



# Early Childhood Education Centers

FAMILY HANDBOOK



# Locations and Hours of Operation

## DES PLAINES CAMPUS

Ages 2 - 5 years

### FULL-DAY PROGRAM

#### Late August - Late May

Monday - Friday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

#### Summer: June - Early August (Closed on Friday)

Monday - Thursday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

## SKOKIE CAMPUS

Ages 3 - 5 years

### FULL-DAY PROGRAM

#### Late August - Late May

Monday - Friday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

#### Summer: June - Early August (Closed on Friday)

Monday - Thursday 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

### PART-DAY PROGRAM

#### Fall and Spring

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

#### Summer: June - Early August (Closed on Friday)

Monday - Wednesday 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

(Two- or four-day option available!)

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# Our Mission

The Early Childhood Education Centers of Oakton Community College are committed to providing high quality care and education for children, working in partnership with families, and offering excellent teacher preparation experiences for students in the academic program.

## WELCOME TO OUR PROGRAM

Our Centers are open to all children and families, and they offer many unique benefits. As part of the College's academic program in Early Childhood Education, the Centers reflect current trends in curriculum design, implementation, and assessment.

The Des Plaines campus provides a full-day program for children from two through five years of age. The Skokie campus provides both part- and full-day programs for children three through five years of age. Both programs are licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

### For Children

In addition to our spacious well-designed classrooms and outdoor environments, our curriculum reaches into the campus at large. Each campus has unique characteristics that provide an extension of the classroom.

### For Families

We welcome families to participate in our active, all-inclusive family groups that convene regularly to plan events, coordinate fundraisers, and offer support in a variety of ways. Throughout the year, we also provide opportunities to enhance parenting and family life. Your feedback about our program is important, and is used to strengthen our services to you and your children. As a part of an ongoing program evaluation process, and to meet accreditation requirements, parents are asked to complete a family survey each spring. Survey results form the basis for appropriate policy revision and professional development activities that, in turn, help us maintain focus on our program mission. Being part of Oakton's community also offers adult family members the opportunity to take a wide variety of college-level courses throughout the year.

# Program Philosophy

## **WE BELIEVE THAT:**

**Play is the medium through which learning occurs.** Children construct knowledge, develop creativity and self-expression, build healthy self-esteem, and engage in meaningful relationships with others outside of family life during episodes of play.

**Qualified teachers are the core of the experience for children.** Our highly qualified teachers understand that once trust is established, children are eager to benefit from a wide range of classroom experiences. Their goal is to support children as they work toward building their skills and abilities in all areas of development.

**The environment is the second teacher.** Classroom and outdoor materials and equipment are chosen with very specific goals in mind. The environment promotes positive experiences and mastery of skills, as well as opportunities for appropriate challenges.

**Supporting diversity and resisting bias are essential values.** We strive to build confidence and skills for sensitive social interaction. We encourage an appreciation for the differences among all people.

**Home and school work together in partnership.** You are an expert on your child. We are knowledgeable professionals. Together these resources provide the most beneficial and individualized experience for you and your child. Our goal is to work together with families in the best interest of the child.

## Curriculum

Curriculum for our program is based on our understanding of how domains of development, curricular areas, the environment, and assessment of learning outcomes are woven into meaningful events, activities, and interactions in the classroom.

Teachers listen actively as children question concepts and strive to master ideas and information. Classroom activities address children's interests, challenge their emerging skills, and lead to their deeper understanding of the world around them.

### **PHILOSOPHY OF CURRICULUM**

Children progress in skill and concept development when they participate in constructing the classroom curriculum. Activities planned and provided by the teachers emerge from the children's interests and address developmentally appropriate skills and challenges. The classroom curriculum promotes cultural competence and reinforces anti-bias principles. The Illinois Early Learning Standards, Work Sampling Illinois, and Ounce Scale are used as references for developing and achieving curricular goals that are meaningful and appropriate.

## **CURRICULAR GOALS**

### **Domains of Development**

#### **1. Social-Emotional Development**

The child's sense of self and identity are critical to healthy development in all other domains. We believe this is the most important aspect of development and the key to learning and success in school.

- self-esteem
- self-confidence
- awareness of cultural family identity
- growing sense of independence and interdependence
- group membership
- self-control
- expression of personal identity and creativity
- social competence
- healthy management and expression of emotions

#### **2. Cognitive Development**

Involves a number of skills and abilities that enable children to explore their emerging interests and learn about the world around them.

- familiarity with concepts about the physical world, people, how things
- work and relationships among all kinds of things
- knowledge about the physical world (how objects behave)
- active exploration of questions
- persistence in solving problems
- critical thinking
- reasoning abilities

#### **3. Language Development**

Involves a variety of skills in listening, speaking, and writing that enable children to receive and express ideas and perspectives.

- listening skills
- oral expression
- receptive and expressive language
- pre-literacy skills, including an appreciation of story, beginning sight
- vocabulary, beginning print skills, and early writing ability
- awareness of other languages and forms of communication

#### **4. Physical Development**

Involves skills in both the large and small muscles of the body, and includes how children take in and process information coming through the physical senses.

- growing control over the body
- balance and agility
- self-regulation
- use of simple tools and technology devices
- understanding of health, nutrition, and physical and emotional well-being
- positive physical self-image

## **CURRICULAR AREAS**

### **1. Drama**

Activities that encourage children's fantasy play, imagination, role-play, and dramatic representation of everyday experiences or a favorite character or story.

- creative self-expression
- imagination, symbolic representation
- appreciation of story
- appreciation of drama and performance

### **2. Art**

Involves a number of ways to encourage children's experimentation with many different kinds of media and materials, and to build concepts around color, texture, spatial relationships, line, pattern, and construction.

- creative self-expression
- imagination
- arts appreciation
- perspective-taking
- self-confidence and risk-taking
- familiarity with change and differences

### **3. Language Arts**

Activities and interactions that allow children to build their communication and early literacy skills.

- phonological awareness
- listening skills
- oral expression
- early literacy skills
- appreciation of story

### **4. Music/Movement**

Activities that engage children in many different experiences listening to music, making music, and moving one's body creatively and expressively.

- appreciation for many kinds of music
- creative self-expression
- understanding of simple rhythm instruments
- understanding of simple musical concepts such as rhythm, beat, softness, loudness, high, low

### **5. Math**

Activities that encourage children's general understanding of logic and how people, things, and events can be put into relationships.

- matching and one-to-one correspondence
- sorting
- comparing
- classifying
- spatial relationships
- size
- sequence and order
- patterns
- number
- time
- measurement
- use of simple tools, measuring devices and technology devices

## 6. Science

Activities that support children's growing understanding of the physical world, the environment, and living things.

- properties of objects
- basic observation and communication skills
- physical knowledge (how objects move or change)
- the scientific process: testing hypotheses, making predictions, drawing conclusions
- use simple tools, measuring devices and technology devices

## 7. Social Studies

Activities and interactions that encourage children's greater understanding of self and others and skills in interacting productively with many different peers and adults.

- positive, knowledgeable self-concept
- understanding of cultural identity
- appreciation for differences in how people live, play, and work
- understanding of one's local community
- growing awareness of other languages and forms of communication
- critical thinking about bias, unfairness, and stereotyping\*
- ability to stand up for oneself or others in the face of bias or unfairness\*

\*Source: Derman-Sparks, et al. *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*. NAEYC, 1988.

# Assessment of Development and Learning

The Work Sampling Illinois assessment system, combined with the Illinois State Early Learning Standards, are used to provide important information about your child's development and progress. The Ounce Scale is used with children under three years of age. The assessment procedures that we use are consistent with our program's philosophy and assist the teachers in achieving our curriculum goals.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE/DEFINITION OF ASSESSMENT?

Assessment is a process that provides teachers with information that helps them evaluate children's development and learning, including their skills, knowledge, and behaviors. Assessment also allows teachers to better understand the wide range of children and families who attend our program.

Teachers receive specialized training in the assessment process, which involves collecting information about children as well as evaluating the overall effectiveness of our program in meeting its goals. In addition, it allows teachers to incorporate the information into planning the curriculum and evaluating the classroom environment. The assessment process provides a framework for communicating the findings to families and other people who are involved in the education of young children.

## HOW/WHY DO WE ASSESS CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING?

Assessment begins at the first meeting with the child and his or her family. This informal screening uses observations to inform teachers about the children. Over time they come to know each child's interests, skills, and needs. This leads to a more thorough assessment of the child's development and learning.



We base this process on two assessment tools: the Ounce Scale and Work Sampling Illinois. They are observation-based and cover birth to 5 years. Both use multiple approaches in collecting information as well as structured methods for obtaining documentation of accomplishments and learning over time. These tools also provide families with the ability to be part of the assessment process.

We also incorporate the newest information on assessment and child development into our work. Throughout the time a child is enrolled in our program, teachers meet with one another and with families to review progress and set goals. Within the first three months, in both the part-day and full-day classrooms, a conference also will be scheduled. This first conference allows teachers and families to share insights about developmental information and set goals to review later in the school year. When necessary, a screening tool such as Ages and Stages may be used to clarify the information that has been obtained during this initial period. The second conference is then held within six months or sooner, if necessary, to evaluate progress towards achieving the goals previously set. Other conferences are planned at the discretion of either the family or the teacher.

### **WHAT INFORMATION DOES THE ASSESSMENT PROVIDE?**

Information obtained during the assessment process is shared with families and among teachers to:

- set developmentally appropriate goals for the child.
- plan curriculum that will continually promote the child's progress.
- integrate culturally relevant practices including the family's home language and values.
- evaluate the environment for necessary modifications.
- determine whether or not the program is meeting its goals.

Assessment ensures that children are on the "right track" to achieve their fullest potential. At times, the information obtained through the assessment process reveals that children could benefit from additional help or resources. When this occurs, the teachers will work closely with the family to better understand the specific needs and access appropriate resources or specialists. Families are the primary decision makers about any additional services for their children.

### **WHERE/HOW DO WE KEEP ALL THE ASSESSMENT INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL?**

All information about children in our program is considered confidential. Information is kept in two ways.

The children's files are in a locked cabinet in the Center's office which is only accessed by teachers and administrative program staff. These files contain the original enrollment forms completed by the family. Developmental checklists, documentation of contacts between teachers and families, conference summaries, and consent and/or release of information forms relating to referrals and obtaining additional information from outside agencies are also contained in separate, confidential files.

The children's portfolios are in the classrooms and may be accessed by teachers, families, college students, and children. The portfolios contain samples of children's work, written documentations, and photographs.

When necessary, college students may have access to limited confidential information. In this instance, the students are trained in the responsibility of maintaining the confidential nature of the information they receive. At no time will they be granted full access to confidential files.

Discussions among teaching staff and program administrators are conducted frequently and with respect to confidentiality. Sensitive information is shared with others who are responsible for the care of the children only when that information is necessary.

When children are no longer enrolled in our program, their file contents will remain in our possession. At no time, either during or after enrollment, will information be released unless specifically requested in writing by the family. Families will receive their child's portfolio upon withdrawal from school.

## Academic Students and Volunteers

The Early Childhood Education Centers are an integral component of Oakton's ECE academic program. The Centers serve as an excellent training ground, where students develop the skills necessary to become qualified teachers. Students from other disciplines also visit the Center for observations. All students are screened in accordance with DCFS licensing regulations prior to their participation in our program.

Volunteers of all ages, abilities, and interests are welcome to participate in our program. All classroom volunteers are screened in accordance with DCFS requirements and oriented on how to effectively contribute to our classrooms.

## Program Policies

### REGISTRATION AND ENROLLMENT

To secure a space in the classroom, families must submit a completed registration form and **non-refundable fees**. The program reserves the right to make enrollment decisions based on priority and classroom balance. Prior to a child's enrollment, the parent/guardian must complete an Enrollment Packet. This includes permission forms, medical information, a developmental, and several other required forms.

**Full-Day (*Des Plaines and Skokie campus*)** – Open enrollment all year per availability

**Part-Day (*Skokie campus only*)** – Open enrollment all year per availability. Currently-enrolled families given priority for re-enrollment. DCFS regulations state:

The Center shall: provide written notice to the parent/guardian of any child enrolled for the first time that within 30 days of enrollment a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and the age of the child is required. The Center shall make a duplicate copy and return the original certified copy no later than the next business day. If a certified copy of the birth certificate is not available, the parent/guardian must submit a passport, visa or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. The Center's notice to parent/guardian shall also indicate that the Center is required by law to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency if the parent/guardian fails to submit proof of the child's identity within the 30-day time frame.

## TUITION AND FEES

*See Family Agreement Form insert.*

### Tuition

**Part-day programs (Skokie campus only)** are based on about 17 weeks in the fall, 19 weeks in the spring, and 10 weeks in the summer.

**Full-day programs** are based on a 49-week year. No tuition is charged for the final week of the calendar year and for two weeks in August. All other weeks are full weeks.

Payment is required when children are absent due to illness or vacations.

### Billing

Tuition is due on the first day of each billing cycle. Tuition payment schedules are available on our Web page and at the time of enrollment. Statements include charges, payments, and balances due. All statements can be accessed online. Paper statements will be available upon request. Cash, check, and credit card payments are accepted at the Bookstore (Skokie only) and Cashier (DP only). Credit card payments can be accepted online.

### Billing Schedule

**Full-day Programs** - Every two weeks

**Part-day Programs** - Full year

Payment options for the part-time program include payment in full, payment per semester, or payment according to billing schedule on school calendar.

For both programs, past-due tuition balances will result in an additional five percent late fee.

### Discounts

**Students/Staff/Faculty** - five percent of tuition

**Second Child** - five percent of tuition for higher-rate child

### Financial Arrangements

Failure to meet the agreed-upon schedule of payments for two billing cycles may result in dis-enrollment at the Center. A child may be re-enrolled once financial arrangements are met on a consistent basis. All late fees (five percent of outstanding balance) and re-enrollment charges will apply. As per the Family Agreement Form, your financial commitment secures your child's participation in our programs. If financial issues arise and you are unable to meet your payment obligations, we encourage you to meet with the site coordinator immediately to set-up a written payment plan. Failure to pay child care tuition may result in sending your account to collections through the college.

### Withdrawal

A two-week written notice is required for consideration of a refund on a percentage of pre-paid tuition. Sorry, no other fees will be refunded.

### Late Pick Up

We ask that you demonstrate respect for your child and teacher by arriving on time. Please call the Center when you will be late. A late fee will be charged as follows: first occurrence: \$10; second occurrence: \$20; third occurrence: \$30, and so on. Chronic late pick-up may result in dis-enrollment.

## Field Trips, Class Photographs, and Other Functions

Fees vary and are not required. Participation is voluntary, but alternate on-site care may not be available.

## TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Teachers create an environment where families and children are given time to establish trust. Teachers work with families in a gradual process that considers the child's individual needs and developmental stages. During the first days of school, plan time for participating with your child in making this transition.

### Arrival

- Prompt arrival means your child will get the most out of his or her school experience.
- Arrival for full-day programs is between 7 and 9 a.m.
- Arrival for the part day program is based on the starting time of each session.
- Always make contact with a teacher.
- Sign your child in (*full-day programs only*).
- Assist your child in placing personal belongings in his or her cubby and washing his or her hands.
- Notify the Center if your child will be absent.

## TRANSITION TO HOME

Teachers will assist families and children in a smooth transition to home. Prompt arrival at pick-up time reassures your child and provides them with a sense of security. It is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to provide current and updated emergency contact information.

### Departure

We ask that the time separating with your child be a cell phone-free interaction. This allows you to be present with your child and make contact with the teachers. You are welcome to complete calls outside the classroom.

- Assist your child in retrieving personal belongings from his or her cubby and check mailboxes.
- Before leaving with your child, always make contact with a teacher.
- Sign your child out (*full- and part-day programs*).
- Children will be released to parents and legal guardians. Others that are identified in writing on the emergency card will require proper identification and picture ID (*minimum age 18*). The child will not be released to others unless written consent is provided by the parent or legal guardian.
- Call the Center if you are going to be late.
- Departure for the full-day program is no later than 6 p.m.
- Departure for the part-day program is based on the ending time of each session.
- If you are late in picking up your child, the Center will charge a fee (see Tuition and Fees).

## TRANSITION TO OTHER CLASSROOMS OR PROGRAMS

Planning for transitions is a way to help children prepare for and gain skills related to managing changes in their lives and daily routines. When children move between classrooms, programs, and/or leave our Centers to move on to new learning experiences, the teachers purposefully plan for these events.

- The first step is to begin discussing the change. A timeline is presented to the child in the form of a calendar, numbers to count down, or some other visual representation of the time remaining at the current placement.
- Visits to a new classroom at the current Center are scheduled and conducted in partnership with the child's current teacher. Over a period of a week or two, depending on the child's needs, the amount of time is increased until it feels quite natural for the transition to become permanent.
- Families are provided with a time to meet with the new classroom teacher to discuss any new routines or expectations, and to have their questions and concerns addressed.
- To assist in the transition to kindergarten or other early childhood programs, a resource manual containing information on local school districts and nearby programs is available to families.
- A kindergarten information night may be planned at each campus, according to the needs of the families, to provide information and resources.

### CHILDREN REMAINING AT SCHOOL PAST CLOSING

In accordance with DCFS regulations, specific guidelines must be followed when a child is not picked up by closing time:

- Attempts will be made to contact the parent/legal guardian at all phone numbers provided twice within the first 15 minutes.
- Persons listed as emergency contacts also will be called at all numbers provided twice within the second 15 minutes.
- If no one can be reached, Center staff will request for assistance from the Oakton Community College's Public Safety Department.
- This will result in contacting DCFS and local police authorities. A program representative will remain with the child on the premises until released to the proper authority.

### BEST INTEREST POLICY

To ensure the well-being of children, regardless of circumstances, teachers in the state of Illinois are required to act as **mandated reporters**. This means that, under any circumstances in which a teacher, staff member, or student has reason to suspect that a child may be at risk for physical, mental, or verbal abuse, or neglect of any kind, they have a legal obligation to report such concerns to DCFS and/or law enforcement officials. Staff members are bound by law to always act in the best interest of the child. Your cooperation with this mandate may be called upon in the event of questionable behavior on the part of any adult present in the Centers. Such behaviors may include but are not limited to the following:

- Impaired/ inebriated pick-up person
- Disregard of court orders
- Violent or aggressive actions
- Any unusual behavior, affect, or conduct

### RELATIONSHIPS

Early childhood programs can be measured by the quality of relationships among the staff, families, and children. Our goal is to work in partnership with families as their children experience all that our programs have to offer.

## MANAGING DIFFERENCES

Differences in philosophy, style, and/or communication methods may occur. Every effort is made to realize outcomes that benefit the child, and lead to better understanding among the adults. It is recommended that families discuss their differing positions with classroom teachers, and/or the site coordinator. If dissatisfaction remains, contact the Early Childhood Education program chair, Sheila Kerwin Maloney. The Family Involvement Committees at each Center are an additional resource for addressing policies, procedures, and program concerns. Contact information for committee group members can be found in newsletters, or by request to program staff.

## CHILD CARE OFF-CAMPUS

Our teachers are experienced professionals who provide high quality, confidential services to families. Standards of ethics in Early Childhood Education suggest that teachers, assistant teachers, substitute teachers, or any paid employee, should refrain from privately providing child care or “babysitting” for families currently enrolled. **We ask that you not seek out paid staff members for the purpose of providing child care in your home** or on the grounds of Oakton Community College. We appreciate your cooperation.

## CHILD GUIDANCE

Our program’s guidance and discipline policy is based on the belief that young children must experience trust and respect in order to build essential lifelong social and emotional skills. Teachers create a positive environment in which children learn the necessary skills to develop self-control, manage impulses, participate in satisfying social relationships, and develop communication and problem-solving skills. Techniques used to foster guidance include:

- Establishing clear, simple, and consistent rules
- Modeling appropriate behavior for children
- Assisting in interactions among children
- Fostering communication and negotiation skills in children

We recognize that no single technique works. On occasion, a child may need additional support to master social skills. Families may be asked to meet with staff to discuss ideas and consider various solutions. It may be necessary to recommend professional developmental assessments or alternative programs. We reserve the right to determine the appropriateness of our classroom environment for each child enrolled. On rare occasions discontinuing enrollment may be necessary. Examples of these occasions may include:

- Behavior that requires continual and persistent teacher intervention
- Threatening and aggressive acts toward others
- Chronic unsafe use of classroom and/or outdoor materials
- Needs that exceed program resources

## HEALTH

These policies are based on guidelines from the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Public Health. Administrative staff and teachers are certified in pediatric first aid and CPR/rescue breathing. A health service consultant is available at both campuses.

- **Hand washing is required of everyone when entering the classrooms.**
- A health form completed by your child’s physician is required for entry into the program. The physician visit must have occurred within six month prior to enrollment. This medical form is valid for two years.

- When children exhibit signs of illness at school, staff members complete a report and specific procedures are followed. *See the Illness Report and Policies section of this handbook.*
- Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school. *See the Illness Report and Policies section of this handbook.*
- Communicable illnesses must be reported so that all families can be alerted to the signs and symptoms. Confidentiality will be protected.
- Medications and non-medicated products will be administered according to specific policies and procedures. A consent form with detailed instructions must be completed prior to administering all medications and non-medicated products.
- Independent toileting is required for children attending the part-day program and the 3 to 5 year-old full-day programs. At the discretion of the program, accommodations will be made for children with special needs. Children in the full-day, 2-year-old classroom (Des Plaines only), are not expected to have mastered this skill. Teachers work closely with families regarding policies and procedures around toileting.
- Outdoor play is a daily activity throughout the year when temperatures range from 20 - 90 degrees Fahrenheit. We refer to the national weather guidelines when determining appropriate air quality and temperatures for outdoor activities.

## **NUTRITION**

Healthy, nutritious meals and snacks are an integral part of the curriculum. Full-day programs provide breakfast, lunch, and two snacks daily. Part-day programs (Skokie campus only) provide a daily snack.

- Meals and snacks are served modified family style. Children are encouraged to try a variety of foods, but will not be forced to consume any meal or snack.
- Menus follow federal and state dietary guidelines for children and are posted in each classroom. They are also available at any time by request.
- Children with food allergies or restrictions of any kind will be accommodated once a physician's authorization is provided. Forms are available that indicate specific needs and instructions.
- Nuts are prohibited at the Center at all times.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Many children will experience a special need of one kind or another at some point during their lives. Perhaps accommodations need to be made for a dietary restriction, developmental needs, or short-term plans made due to family circumstances. Regardless of the situation, it is the program's position that all children be welcomed and accommodated to the best of the Center's ability.

If your child has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), please provide a written copy of the plan to the Center in order to best facilitate meeting your child's social and educational goals. We work closely with other service providers and community agencies to promote continuity and consistency of services for the child. Our program accommodates appointments for therapies conducted at school. Our teachers attend meetings held by IEP or IFSP early intervention or district professionals to review progress and/or develop further plans for children. Every effort is made to include all children.

## WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

### Clothing

Label all items with your child's name using a permanent marking pen.

Clothing should be comfortable and practical for play. Smocks are provided. As outdoor play is a daily activity, appropriate outdoor clothing is necessary to protect your child's health and safety.

Children in the full-day program need an extra change of clothing kept at school. Children in the part-day program (Skokie campus only) should bring a change of clothing to school each day in a backpack.

Children in the 2-year-old classroom requiring diapers and wipes (Des Plaines campus only) will need a minimum one-week supply kept at school.

### Napping Items

Napping is a required routine in the full-day programs. A child cannot be restricted from napping, nor awakened prior to the end of their individual napping period. Children who no longer require a nap will rest quietly on their cots for a reasonable amount of time. We ask that all families send a child-sized pillow and blanket. These will be sent home weekly for laundering. A soft sleep toy may be brought from home.

DCFS licensing standards mandate provision of a daily rest period. Teachers create a warm environment that is conducive to sleep. Individual nap needs are met and children are assisted in resting and relaxation.

### Other Items from Home

Items that are pertinent to the classroom curriculum are always welcome. All other toys and items should remain at home. **Weapons or violence-based items will not be permitted in the classroom nor should they be brought to school.**

## Home/School Connections

Family involvement is at the core of our programs. We advocate working together in a spirit of partnership with families. This means we welcome your input, ask for your suggestions, and engage in problem-solving together. You are encouraged to share information that can be helpful to teachers in working with your child. Family members are always welcome in our classrooms.

### DAILY COMMUNICATION

Teachers encourage daily contact with families. Arrival and departure transitions are good for a quick chat about the day. Longer meetings or phone conversations can be scheduled with your child's teacher. Other forms of communication are newsletters, flyers, e-mails, and notes about Center activities. Families may visit at any time during the program's regular hours of operation.

### CONFERENCES

Conferences provide an opportunity to share information about your child's development, skills, and behavior. They also provide an arena to set goals, solve problems, and acknowledge success. Conferences are conducted twice yearly. Teachers will provide schedules for available days and times. Additional conferences can be scheduled if necessary.



## CELEBRATIONS

Celebrations and gatherings take place throughout the year. We promote simple, respectful, and age-appropriate celebrations. Your involvement provides an opportunity for everyone to share in the richness of diversity. To protect the health and safety of all children, gifts in the form of “goody bags” or trinkets/toys may not be distributed at the Center.

### Holidays

Holidays can be very important. Children often want to share the anticipation and excitement they feel about holiday celebrations. Families are invited to share aspects of their holidays with the children in the classroom. Meaningful, respectful, inclusive celebrations are the goal of our program. Consult with your child's teacher to make arrangements.

### Birthdays

Birthdays are important, too! Simple birthday celebrations are encouraged. **Consult with your child's teachers two weeks prior** to discuss dates, times, and appropriate treats. Commercially-produced, store-bought items transported in their original containers are required by licensing regulations. **Home-baked items cannot be served to the children. Food allergies and other food-related restrictions require careful selections of appropriate items. Teachers are resources in recommending appropriate foods.**

Birthday invitations for parties outside of school are the responsibility of the family. **Invitations may be distributed at school if all classmates are included.**

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Family representatives meet regularly to plan events, raise funds, and provide support to the Centers. All families are encouraged to become active members. Family Involvement Forms are included in your Enrollment Folder/Package.

Your feedback about our program is important, and is used to strengthen our services to you and your children. Families are encouraged to offer input on any and all aspects of the program throughout the year. Anonymous and/or confidential communication can be through a letter or by requesting the assistance of other parent representatives or program staff.

## RESOURCES

Our program site coordinators and teachers have access to information helpful to families. Our resource manuals contain information on health and safety, education and government agencies, and family programs and entertainment.

Translators are available in many languages to assist families where English may not be the primary language. Site coordinators and teachers are available to assist in locating and using these college resources.

## Parking

Convenient parking is available at each of our campuses. To comply with parking requirements, parking permits must be clearly displayed at all times and all parking rules obeyed. Campus and local law enforcement officers will ticket your vehicle if the rules are violated.

# Emergency Closings

The Early Childhood Education Centers follow the Oakton Community College calendar for most closed dates and holidays. You will be provided with a school-year calendar specifying the dates of Center closures.

In the event of a weather or disaster-related closing, families will be contacted immediately via a “calling chain”. For this reason, it’s important that your contact information be up-to-date.

The College Web site ([www.oakton.edu](http://www.oakton.edu)) and local radio stations will provide updated weather-related closing information when available. We encourage you to register with ALERT OAKTON by choosing *myoakton* on the home page of Oakton’s Web site. Follow the prompts to register.

## Radio stations:

WMAQ – AM 670

WLS – AM 890

WGN – AM 720

WBBM – AM 780

# Illness Report and Policies

**Any single symptom from this list requires that your child be picked up from school.**

- fever of 101 degrees or higher
- severe and persistent coughing
- two or more loose stools, or one diarrhea
- two episodes of vomiting with no other symptoms, or once with other symptoms
- skin rashes
- open mouth sores
- drainage from the eyes, ears, or open sores

**Any two or more symptoms from this list requires that your child be picked up from school.**

- fever of 100 degrees or higher
- cannot participate comfortably in routine activities
- requires continuous one-on-one care
- excessively drowsy or appears fatigued
- difficulty breathing
- unexplained loss of appetite
- flushed or pale appearance
- complaining of headache, stomachache, dizziness, or pain
- excessive yellow or green mucus discharge from nose, persistent sneezing

Children who become sick at school will be cared for in an isolated area until they are picked up by a parent/guardian, or an individual designated on their emergency card. Your child may return to school when he or she has been symptom-free for 24 hours. If your child returns to school with symptoms, a note from your child’s doctor indicating the diagnosis of the illness or symptoms, and clarification that the condition is non-contagious will be required. If the symptoms persist or become worse, your child may be sent home again. We understand that this policy may be inconvenient, but must be followed in accordance with DCFS licensing regulation, section 407.310 c. 2. **Any contagious illnesses must be reported to the Center immediately.** Plan to have an emergency illness plan in place at all times.



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