around PIC and the surrounding neighborhood should occur regularly, weather permitting. To be sure that children and staff are safe the following policies are followed when taking children off the PIC grounds:

- A “trip bag” is carried on all excursions, even if it’s just a walk around the block! The bag includes first-aid supplies and emergency release forms for all children.
- Administrators must always know where a classroom is walking to and the approximate time of return. One staff member always takes their cell phone in case of an emergency.
- There must always be at least two staff members with the children. Appropriate child-staff ratios should be kept at all times.
- When walking, the group always follows pedestrian safety precautions at all times (cross at crosswalks, all children holding hands.)
- Frequent head counts are taken to ensure that all children remain with the group.
- If the trip with preschool-age children involves any kind of transportation, staff will inform parents ahead of time about the destination, method of transportation, expected departure and return times.
- Children wear name tags if going to a museum or other cultural institution. PIC’s name and phone number are on the tags, NOT the child’s name.

Classroom Management/Discipline Policy

Overview

At PIC, all children are treated with dignity and respect. Discipline is considered an opportunity to foster and support the development of self-control and to allow the child to assume responsibility for his or her own actions. Discipline measures are appropriate, positive and encouraging, and are not punitive in nature.

Children in our program are never allowed to hurt themselves or others. Young children do not yet understand that hitting hurts or that they should be “nice” or “polite.” They do understand that hitting, grabbing toys, throwing objects other than balls, and biting are not allowed.

Teachers use many strategies to guiding children’s behavior, including:

- Planning ahead to prevent problems.
- Establishing clear and consistent rules with the children.
- Redirecting children by diverting their attention.
- Encouraging and reinforcing appropriate behaviors by praising, supporting and coaching.
- Offering limited choices (i.e. *Do you want me to help you with your coat or do you want to do it yourself?*)
- Using motivation and humor (i.e. *Where does your coat go?* rather than *Hang up your coat.*)
- Preparing children in advance for what will happen next.
- Guiding children to resolve conflicts by sharing feelings, using words, and developing a plan of action.
- Speaking clearly and firmly in a modulated voice.
- Role-playing and practicing acceptable behavior.
- Modeling self-control and respect.
- Using eye contact, body language and facial expressions to express concern.
- Allowing for logical and natural consequences of behaviors.
- Not expecting young children to behave like adults, or even older children.

The Trouble with “I’m Sorry”

Often, adults are tempted to have children say, “I’m sorry” as a way of resolving a conflict or problem. However, young children’s experiences with regret are often more related to not having gotten the toy that they wanted than remorse for their actions. Very young children are still learning about cause and effect. Although adults may feel better hearing children say, “I’m sorry,” helping children find alternative things to do or say in expressing angry feelings is a more effective way of developing a conscience.

You also help to build their consciousness by setting firm and consistent rules. The ultimate goal is self-discipline/self-regulation. PIC teachers are skilled at mirroring and reflecting children’s emotions, drawing attention to the effect of their actions, and encouraging the child to ask, “How can I help you feel better?,” all excellent ways to help children move toward self-discipline.

Assessment of Children

Assessment at PIC

In the Early Learning Program, we believe that it is critical that the assessments we use with children are closely related to our philosophy and our curriculum. We use a “continuum” approach to curriculum planning, and likewise, a “continuum” approach to assessment. Both our curriculum continuum and our assessment continuum are based upon The Creative Curriculum (Dodge, et al, *Teaching Strategies*, 2002.) We understand that children do not master a particular skill all at once. There is a sequence of steps to expect as children progress toward reaching developmental milestones.

Why?

Assessments help us gather information about a child's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health, physical development and self-help skills. In some instances, it may provide us with important information about additional resources, developmental screenings and/or referrals for diagnostic assessments a child may need. We use this information to identify children's interests and needs, to set goals for individual children, to describe the developmental progress and learning of each child, to guide curriculum, to adapt teaching practices, to make adjustments to the environment, and to help with planning program improvements.

How?

Teachers are constantly assessing and evaluating the children in their classrooms as they observe and document each child's play, behaviors, and interactions to assess their progress. Informal methods of assessment include observations, checklists, and collections of children's work. Activities and achievements are often documented with photos.

More formal assessments are conducted three times per year, around **October 15, February 15, and May 15**. The Early Learning Program uses Teaching Strategies GOLD (published by Creative Curriculum, Inc.) for these formal assessments. Children are assessed in their classroom groups and occasionally one-on-one with a teacher in the classroom. After these assessments are completed, **family conferences are offered three times per year and are scheduled times to discuss the developmental progress of each child and next steps at home and school to support the child's growth.**

Uses - The results of assessment are used: a) to adopt and improve the curriculum, specific teaching approaches and practices, strategies to meet the individual needs of the children, and to provide the optimal learning environment and b) to inform overall program development and improvement, and c) to arrange for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment for a child when indicated.

Ages and Stages Assessment

Families are the best source of information about their children. Upon enrollment, we ask that families complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and a Child Profile at the beginning of each year. These assessments ask detailed questions about their child's growth and development, interests, strengths, challenges, etc. This information helps classroom teachers get to know and understand each child better.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (3rd edition) is a set of questionnaires designed to be completed by parents or other primary caregivers for children between 2 months and 5 ½ years of age. There are 21 different questionnaires for different ages of children, and they contain 30 developmental items relating to the areas of communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social. The appropriate questionnaire is included with enrollment paperwork sent out by the Enrollment Coordinator for all new children enrolling at PIC. The original copy is given to the Lead Teacher as one of several documents and a copy is maintained in the child's file in the Enrollment office. The teaching team reviews the questionnaire for their information.

Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment Tool

Teaching Strategies GOLD is an authentic, ongoing observational system for assessing children from birth through kindergarten and is the assessment tool that we use at PIC. This assessment tool helps teachers to observe children in the context of everyday experiences, which is an effective way to learn what they know and can do. Teaching Strategies GOLD is based on 38 objectives for development and learning that include predictors of

school success and are based on school readiness standards. Results of the assessments are shared with families during family conferences.

Supporting all Children: Inclusion, Suspension and Release Policies

Inclusion Philosophy

PIC welcomes all children and is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early learning and experiences that support the full access and participation of each and every child. We believe that each child is unique and we strive to meet the needs of each child and family we serve. We work in partnership with families and other professionals involved with the children to provide the support every child needs to reach their full potential.

PIC is deeply committed to developing the whole child within each classroom community. Each child's unique needs are considered during their time with our program, and a team approach is used in order to determine the best learning environment that will meet the individual needs of each child. In early childhood, developmental and behavioral challenges are a part of life for some children.

Inclusion Practices

Teachers at PIC use developmentally appropriate practices and consider the unique needs of all children when planning curriculum and environment. Teachers will make every attempt to make adaptations or modifications necessary to meet the needs of the children. Schedules, routines and activities are flexible and teachers will work to every degree possible with families, therapists, special educators and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications and strategies into classroom routines and activities. All accommodations suggested for any individual child need to align with our program philosophy and must be able to be managed within the context of the classroom structure as the teachers meet the needs of all children in the classroom. Any adaptations will be reviewed with families and other professionals supporting the child. Child development and best practice to support children with challenges are areas that are constantly evolving. At PIC, we strive to be the best at what we do. We know that it is vital to creating vibrant and responsive classrooms that best meet the needs of all our children.

Responsiveness to Children with Special Needs

The term "special needs" covers a wide range of issues, including disabilities, emotional vulnerabilities, developmental delays, and physical or motor limitations. Children with special needs also include children who are notably ahead in one or more areas and who require additional stimulation and challenge. We design our curriculum to be responsive to the special needs of children currently enrolled in the program, as well as be ready to meet the needs of children who may enroll in the future.

Our curriculum considers the needs of **all** children by:

- Emphasizing acceptance and respect for all.
- Supporting independence.
- Promoting a caring atmosphere.
- Being flexible and responsive to the needs of all children.
- Taking a proactive approach in addressing developmental or medical challenges that children may exhibit in an early childhood setting.
- Changing as children develop and grow.
- Recognizing that curiosity about disabilities is natural.
- Promoting simple, honest communication about differences.

At PIC, we continue to make changes and adjustments in how we respond to children with challenges as we keep

pace with new regulations, criteria and best practices in the field.

Goals of Inclusion at PIC

- To prepare children to enter school ready to learn.
- To address developmental concerns and to ensure the least restrictive and appropriate environment for children to thrive.
- To provide strategies for families and teachers to differentiate classroom practices.
- To retain children who demonstrate challenging behaviors.
- To support children who present challenging behavior or delays but who do not qualify for services.
- To work with each family in responding to developmental concerns in children who are “at risk” to mitigate any chances of later school failure.
- To provide resources to families who may not be aware of the educational rights of their child. This includes publicly funded services, private providers and/or developmental pediatricians.
- To provide guidance and support to families as they navigate the early intervention system.

Enrollment Procedures

Children of all abilities are accepted into PIC. All families interested in having their child attend the program will be given an equal opportunity for admission. A waiting list is maintained, and children will be accepted from the list on a first come first served basis, as openings arise in age groups that align with the ages and the schedules of the children on the waitlist. Sibling priority is always given to currently enrolled families. For our state funded PreK Counts program, children are given placements based upon predetermined risk factors that include family income and language.

All families interested in PIC enrollment for their child(ren) complete an Application, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and a Child and Family Profile. These forms give us detailed information about each child. Interested families of children who will be three years of age by September 1, also schedule a 30-minute classroom visit with their child. The child (or small group of children) are observed during this visit (typically by the Enrollment Coordinator or by lead teachers). A Preschool Visit Form is completed for each child after the classroom visit. If a child is currently receiving early intervention services, we ask that families provide the IEP/IFSP plan to the Enrollment Coordinator. PIC may request an evaluation of the child from their current teacher if they are currently enrolled in another program.

Family Centered Practices

PIC acknowledges and respects that positive relationships with families requires that we are culturally and linguistically responsive to the children and the families that we serve. Families are encouraged and supported to collaborate with our teachers to ensure that each child has an opportunity for optimal success. PIC communicates regularly with each family and has regular meetings to discuss the child’s growth and challenges.

If a child is evaluated, we ask families to share with us the results of the evaluation. Sometimes, a family will share the results of the evaluation (or the IEP or IFSP). Other times, the Program Coordinator or the Enrollment Coordinator will need to contact the family to best support the child during his or her school experience.

Supporting Teachers

We make every reasonable effort to ensure that support is provided to teachers so that they are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the developmental and educational needs of children. Whenever possible, staff receive an orientation on inclusion policies and attend training focused on effective inclusion and/or other disability topics. The Program Coordinators will provide additional support and resources as appropriate and feasible.

Outside Evaluations for Children and Families

We understand the importance of outside evaluations for some children. These evaluations provide both families and PIC with additional information to best meet the needs of the child, and may occur through private therapists or publicly-funded programs. For children birth through 3, Childlink provides free evaluations and services for those children who qualify. Their intake line is 215-731-2110. Elwyn SEEDS is the provider for children ages 3-5. Their intake line is 215-222-8054.

PIC will fully support the evaluation process. This may include teachers completing questionnaires, or classrooms hosting observers so that a support professional can observe a child in the school environment.

If a child is evaluated by a specialist or the Intermediate Unit, we ask families to share with us the results of the evaluation. This information can be helpful in developing strategies for supporting the child at school and can create greater continuity between home and school. Such evaluations can be shared upon entry to PIC, when the family receives the information, or in the context of a Child Support Team to allow for conversations about the best ways to support the child's growth and development.

IFSPs and IEPs

Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs, for children birth through age 3) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs, for children age 3 to 5) are plans for children who have been determined to be eligible for special education services. Children who need extra support are 1) those for whom screening evidence indicates apparent difficulties with speech and language, motor development, sensory-motor integration, or serious emotional problems, 2) those for whom screening indicates physical impairments such as blindness, deafness, or conditions requiring a wheelchair, or 3) those who have diagnosed with autism, cerebral palsy, or other conditions that require special care or program modification. The IFSP and IEP plans are developed by teams made up of the classroom teachers, family members, and often a professional from another agency such as the Philadelphia County Intermediate Unit. Both plans are governed by federal laws pertaining to the education of individuals with disabilities.

An IFSP is a plan for young children that details the child's strengths and areas that require attention. The team writes goals and objectives to address areas in which a child needs added supports at school and at home. Meetings take place regularly to evaluate progress. IEPs are written for children's transition to formal schooling.

The results of any evaluation (or IEP or IFSP) are confidential and are not shared with anyone other than the classroom staff who are directly working with the child.

We welcome therapists and support professionals to work in the classroom with children to meet any goals in the IFSP or IEP. Research has shown that incorporating such intervention into the classroom (as opposed to sessions outside the classroom) can be the most effective means of support. Young children do not typically perceive these services as strange or different, rather, the child and their peers love having another adult to play games and tell stories.

Early Intervention

Many children with special needs and/or challenges are supported by developmental and educational professionals such as therapists, teachers and others. In many of our classrooms, children receive Early Intervention (EI) services through Childlink (birth to three years old) or Elwyn (three to five years old). These organizations provide free therapeutic support services to children who have developmental Services that range from weekly speech or physical therapy to "special instruction" designed to support a child's social and academic skills. These outside support professionals are welcomed guests in our classrooms (who often bring fun games to share!) We work closely with them to assure the child's success. The support professionals are encouraged to

provide services to the child in the context of the early childhood classroom environment. When a child is receiving additional services and an additional adult is present in the room, the teachers will introduce the additional person as another helper in the classroom. The child's teacher and the EI professionals work collaboratively to determine the best strategies to support the child in the group setting. The final goal of collaborating with all outside professionals is to meet a child's individual needs so that the child can safely and successfully participate in the classroom setting.

The results of any evaluation (or IEP or IFSP) are confidential and are not shared with anyone other than those who are directly working with the child (classroom teachers and program coordinators).

Child Support Teams

Children and families may need additional support for any number of reasons. If a parent has a concern, he or she may reach out to the teacher to schedule a conversation. Likewise, a teacher may request to meet to discuss classroom observations about a child's behavior or needs. Sometimes the teacher or family may feel the need for more focus on the child, and may request a Child Support Team be convened. Child Support Teams consist of parents or guardians, teachers, the Program Coordinator, and may include outside support professionals as applicable. The goal is to increase support and communication around children about whom teachers or families have concerns. At the Child Support Team meeting, strategies for home and school are developed as well as any agreed upon follow-up with outside supports. Outside supports may include accessing the publicly-funded services through the Intermediate Unit or private evaluations and support services. Child Support Teams can meet as often as necessary.

Termination of Services When No Resolution Can Be Found

Given we have full cooperation and collaboration with families, PIC strives to meet the needs of all children in our care. However, there may be times when PIC cannot meet a child's needs and/or the parent has acted in a manner that does not align with our stated policies and protocols. The Executive Director holds the right to make the final determination that a child (and/or family) might be better served in another environment.

The majority of children who are determined to have special needs during their early childhood years benefit from being included in a regular early education program and with (and sometimes without) additional support, can continue to be successful in a regular elementary school setting. However, some children do benefit from classrooms where there are fewer children, specially designed environments and special services. Each child's unique needs will be considered during their time with our program, and a team approach will be used on an on-going basis to determine the best situation for each child. *It is critical that we have the full cooperation and collaboration with families as we strive to meet the needs of all children in our care.*

When a child's behavior in a classroom poses a risk to themselves, other children and/or adults, and after all recommended strategies have been implemented, the parents are required to meet with an administrator, the classroom teachers and other support team members, within one week of being contacted by PIC to schedule a meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to clearly outline the concerns, to gain insights from the parents and support team members and to discuss additional strategies to help the child remain in the classroom setting. Other recommendations may be requested that the family needs to agree to act upon (i.e applying for wrap-around services, meeting with an additional specialist such as a developmental pediatrician, or following through with an evaluation by the Intermediate Unit.) Occasionally, we may require that the family limit the number of hours that their child is in care at PIC if it is deemed that the child cannot self-regulate throughout the day and the team is unable to provide a safe environment for all of the children.

It is a very rare (but possible) event that we determine that our program is not able to meet a child's needs with reasonable accommodations or that the program is not providing a successful experience to help the child enter Kindergarten ready to learn. At that point, we may determine that a child can no longer remain in our care. We will make every effort to assist the family in finding an appropriate program and to give two weeks notice in order for the family to do so. If the child's behaviors provide direct threats to the health and safety of themselves or others, the decision may be made to immediately end enrollment. **PIC holds the final right for the Executive Director to make this decision.**

PIC in the Community

PIC in the Neighborhood

PIC considers involvement in its West Philadelphia community to be an important part of its role. We have chosen to be in a diverse community because we want our children and their families to experience the richness that such an environment offers.

For the children, this means frequent walks around the neighborhood to the nearby shops, ethnic groceries, firehouse, or playgrounds. The children like to visit the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, where they can see their grown up friends and climb on outdoor sculptures or visit museums. The Biological Research Pond at Penn is also a favorite site for exploration.

Community Advocacy

Our Board and staff are always interested in exploring other ways we can support parents in our community by working with them to find solutions to parenting problems. We believe in advocating for quality, affordable child care for all families who need it. We encourage parents to participate in the local, state and federal electoral and legislative processes, including lobbying policy makers to improve the quality and accessibility of child care. We think that in the long term, the best solutions to the child care needs of families lie in partnerships between government, employers, and families. If you are not a registered voter, you may pick up a registration form at PIC.

PIC as an Educational Resource

The Center serves as a practicum and research site for high school and university students in a variety of fields. We host several student teachers from area colleges each year. Anthropology students observe the development of language skills; psychology students test the development of cognitive skills; nursing and medical students learn about child development. High school students gain experiences that will help them explore career options. Students may also be fulfilling professional internships or practicums.

Requests for observations or research are always cleared with the administrative team. If a project involves working with specific children outside their regular classroom activity, families will receive a letter describing the research and asking for written permission to have their children participate.

Family Involvement at PIC

Our Board and staff are committed to the idea that the best child care involves the entire family. In a variety of ways, every member of each child's family is drawn into the Center's activities.

Family-Teacher Interactions

Regular communication between families and teachers is an important element of our partnership. Each classroom posts the schedules of its teachers and the schedule for the day on a bulletin board outside the room. You will also find posted lesson plans. Teachers of infant/young toddlers provide daily information about feedings, naps and diapering. Teachers of older children send regular emails that include information about

classroom activities and adventures.

Please let us know about important events in your child's life—a visit from relatives, a special outing, teething or sleeping problems, or times of unusual stress such as a family death or divorce. This information will help us be more responsive to your child's needs.

There is a classroom phone so you can easily contact your child's teachers for a quick message (215-222-5480.) It's best to schedule a time to call during nap time, from about 1:30 to 3pm. Sometimes there is time to exchange news at the beginning and end of the day if the children do not need the teacher's attention.

We recognize the importance of our work with parents of very young children, often new parents, and often first out-of-home care experiences. Thus, we hope our teachers share their experiences in working with children and offer a shoulder to lean on or a sympathetic ear when it comes to parenting, child rearing or just dealing with the everyday life stresses. We hope that parents and teachers can work as a cooperative team on every issue.

The quality of care for your child will be influenced by the quality of our communication with you. Receiving accurate, frequent information about your expectations, needs, and feelings about your child's care enables us to do our job more effectively. In general, teachers communicate with parents in brief informal conversations at drop-off and pick-up times, during telephone conversations, at conferences, and through written communications.

If you have a specific concern regarding your child or your classroom, please email your child's teacher.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Teachers schedule a conference with families within the first month a child is in a new classroom. This is a chance to talk about how your child is adjusting to the group and ask questions of one another. Teachers perform developmental assessments three times a year. You will receive written copies of these assessments and an invitation to meet with the teacher about assessments.

At private parent-teacher meetings, parents and staff can candidly discuss a child's development. We strongly recommend that all caregivers attend parent-teacher conferences. Many times parents find these discussions helpful in answering their own questions about subjects such as toilet learning, bedtimes, or limit setting. It's helpful if you have thought ahead about questions you have for the teachers.

In the fall, the teachers will schedule a classroom parents' meeting and potluck supper to discuss plans and answer questions. This is an excellent time for parents to talk about ways you can get involved in your child's classroom.

Board of Directors

PIC is managed by a Board of Directors made up of family and community representatives. The Board hires and supervises the Executive Director and works closely with her to make program and policy decisions, develop and oversee the budget, and organize fundraising efforts. The Board and its committees provide a direct opportunity for families to influence the program of the Center. Those who are interested in serving on the Board or committees are encouraged to attend meetings and to make us aware of their interest. We want to have a Board that represents all of our programs, reflects the diversity of our families, and has the skills needed to run a good business. The Board of Directors is elected annually by the PIC membership, and an annual Director's Report is sent electronically to all PIC members.

Program Evaluation

Each year, PIC families are asked to evaluate our program through an electronic Family Feedback Survey. The survey responses are reviewed by the Executive Director and by a small committee of board members. The results of the survey are shared with our full board and our staff. The survey allows us to update and adjust our program based upon the information we receive.

Family Life Activities

PIC has a Room Parent network, charged with sustaining center-wide connections in order to strengthen the PIC community and promote the best possible experiences for children and families.

Parenting is tough work and we all benefit from having others to talk with about the challenges and joys of raising children. Throughout the year, staff and parents plan social activities to encourage parents and children to get to know one another. These events may happen in the classrooms, center-wide, or in the community.

Parent Participation Program (PPP)

Active parent participation is one thing that sets PIC apart from most other child care programs, and it's one of the features we consider very special about PIC. Parent participation contributes to a greater sense of community among our families, benefits our children, and builds a sense of ownership of the Center and its programs.

While we continue to be following COVID-related protocols, we are not tracking parent participation hours. While parent participation opportunities continue to be diminished, we continue to seek out ways that we can foster community among families and staff. Please keep an eye out for these opportunities.

Fundraising

We believe that maintaining socio-economically diverse enrollment benefits everyone at PIC, and that all children deserve the same quality start in life. We enroll families who receive public subsidy and who are enrolled in the PA's PreK Counts program. There is a significant gap between the true cost of care for a child at PIC and the reimbursement rate provided by these public programs. We depend on contributions and our fundraising events to help sustain our diverse enrollment by reducing this funding gap and to support an in-house tuition assistance program for families who earn too much to qualify for government programs. Fundraising campaigns help support capital improvements and special projects are generally funded by grants.

We count on the participation of all PIC families to assure the success of our annual fundraising events. ***ArtStart*** is our fall silent auction and dinner event, and ***Day of Play*** is our spring event that includes a community gathering of activities and play on our nature playground, and entertainment for children. Parent committees provide critical support in planning these events and volunteers lend hands-on help at each fundraiser. Being part of a planning committee or volunteering on the day of our events is a wonderful opportunity to meet other parents and make connections within our community.

Grants

We support many capital and program innovations by applying for grants. We appreciate parents sharing information about funding opportunities. We are also grateful when parents volunteer to help with grant writing. This is a great way to invest your special skills at PIC.

Donations and Contributions

PIC is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization and contributions are tax deductible. *Gifts are always welcome.*

PIC is eligible to receive funds through the United Way Donor Choice plan and the Penn's Way Campaign. Our

number is **02671**. We hope that you will consider designating PIC in your employer's next workplace giving campaign.

Each year, PIC conducts an annual campaign to friends and alumni of the center to raise funds for operations, special projects and tuition assistance.

PIC participates in Pennsylvania's Pre-K Tax Credit Program. Instead of paying taxes directly to the Commonwealth, a business may instead support PIC through this program.

When children graduate from the Center, some families choose to **donate a portion of their tuition deposits** as a contribution to our tuition assistance program – a thoughtful farewell gesture that is always appreciated. You will receive a letter about your escrow deposit at the end of your enrollment.

Center-wide Communications

Photo and Video Policy

We often take photographs or videos for community information and organizational, educational and publicity purposes. Collected media may be used to better communicate with families, our staff and other early childhood educators, to illustrate the daily curriculum, to chronicle a child's development, or to document center activities.

Images may appear in (but are not limited to) e-mails or e-newsletters, professional presentations, printed publications, PIC website, social media platforms, and local media. Children are never identified in these images. All external media requests are done at the approval of the Executive Director.

All families will be asked to sign a Media Release Form that grants PIC permission to use photos and videos for the purposes stated above.

Newsletters

A weekly electronic newsletter, *PIC Monday Mail* includes news of classroom activities, announcements of upcoming events, public policy updates, and other information. We publish a semi-annual mailed newsletter for the broader community to current and alumni families, PIC friends and supporters, business and professional contacts, legislators and policy makers. The spring newsletter includes our annual report.

Website

PIC's website, parentinfantcenter.org, contains a copy of this handbook, information about the Center and its programs, events, staff and Board member profiles, and phone and e-mail contacts. There is a "PIC Families" section of our website where families can pay tuition online, learn about PIC closings, and access forms and resources.

Facebook

We invite you to visit PIC's facebook page (facebook.com/parentinfantcenter) and "like" us for center updates, interesting articles, and general happenings around the Center and community!

E-mail

In addition to weekly e-newsletters, PIC maintains an e-mail list for general announcements and queries to parents. Every classroom has an email listserv used by teachers for classroom e-newsletters, important information, and reminders, by Room Parents for new family welcomes and special announcements.

In signing our PIC Agreement, all parents and guardians acknowledge that any email list(s) used by PIC is proprietary and is intended for the use by PIC to conduct center business. Parents and guardians agree that they will not use PIC's email list(s) for personal use unless the Center consents in advance. Like all communication within PIC, the expectation is that email content will be productive, respectful and appropriate at all times.

We value the quality of communications between parents and staff, and we believe that face-to-face communications are best when discussing important issues concerning your child. E-mail may not be used to report a child's absence, in lieu of medication consent forms, or for any activity requiring your signature.

Classroom Communication

All PIC teachers and staff have PIC email addresses and all classrooms have telephones. Teachers will communicate with their families about the best way to reach them.

Teachers take many photos and/or videos that may appear in the classroom, on bulletin boards outside the classrooms, in professional development materials, in e-mails or e-newsletters written by teachers and shared with classroom families.

Tadpoles

All of our classrooms also use the Tadpoles application for daily communication. All infant and toddler families will receive a daily report by email. You can also choose to download the Tadpoles Family app to your mobile device to get the daily updates.

Translation

We typically translate our Family Handbook into the most frequent languages spoken at PIC. Families who need any other PIC documents translated into their home language should notify Communications Manager Rachel Isaacson at risaacson@parentinfantcenter.org to discuss translation.

Health Policies

Handwashing

In addition to regular check-ups and immunizations, good nutrition and plenty of rest, we know that handwashing is the best protection against the spread of germs. Teachers and children wash hands before and after meals, and nose wiping, and at other appropriate times.

Exclusion of Sick Children

While we are still in the midst of the COVID pandemic, the following policies regarding the exclusion and return of sick children continue to change. Please refer to the [COVID GUIDELINES 2022-2023](#) and follow those guidelines for exclusion and quarantine issues around COVID during this time.

Young children have frequent colds and other illnesses. Classroom staff, in consultation with the Program Coordinators, must consider whether a child's symptoms require him/her to be sent home. If so, we will call you to pick up your child. *Please arrive within an hour.* This decision is made considering the health and comfort of the individual child and the routine requirements and needs of the other children in the group, as well as the state regulations for child care programs.

Children who are brought to the Center while ill present several problems in the classroom:

- Your child will not get well as quickly as she or he will in a more isolated, quiet, home environment.
- There is an increased chance of other children and the staff getting sick.

- Staff giving extra attention to sick children cannot give adequate attention to other children in the classroom.

Please be considerate of your child's needs as well as those of the rest of the children in the classroom and the staff by having a plan in place for those occasions when your child may not come to the Center or will have to be taken home in the middle of the day.

Our policies have been developed in consultation with pediatricians and the available literature on illness in early childhood settings. We ask you to carefully review the following criteria to determine whether your child is well enough to attend the Center. Temporary exclusion is recommended when the child has any of the following:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities;
- The illness results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children;
- A severely ill appearance - this could include lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash;
- Fever (temperature above 101°F [38.3°C] by any method) *with* a behavior change in infants older than 2 months of age. For infants younger than 2 months of age, a fever (above 100.4°F [38°C] by any method) with or without a behavior change or other signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea) requires exclusion and immediate medical attention;
- Diarrhea is defined by stools that are more frequent or less formed than usual for that child and not associated with changes in diet. Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet-trained children if the diarrhea is causing "accidents". In addition, diapered children with diarrhea should be excluded if the stool frequency exceeds two stools above normal for that child during the time in the program day, because this may cause too much work for the caregivers/teachers, or those whose stool contains blood or mucus. Readmission after diarrhea can occur when diapered children have their stool contained by the diaper (even if the stools remain loose) and when toilet-trained children are not having "accidents" and when stool frequency is no more than 2 stools above normal for that child during the time in the program day;
- Mouth cold sores are infectious in beginning stages, particularly in children who cannot control their secretions (drooling). Your child must stay home until the sores are dried.
- **Illnesses requiring a doctor's note for readmission include, but are not limited to: hepatitis, scabies, ringworm, pinworms, scarlet fever, strep throat, or treatment for exposure to shigella, salmonella or E. coli bacteria.**

Please inform your child's teacher as soon as your child becomes ill at home from any cause. We can alert other parents to be alert to similar symptoms and take appropriate preventive measures. It is important that you also let us know if your child ever needs hospitalization.

Returning After an Illness

Your child may return to the Center once his or her condition has improved and he or she is able to participate in normal activities. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to PIC.

Please note, nearly every day our activities include outdoor play. Children well enough to be at the Center are expected to be well enough to go outside. We generally don't have enough staff to be able to have a caregiver inside with one child while the others are outdoors. If your child's medical needs require an exception to this rule, we will require a letter from the pediatrician specifying the circumstances under which a child is to be kept indoors.

Conditions/symptoms that do not require exclusion

Many common childhood illnesses do not require exclusion from daycare settings. Research has shown that the most effective means of preventing the spread of illness is *not* exclusion, but rather good hygiene. These conditions include:

- Common colds, runny noses (regardless of color or consistency of nasal discharge)
- A cough not associated with fever, rapid or difficult breathing, wheezing or cyanosis (blueness of skin or mucous membranes)
- Pinkeye (bacterial conjunctivitis) indicated by pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye mucous drainage and matted eyelids after sleep. This may be thought of as a cold in the eye. Exclusion is no longer required for this condition. Health professionals may vary on whether or not to treat pinkeye with antibiotic drops. The role of antibiotics in treatment and preventing spread of conjunctivitis is unclear. Most children with pinkeye get better after 5 or 6 days without antibiotics. Parents/guardians should discuss care of this condition with their child's primary care provider, and follow the primary care provider's advice. Some primary care providers do not think it is necessary to examine the child if the discussion with the parents/guardians suggests that the condition is likely to be self-limited. If no treatment is provided, the child should be allowed to remain in care. If the child's eye is painful, a health care provider should examine the child.
- Watery, yellow or white discharge or crusting eye discharge without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness
- Yellow or white eye drainage that is not associated with pink or red conjunctiva (i.e., the whites of the eyes)
- Fever without any signs or symptoms of illness in children who are older than four months regardless of whether acetaminophen or ibuprofen was given. For this purpose, fever is defined as temperature above 101 degrees F (38.3 degrees C) by any method. These temperature readings do not require adjustment for the location where they are made. They are simply reported with the temperature and the location, as in "101 degrees in the armpit/axilla". Fever is an indication of the body's response to something, but is neither a disease nor a serious problem by itself. Body temperature can be elevated by overheating caused by overdressing or a hot environment, reactions to medications, and response to infection. If the child is behaving normally but has a fever, the child should be monitored, but does not need to be excluded for fever alone. For example, an infant with a fever after an immunization who is behaving normally does not require exclusion.
- Rash without fever and behavioral changes. Exception: call EMS (911) for rapidly spreading bruising or small blood spots under the skin.
- Lice or nits treatment may be delayed until the end of the day. As long as treatment is started before returning the next day, no exclusion is needed;
- Ringworm treatment may be delayed until the end of the day. As long as treatment is started before returning the next day, no exclusion is needed;
- Thrush (i.e., white spots or patches in the mouth or on the cheeks or gums);
- Fifth disease (slapped cheek disease, parvovirus B19) once the rash has appeared;
- Children with chronic infectious conditions that can be accommodated in the program according to the legal requirement of federal law in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The act requires that child care programs make reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, considering each child individually.

Medication at PIC

All medication (prescription and over-the-counter) administered at PIC follow these guidelines:

- "Permission to Administer Medication and Medication Log" form is completed by a licensed physician and a parent/guardian.

- Prescribed medication is provided in its original container with the prescription indicating the dose and frequency to be given.
- All medication must have the child's full name, name of medication, prescription date/date of expiration and name of prescriber.
- If the medication is being used to treat an ongoing special health need (like asthma or allergies), please complete a Care Plan for Children with Special Health Needs

“Permission to Administer Medication and Medication Logs” are available from classroom staff. All medicines will be placed in a locked container that is not accessible to children. Medicines must not be put into a child’s lunchbox or cubby. If medicine needs to be refrigerated, be sure to include that information on the form.

Diaper cream/ointment and/or bug spray must be provided by the family and will be applied as needed, with prior consent. We ask that sunscreen be applied before school. PIC does supply sunscreen that the teachers will reapply as needed.

Upon enrollment and when entering a new classroom, families are asked to complete a “Special Permission: Administration of Tylenol, Motrin or Generic Substitute.” This Special Permission applies ONLY to instances where the parent or guardian has been called to pick up a sick child. In this case, with your permission, the staff will give a dose of Tylenol, Motrin or GS to bring down fever while awaiting your arrival. A signed Special Permissions form, including the dosage needed, must be in your child’s permanent file. These forms are completed at enrollment and when a child moves up to a new age group.

Special Care Plan

When the parent or legal guardian informs PIC staff that the child has a special need (such as an allergy, asthma or other chronic conditions) or disability, a Care Plan for Children with Special Health Needs needs to be completed and signed by a parent and health care provider(s). In the case of asthma or allergies, you should complete an additional Action Plan detailing how and when additional interventions will take place. If your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), please provide a copy for your child’s file. You are encouraged to invite your child’s teacher to future IEP or IFSP meetings. We welcome therapists to PIC to work with individual children who need services.

Food Allergies

PIC is entirely peanut and tree nut free program.

If a child has a food allergy, please be sure the information is both documented in writing on our enrollment forms AND that you verbally inform your child’s teachers. Warnings will be posted inside and outside the child’s classroom.

Examinations and Immunizations

We require an **annual** medical examination of your child older than 2 years by his or her physician on our medical examination form. Children under 2 must have a health assessment **every 6 months**. We will remind you of this by providing you with a new form when the old one is about to expire. We appreciate your assistance in making certain that your child receives regular examinations and all necessary immunizations. Because this is a licensing requirement, we may exclude children from the Center whose parents fail to return completed forms. If, for medical or religious reasons, your child is not immunized, you must complete an exemption form to attach to the health form. These can be obtained from your pediatrician.

In the event that a child is underimmunized (has not received the recommended number or types of vaccine for his or her age according to the national and local immunization schedules,) and a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the program, the family of the underimmunized child will be asked to promptly pick the child and not

return until the vaccine preventable disease has run its course.

Mandated Reporting

All individuals working with young children are required by law to report any suspected child abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse or maltreatment. All suspected situations of any of these instances will be reported to PA ChildLine. PIC will cooperate fully with the appropriate agency's investigation and will conduct an internal investigation to determine the appropriate response from the program.

Abuse Allegations Against a PIC Staff Member

In the event of an allegation of abuse against a PIC staff member, the following protocol will be followed:

- The person making the allegation will be asked to write down all of the details of the alleged incident and indicate the names of any adults or children who were witness to the incident.
- Executive Director and the immediate supervisor of the employee will meet with the employee to review his or her account of the incident. The employee will also be asked to write down his or her account of the incident.
- Parents of the child involved will be notified and informed about the process for handling such allegations.
- Executive Director will immediately inform the Board and the Department of Human Services in writing of allegations and the staff member's response to the allegations. PIC will follow the subsequent direction of the legal authorities.

Emergency Medical Attention

In case of a medical emergency, we will contact 911 and take your child to the Emergency Room at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 34th and Civic Center Blvd. We will call you immediately, and you can meet us at the hospital to authorize treatment.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP YOUR HOME, BUSINESS, AND EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS CURRENT AT OUR OFFICE.

Safety and Security

Staff: Child Ratios

Licensing regulations require that we meet certain standards for adult to child ratios. These ratios are among the most important factors in the safety of all children and in program quality. PIC tries to exceed these regulations when possible.

	PA Licensing Regulation	NAEYC Standard	PIC Practice	PIC Nap Ratio (Meets or exceeds licensing requirements)
Infant	1:4	1:4	1:3	1:4
Toddler	1:6	1:6	1:4	1:12
Preschool	1:10	1:10	1:7	1:20
School-Age	1:12	1:15	1:10	N/A

Supervision of Children

At PIC, active supervision of all children at all times is taken very seriously. All classrooms follow the principles of active supervision at all times:

- **Set up the Environment**
 - Teachers set up the classroom environments so they can supervise children and be accessible at all times.
 - Small spaces are kept clutter-free and big spaces are set up so that children have clear play spaces that teachers can observe.
- **Positioning**
 - Teachers carefully plan where they will position themselves in the environment to prevent children from harm. They make sure there are always clear paths to where children are playing, sleeping, and eating so they can react quickly when necessary.
- **Scan and Count**
 - Teachers are always able to account for the children in their care. They continually scan the entire environment to know where every child is and what they are doing.
- **Listen**
 - Specific sounds or the absence of them may signify reason for concern. Teachers listen closely to children to immediately identify signs of potential danger.
- **Anticipate Children's Behavior**
 - Teachers use what they know about each child's individual interests and skills to predict what s/he will do. They recognize when children might wander, get upset, or take a dangerous risk.
- **Engage and Reflect**
 - Teachers use what they know about each child's individual needs and development to offer support. They wait until children are unable to problem solve on their own to get involved. They may offer different levels of assistance or redirection depending on each individual child's needs.

Specific Safety and Security Measures in Place at PIC

Early Learning Buildings (Spruce and Sweet Buildings)

- Exterior doors are kept locked at all times and families are issued electronic fobs to gain entrance.
- Cameras are at each entrance door and on the entrance walkway and nature playground. The cameras are monitored by administrators all day.
- Locks have been installed on all classroom doors and each room can be locked from the inside.
- Pull down shades have been installed on all interior and exterior windows, as well as the windows on classroom entrance doors to reduce visibility if needed.
- All classrooms have phones to call an administrator if needed.
- All classrooms are connected to our central phone system and are used as speakers if needed.
- We have an outdoor alarm bell in the playground to alert teachers of any emergency.
- All the stairwells have had improved lighting installed.
- Exterior lighting has been recently upgraded.

School age Buildings (Stucco and Aviary)

- The Stucco building is kept locked at all times.
- The north side of the building is equipped with an electronic fob entrance.
- Pull down shades have been installed on all the windows in the Stucco building to reduce visibility if needed.
- There are phones in both buildings to call out as needed.
- Exterior lighting has been upgraded.

The Aviary building that houses the 1st-4th graders in our school age program presents specific challenges that we are currently working to overcome. We are currently receiving estimates that would allow the doors to remain locked and have the same electronic access system that we have in the other buildings. We are also currently investigating if an installed camera system can be hooked up to the current camera system on the other buildings.

We have separate procedures for fire, emergency shelter, shelter-in-place and active intruder. All new staff are given information about these procedures. Fire drills are practiced monthly, while other drills are reviewed and practiced regularly with staff.

How parents and caregivers can help with safety and security

- Siblings may never be left unattended while another child is being dropped-off or picked-up. This includes leaving siblings unaccompanied in a hallway (even directly outside of the other child's classroom,) or on the blacktop or playground. Once a parent arrives to drop-off or pick-up a child, the other child(ren) accompanying the parent or caregiver must be with both children at all times.
- When siblings come into a classroom, we ask parents and caregivers to closely monitor the behavior of the child coming into the room that they are not enrolled in. Furniture and equipment in the younger rooms are not made to withstand the play of older children. Likewise, the equipment and supplies in the classrooms with older children is not always suitable or safe for younger children.
- All PIC entrance/exit doors are kept locked and are monitored by security cameras. Not all administrators monitoring the doors will recognize all of the children and families entering. All families in the Early Learning Program are issued a key fob so that they can enter without waiting or the bell to be answered. If you do not have your key fob and you need to ring the bell for entrance, please let the person who answers know who you are and whom you are arriving with or picking up. If arriving with your child and needing to ring the bell, it is not enough for your child to say his or her name, as not all administrators responding to the bell know the names of all children. Be certain to close the door securely behind you.
- **Tailgating:** Do not hold the entrance/exit doors for people you do not know (we call this "tailgating,") If the person does not have a child with them.
- **Drop-off time:** All children must be brought into the classroom or onto the playground by a parent or another responsible adult. Please be sure that a staff member knows that your child has arrived and that you have signed in.
- **Pick-up time:** When you pick up your child at the end of the day, be sure to notify one of the regular staff that you are signing out and taking your child home.
- **Change of escort:** Please notify the teachers ahead of time when there is someone new who will pick up your child, and make sure that person is added to your Emergency Contact form. Any pick-up person not known to the staff will be asked to show identification.
- **Contact information:** You are responsible for reporting any change in address, email, phone numbers, or changes in employment to the Enrollment Coordinator. Remember to keep the information for your Emergency Contacts up to date (verified every 6 months). It is essential that we know where and how to reach you at all times.
- If you wish to ask another PIC parent to pick up your child(ren), please call those parents ahead of time to make that request. It is not appropriate to ask classroom staff to negotiate those plans for your family. Also, please be sure that the parent is listed on your consent for pick-up form, and inform the classroom staff of the change.

Key Fobs

There is a \$50 fee to have the key fob replaced and it must be returned for the full return of your deposit. See the Facilities Manager for a key fob.

Parking

Parking a car at PIC is challenging! There is no parking allowed on PIC property. Between the hours of 8 and 10 am, and then again from 4 to 6 pm, the parking spaces halfway down the blocks on both 42nd and Locust Streets are designated as 20-minute loading zones. At other times, those spaces are available for parking for an extended period. Many parents find the loading zones to be convenient for drop-off and pick-up. If you expect to spend more than 20 minutes dropping off or picking up your child, you'll avoid being fined by the Philadelphia Parking Authority if you park in one of the 2-hour parking spaces on our neighboring blocks. Spaces adjacent to the Penn Alexander School are designated "no parking" areas between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:30 pm on school days.

Please do not park in the "driveway" at the corner of 42nd and Locust – this is a No Stopping Zone. Emergency vehicles need to have access to the driveway in the event of an emergency, and thus it is illegal to park there.

Strollers, Scooters, Bikes

Some children come to PIC by stroller or scooter. Please park strollers/scooters on the ground floor of the Spruce Building or the Sweet Building, or in one of the stroller storage areas. The stroller storage areas are located in the Small Gym, the area next to the Wild Things room on the ground floor of the Spruce Building (entering across from the Penn Alexander School) or the 1st floor of the Sweet Building (next to the Doodlebugs room.) All of these spaces are tight and we ask that you fold your stroller so that there will be room for others.

If you or your child rides a bike to PIC, we ask that these be parked and locked at the bike rack on the playground. Stroller areas are not designed to accommodate bicycles. PIC is not responsible for loss or theft of bicycles.

Facility Rentals

With COVID-related restrictions still in place, we are not renting the Small Gym space at this time. We will reserve our Nature Playground for events. We will open the bathroom closest to the blacktop for use during the event. We do require the presence of a PIC staff member during the event. The only fee charged at this time is for paying the PIC staff member. Please contact Operations Manager Julie Wesenberg at jwesenberg@parentinfantcenter.org for additional information.

Air Quality

Adequate ventilation, humidity and temperature control promote physical well-being. Teachers take the children outside daily for fresh air except in extreme weather conditions. Windows are opened for ventilation. All classrooms are supplied with an air condition system for temperature control, and maintenance requests are submitted if there are issues. All air quality systems are maintained in accordance with national standards.

Prohibited Substances

The following substances and objects are prohibited anywhere on the grounds of PIC or in vehicles used by the program to transport children.

- Tobacco and electronic cigarette products (not permitted within 15 feet of any of the PIC entrances)
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Guns or any weapons

Sanitation Standards

The Department of Human Services completes an annual certification for compliance with disinfection standards. PIC contracts with a cleaning service that sanitizes the facility on a daily basis. We follow NAEYC standards for ongoing scheduled cleaning of classroom equipment, furniture, and supplies. Teachers follow standards for reducing the spread of infectious diseases and store any hazardous materials in a locked cabinet.

Safe Outdoor Play

PIC follows weather watch alerts to determine safe temperatures and weather conditions for outdoor play. Since we encourage classrooms to go outside daily except in extreme conditions, we do ask families to provide weather appropriate clothing, including but not limited to rain boots, layered clothing for cold weather, snowsuits, snow boots, hats gloves, sun hats, swimsuits, swim diapers, and water shoes.

ADDENDUM

Pre K Counts Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Attendance is recorded daily on the class attendance sheet in the classroom by family members. We strongly encourage families to get to PIC no later than 8:30am. The teachers check the sheets for accuracy daily, and weekly enter the information onto the individual attendance records. The individual attendance records are then entered into the School District's database(s) by the Enrollment Coordinator or assistant.

Regular attendance is important for children to maintain steady progress and to enjoy the benefits of a high quality early education experience. If a child is ill or unable to attend school, the family should call to let the teachers know. If a child is routinely late or has unexcused absences, the teacher will reach out to the family to see what kind of support they need for regular attendance. If the issue continues, the Preschool Program Coordinator will also be in touch with the family to offer problem solving strategies. As a last resort, the school district liaison will contact the family to advise them of their responsibilities for attendance as part of the Pre-K Counts program. This plan is detailed in the Family Handbook Pre-K Counts Addendum.

Enrollment in the Pre-K Counts Program will be jeopardized with 10 or more consecutive absences or more than 18 days absent per school year. Accountability measures:

- After 3 absences: Teacher will verbally remind parents about the importance of daily attendance.
- After 5 absences: Teacher will meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the reason for absences and strategies to be utilized to avoid absences in the future.
- After 10 absences: Educational Coordinator will confer with the parent regarding excessive absences and develop a plan of action to ensure daily school attendance.
- After 15 absences: Parent receives written notification that continued absences will result in child's removal from the class list.
- At 18 absences: In consultation with the program director, the child is placed back on the waiting list, and the slot will be filled by the next child on the waitlist.

The only exception is an extended recurring medical situation. Unfortunately, extended vacations/holidays from school count as absences.

If the child is a Pre-K Counts student, we do not accept regularly scheduled early dismissals during instructional time. The entire amount of time allocated for the slot is supposed to be fully utilized by the recipient.

Snacks and Lunch

Healthy snacks and lunch are provided daily, with milk and water offered at each meal. All children in the Pre K Counts are automatically enrolled in the PIC lunch program, with meals provided by Smart Lunches.

For children participating in the PIC lunch program, we are not allowed to serve outside food. This means that we have to ask families not to send additional food from home. If the family chooses, they may opt out of the lunch program *completely* and bring their own lunches. To opt out, the family should provide documentation regarding the reason for refraining from participation, even if it is personal preference.

Paperwork

The general expectations around child observations/assessments and curriculum planning and documentation are the same as for all classrooms at PIC. Additional assessments and documentation may be required by the School District, and will be reviewed prior to the beginning of each school year. For instance, the School District is

currently tracking the Student Learning Objectives (SLO) around letter and sound recognition for children who are 4 by September 1.

Professional Development

All lead teachers must be PA certified in Early Childhood Education. Teachers with Level 1 Certification have six years to convert their certificate to Level 2. This requires:

- successful completion of the Induction Trainings with the School District
- the CORE series of three professional development trainings
- completion of six teaching observations with the School District
- 24 credits of post-baccalaureate coursework

Support from the School District

The Philadelphia School District is our liaison to the PKC Program. They provide several layers of support to the PKC Program at PIC. The **Instructional Specialist** visits each classroom several times each year providing support to the teachers on curriculum and children. The **Early Childhood Education Field Administrator** visits the center periodically to provide program support and conduct observations. Other supports that are available as needed include a School District Nurse, a Special Education Specialist, a Mental Health Specialist, a Nutrition Specialist, and a Family Engagement Specialist. A representative from PIC, usually the Executive Director attends monthly meetings with the School District to stay up-to-date on all matters related to the PKC program.