



Parent Handbook

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Director

The Great Plains Early Learning Center Parent Handbook is used to outline the program's expectations, policies, and procedures that all families must understand and comply with. You have received this handbook as a partner in your child's development at GPELC. After reviewing this document, the receipt form on the last page must be completed and returned to administration. This receipt states that you understand and will adhere to all expectations, policies, and procedures of this early learning center. This handbook will be updated from time to time, and the most up-to-date copy will be available to you. Thank you for being a part of the GPELC family!

Mission Statement

At GPELC, we believe each child has the potential to bring something unique and wonderful into the world. By having a respectful and caring bond with both the student and the family, we can create a strong foundation for a wonderful experience for our students. Through active exploration of the world around them, play, interaction with others, memorable experiences, and hands-on learning activities, our students' development and growth occur daily. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, exciting, and high-quality learning environment for all of our students. Our love for children is the driving force for starting the program. Committed to the families we serve, we strive to give parents the feeling that their child is in the care of the most loving, knowledgeable, and thoughtful caregivers. Children deserve to participate in experiences that will change their lives for the better, resulting in positive outcomes. GPELC strives to provide the environment to make this possible.

Our Values

At the Great Plains Early Learning Center, our vision is to foster a community where every child feels respected, valued, and loved. We are committed to creating an environment where children are encouraged to grow into the best version of themselves, developing to their fullest and greatest potential.

We recognize that every child is unique, and our program is designed to address the whole child, supporting education, healthy development, social and leisure opportunities, and identified medical needs, including nutritional support. By listening to and partnering with enrolled families, we are able to identify and meet additional needs, ensuring that each child is provided the tools, resources, and encouragement they need to thrive.

Our values consist of the following, but are not limited to:

Quality: We believe every child deserves excellence in early learning programs and services to make a difference in their lives and our community.

Inclusion: All students are included in our learning environment. We welcome all with open arms and love in our hearts. At GPELC, we believe each child has the potential to bring something unique and wonderful into the world.

Respect: Respect is essential in building relationships with our students and families that last a lifetime. Respect is a key component of our work as it helps to optimize the talents and diversity we bring into the program as partners in our students' growth and development.

Accountability: We pride ourselves on providing open communication with all partners. This allows us to be transparent, open, and honest with one another, and in turn, provides us with the best environment for our students at home and while in our care.

Teamwork: By having a respectful and caring bond with both the child and the family, we can create a strong foundation for a wonderful early childhood experience for our students. The combined action of the educators and the families working together provides an effective and efficient working relationship. By acting together as a team, we are working toward the best interests of our common cause, which is for our students!

Our Goals

GPELC goals provide us with a path to our desired outcomes for our students. These goals provide direction and motivation for the quality of care and education we provide.

1. To provide a wide variety of developmentally appropriate practices that children can learn and develop from.
2. To provide a flexible, calm, and nurturing environment where affection is given freely and from the heart.
3. Independence is encouraged, and expectations are clear for all students.
4. To meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of our students.
5. To provide an atmosphere of respect for self and one another.
6. To provide opportunities for cooperative play.
7. To create a happy, warm, and exciting environment that is inviting, comfortable, and manageable for the children.
8. To support a caring staff who show genuine respect, love, and encouragement for the children.
9. To offer children individual guidance based on careful observation of each child's needs and keeping with parent/guardian direction.
10. To ensure the safety and welfare of all children.

Our Program

The overarching goal of all experiences and activities at GPELC is that they are play-based and include both teacher-led and child-led choices. Our program provides children with a safe and supportive space to practice and expand their skills across all areas of development. At all times, while present at or involved in activities arranged by GPELC, children are under adequate supervision to ensure their safety, health, well-being, and development.

The program's activities support:

- Motor skill development
- Physical development
- Physical fitness
- Social development
- Intellectual development
- Literacy
- Speech and language development
- Creativity
- Emotional health
- Cognitive skills
- Safety issues
- Self-care
- Identity development
- Play

The program’s learning environment recognizes the following identified needs of the child:

- Cultural
- Spiritual
- Age
- Gender
- Developmental
- Physical
- Health
- Social

Developmentally Appropriate Activities

At GPELC, we provide our students with developmentally appropriate activities and curriculum based on Oklahoma state standards. NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, defines developmentally appropriate curriculum as follows: “methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful engaged learning.” Our weekly lesson

plans are developed with our students' interests in mind. We love to study themes that get them excited, interested, and to progress their natural cognitive development. We try our best to meet every child's individual cognitive and developmental level and to encourage and inspire them to continue to advance this growth.

Language Development

Our developmentally appropriate experiences and activities, such as book reading, signing, art activities, games and journaling, represent meaningful learning opportunities that incorporate early literacy concepts and handwriting. Language development skills are developed through exposure to letter-sound connections, combining those sounds into meaningful words, and putting words together into sentences to communicate our thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Our language activities foster your child's handwriting abilities, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and narrative skills.

Cognitive Development: Science and Math

Cognitive development is how children explore, think, create answers, and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, skills, and problem solving that help children think about and understand the world around them.

Math Math skills involve children learning the basic concepts of numbers, counting, sorting, building patterns, working with fractions, money skills, solving real world story problems, and so much more!

Science Science helps children develop an understanding of scientific concepts and develop inquiry skills. Scientific development in young children consists of children using their senses to observe, compare, measure, make predictions, classify, and construct hypotheses. Students are born natural scientists. Students are eager and curious to explore the world around them. At GPELC, our job is to nurture their scientific spirit and provide students with the opportunity to enhance their scientific exploration experiences in and out of the classroom.

Social-Emotional

Children's emotional well-being during their early years has a powerful impact on their social relationships. Emotionally healthy children can better establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and their friends. In our classrooms, children are learning to talk about their feelings and the feelings of others. We feel social-emotional development involves more than just expressing emotions. Social-emotional development involves the act of taking turns, learning to become independent, following routines, interactions with both verbal and nonverbal peers, controlling and managing emotions, and developing a positive and loving self-image. These skills are crucial for children's successful participation in all aspects of life, school, and home experiences, and their overall positive self-growth.

Physical Development: Fine and Gross Motor

Fine Motor Fine motor skills involve the movement of the smaller muscle groups in your child's hands, fingers, and wrists. While hand-eye coordination comes far more naturally to some, this is not true of all. Children must learn how to control muscle movement in their hands to obtain hand-eye coordination and more. There are specific ways we encourage fine motor use, such as having your child use scissors, color, play with Legos, draw pictures, and more. These skills can later become more advanced as your child decides to crochet, play the guitar, or type on the computer!

Gross Motor Gross motor skills involve movements of the large muscles of the arms, legs, and torso. Kids rely on gross motor skills for everyday activities at school, home, and in the community. By playing actively indoors and outdoors, each child develops muscle strength, endurance, agility, coordination, balance, and flexibility. They also build confidence and social skills.

Sensory Exploration

Sensory exploration is a child's way of examining, discovering, categorizing, and making sense of the world, and it is beneficial to provide them with opportunities for sensory play. Here at GPELC, the student participates in activities that allow them to explore different types of materials and enhance their senses, such as music and dance games, sensory bin exploration, and playing with a variety of materials that smell, feel and taste different!

Art, Music and Creative Expression

At GPELC, we encourage and provide opportunities for our students to explore creative expressions such as art, music, dancing, and drama. The creative arts engage children's minds, bodies, and senses and allow them to explore their imagination, sense of movement and rhythm, and their ability to express themselves through art. Teachers plan activities to introduce children to different kinds of art media, music, culture, and dance to encourage the student's development of creativity and imagination. Many opportunities are presented for exploration by playing with a variety of materials. The arts allow students to dive into different means of expressing themselves and having fun at the same time!

Employee Information

GPELC Required Documentation

Current contact information, including telephone numbers, is kept readily available at GPELC for the following:

- Parent/legal guardian and designated emergency backup contact
- All personnel, including substitute personnel
- Poison control center

- Fire department
- Police department
- Ambulance services
- Nearest health facility and/or identified physician
- Child abuse and neglect reporting agency

Additional Documentation

The program also maintains records of the following:

- Each child's daily attendance, including arrival and departure times
- Any issues or incidents that may arise during the child's stay
- Personnel attendance, including arrival and departure times
- Hours spent by personnel providing care

Staffing at GPELC

GPELC always provides enough staff for the capacity of each classroom. This means that the student-to-child ratio, set by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Child Care Licensing, is always followed. A detailed staffing plan is maintained and kept in the office.

What Makes Our Staff Special?

Our highly qualified staff can demonstrate the skill and competence necessary to contribute to each child's physical, intellectual, personal, emotional, and social development. Factors contributing to the attainment of this standard include:

- *Emotional maturity when working with children
- *Cooperation with the purposes and services of the program
- *Respect for children and adults
- *Flexibility, understanding, and patience
- *Physical and mental health that do not interfere with childcare responsibilities
- *Good personal hygiene
- *Frequent interaction with children
- *Listening skills, availability, and responsiveness to children
- *Sensitivity to children's socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and individual needs and capabilities
- *Use of positive discipline and guidance techniques
- *The ability to provide an environment where children can feel comfortable, relaxed, happy, and are involved in play, recreation, and other activities

GPELC has 2 Master Teachers on staff. Master Teacher is a designation given to highly qualified early childhood educators by OKDHS and the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD). These master teachers are available to assist any staff member with the creation and implementation of developmentally appropriate lesson plans and classroom management.

Staff Positions

GPELC has the following employees on staff to ensure proper supervision and developmentally appropriate learning environments:

Director: The director oversees all program elements, handles all business concerning the city and state, manages the business, is responsible for the planning and supervision of the program and activities of the children, conducts orientation of newly employed staff, provides on-site supervision of all staff, and in-service training.

Teacher: Teachers are responsible for the cognitive and social-emotional growth and development of the children in their care. The focus for our teachers is to work with parents, administrators, and other teachers to improve students' experiences and meet teaching goals. Additionally, teachers plan, evaluate, and improve the physical environment of the classroom to create opportunities that meet the changing needs of their students.

Assistant Teacher: The assistant teacher will support the lead teacher in general supervision of the class and the overall classroom management. The assistant teachers' duties are the following, but not limited to: assisting the teacher in planning and implementing activities to meet the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social needs of students, assisting in teaching social-emotional management an independence, assisting in the creation and planning of activities, staying on task and following the daily schedule, helping communicate with parents, and other program-wide activities.

All employees are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Employees are vetted through a nationwide fingerprint database and background check process and rechecked every 5 years. Staff participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

Transition Policies

The program's daily activities are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate the individual needs of each child. This flexibility ensures that children are supported in their development while also respecting their personal rhythms and preferences.

Daily activities accommodate the following needs of the child:

- Sleep or quiet time

- Group play opportunities
- Individual play opportunities
- A variety of activity choices

Transitioning Throughout the Day

Daily transitions in early care and education programs take place during an activity, or when children move from one activity to another or one location to another. Thoughtful planning is needed so transitions can be positive and enjoyable learning experiences for every child and less stressful for adults. When planned, transitions provide predictability, help children feel safe and secure, and can reduce or prevent behavior problems. Here are a few strategies GPELC uses for daily transitions:

*Discuss the daily schedule using visuals with children at group time.

*Establish a regular routine and post a picture schedule to help all children know what to expect.

*Reduce the number of transitions and the amount of time children need to wait.

*Offer activities that can be completed during the short wait times, such as puzzles, books, songs, fingerplays, riddles or poems. These can be kept handy using index cards on a ring and support students' early literacy.

*Engage imaginations and movement: creep like mice, act out songs or stories, etc.

*Use playful games: pick up songs or games, act like a train, etc.

Transitioning a Child into the Program

Parents and children will be provided with time to visit the teacher and explore the classroom, facilities and playground prior to the child's first day. Parents will be notified with messages through the Brightwheel app on the student's progress. We believe that slow and steady wins this race, and positive energy from parents and teachers will help the student feel comfortable and confident in their new environment.

Transitioning a child to the Next Age Group

When a child is ready to move to another age group, parents will be notified of the upcoming transition. Prior to moving to the next room, the child, with their current teacher, will visit the new room. The child will be allowed multiple exposures to their new environment and the staff will take cues from the child about when they are ready to transition completely.

Behavior and Guidance Policy

GPELC uses praise and positive reinforcement as effective behavior management methods. When children receive positive feedback, they develop problem-solving

abilities, self-discipline strategies, and a stronger sense of self-love. Based on this belief, the school uses a positive approach to discipline.

What We Do

- *Communicate with children using positive statements
- *Communicate with children on their level
- *Talk with children in a calm, quiet manner
- *Explain unacceptable behavior to children
- *Give attention to children for positive behavior
- *Praise and encourage the children
- *Reason with and set limits for the children
- *Apply rules consistently
- *Model appropriate behavior
- *Set up the classroom environment to prevent problems
- *Provide alternatives and redirect children to an acceptable activity
- *Give children opportunities to make choices and solve problems
- *Help children talk out problems and think of solutions
- *Listen to children and respect the children's needs, desires and feelings
- *Provide appropriate words to help solve conflicts
- *Use storybooks and discussions to work through common conflicts

What We Do Not Do

- *Inflict corporal punishment in any manner upon a child, which includes any physical force to the body
- *Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles a child
- *Use any strategy that threatens, intimidates, or forces a child
- *Use food as a form of reward or punishment
- *Use or withhold physical activity as a punishment
- *Shame or punish a child if a bathroom accident occurs
- *Intentionally embarrass any child in front of others
- *Compare children

- *Place children in a locked or dark room
- *Leave any child alone, unattended, or without supervision
- *Allow discipline of a child by other children
- *Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child, their parents, families or ethnic groups

What We Do When Problems Occur

When a more serious or consistent disciplinary issue occurs, a conference will be scheduled with the teachers of the classroom and the child's parents/guardians. Observations, accident reports, and other important documents relating to the events will be shared and discussed at that time.

Assessments, Observations, and Conferences

Assessments and Observations

GPELC reserves the right to conduct developmental assessments and/or observations of children's growth and progress to determine appropriate placements and programming.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences occur twice a year in April and October. Conferences may also occur when needed or requested by parents and/or staff. These events provide parents with insight into their child's growth and development while enrolled in the program. They also allow the teacher and parents to form a more personal relationship to ensure the program is meeting the family's and the child's needs.

Admissions

We accept children aged 6 weeks to 5 years (or until they can start Kindergarten).

We coordinate with Hobart Elementary School to offer part-day Pre-Kindergarten placements.

Intake Process

The first step in our intake process is a tour of our facility. After the tour, the family can schedule a meeting with the director to fill out necessary paperwork and discuss issues important to enrollment. The last step is the orientation process involves the child and parents visiting the classroom and meeting the teachers. We want this process to be as comfortable as possible, we know it can be stressful for both parents and the child to transition to a new setting. We are here to help make the process as smooth as possible! Please let us know if there is something else, we can do to help in this process.

Registration Documents

The following forms must be completed and returned to reserve your child's spot at GPELC:

*Enrollment packet

*Proof of Immunizations (We can print these off)

*Or Proof of Exemption

Updating forms for your child's file

GPELC requires all parents/guardians of enrolled students to keep their child's forms up to date with their current medical and emergency information. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure all school forms are current and up to date. The administration has the right not to allow the student into the program if any forms are missing from their file after two notices.

Weekly Tuition

Infants: \$185	3's: \$165
Toddlers: \$180	4's: \$160
2's: \$170	5's+: \$155

Program Options

Full-time is the top priority! Part-time will be considered based on availability.

Items to Bring on the First Day

Infants: diapers, wipes, formula or breast milk, bottles, change of clothes in a Ziploc bag

Toddlers: diapers, wipes, change of clothes in a Ziploc bag

Twos: **diapers**, wipes, change of clothes in a Ziploc bag

Threes, Fours, and Fives: change of clothes in a Ziploc bag

Please be sure all items are labeled with the child's name.

Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition is due on Friday as pre-payment for the week ahead. Tuition is invoiced via the Brightwheel app and payable by card, ACH bank draft, or check.

Late Payment Policy

A late charge of 10% will be assessed after Tuesday.

Returned Payments Policy

Returned checks will incur a \$50 fee in addition to any late fees.

Absence Policy

GPELC does not offer tuition refunds or make-up days for child absences. This includes sick days, vacation days, or willingly keeping your child home on days we are holding their spot.

Late Pick-Up Policy

A \$1 late pick-up fee will be assessed every minute the family is late and will be added to the next week's tuition invoice.

Pick-up is not a time to conference with your child's teacher or the director. Time can be scheduled for the conference outside of pick-up time as needed.

GPELC closes at 5:15 pm. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time so that our staff may leave on time.

*Please do not arrive at 5:15 pm—we are closed at that time. If a family is consistently late, an earlier pick-up time may be instated. If this policy continues to be broken, care may be terminated.

Non-Payment Policy

Unpaid tuition and fees more than 1 week behind will result in forfeiture of the child's spot and 2-week deposit.

Evaluation of Tuition Rates

All families will be notified of any changes in tuition rates 90 days prior to when they become effective.

Holidays

GPELC observes the following holiday closures: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following. Christmas holiday closures will be determined annually based on the calendar year.

Weather Policy

GPELC may close due to harsh weather conditions. The director will monitor local news to address when the center should close early or close for a day. Parents will be notified through the Brightwheel app, as well as the GPYFS Facebook page.

Withdraw and Discharge Policy

Withdraw Policy

If you wish to withdraw your child from GPELC, a 2-week written notice is required. If you fail to provide a 2-week notice, the initial deposit will be forfeited.

Discharge Policy

GPELC has the right to terminate a child's enrollment under specific circumstances. These circumstances include any child who, after many attempts, does not progress in their behavior and whose behavior affects the large group. This also includes any child whose needs cannot be met by the program's philosophies. Before termination, many attempts will be made to help the child thrive in our environment. These attempts include observation notes, therapy referrals, and tactics to be used at home and onsite.

The following measures will occur prior to dismissal of a student:

1. The teacher will document the student's behavior by providing detailed notes with dates and other insights into why the situation occurred and what happened.
2. The director, parents/guardians, and teachers will meet to discuss any behavior concerns.
3. A behavior plan for the individual is created and agreed upon by all parties. Behavior therapists and consultants may be used to support the staff when working with the child.
4. Staff and parents/guardians will have frequent communication to evaluate the success of the behavior plan.

When the efforts to bring about change have been exhausted, parents/guardians and the director will meet to determine the next course of action. The program and its staff reserve the right to determine any disputed factual matters regarding termination and enrollment.

Arrival and Departure

Arrival Procedure

Children may be dropped off between **7:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.** unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the GPELC Director.

If your child needs to eat breakfast at the center, **they must arrive by 9:00 a.m.**, as breakfast is served at that time.

Parents are required to bring their child into the building, **sign them in using the Brightwheel app**, and escort them to their assigned classroom.

Departure Procedure

Parents must come into the center and sign their child out using the Brightwheel app. After signing out, parents will retrieve their child and gather all belongings from the classroom. Please allow enough time to complete this process and exit the building by our **5:30 p.m. closing time.**

Pick-Up Authorization

For the safety of our students, the only people allowed to pick up a child are those designated by the parent/guardian on the child's approved emergency contact or pick-up list. If a child is to be released to anyone other than the person(s) listed, parents/guardians must notify GPELC in writing or in the Brightwheel app. Any authorized pick-up person must provide photo ID if they are unknown to our staff. Please let the pick-up person know to bring their photo ID. This is for the safety of our students, and no exceptions will be made.

Food Service

Nutritious meals and snacks are provided by GPELC unless:

- Parents, legal guardians, or caregivers are required to furnish them
- They are furnished at appropriate times and in sufficient quantities in accordance with the needs of the child

Mealtimes

Breakfast is served at 9:00 am.

Lunch is served at 11:30 pm.

Snack is served at 2:30 pm.

Preparation of Food

Food service is supervised by the director. People handling food hold a valid food-handler certificate as required by the state.

Menus

All food menus are posted in the kitchen, parent information center, classrooms and the office, as well as electronically on the Brightwheel app.

Children with Special Diets

If a student has allergies or dietary restrictions, please inform the school immediately. Parents/guardians must notify administration in writing, and this is kept in the child's file. This information is also posted in the classroom, the kitchen, and in the child's electronic file for all staff to be aware of. Depending on the method used in allergy emergency situations, parents may be asked to complete a Food Allergy Information form.

Food From Home

If GPELC cannot provide the food needed for a special diet, meals or portions may be provided by the parent. The parent and the administration must agree upon this. Perishable food will be refrigerated upon arrival. Special foods provided by parents must be clearly labeled with the child's name, date, and the identity of the food and will not be shared with other children. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure the student has food at school every day.

Celebrations at School

GPELC loves to celebrate with your child! Parents/guardians must notify the administration or the classroom lead teacher one week prior to the celebration to discuss the classroom and school's food restrictions and policies for bringing in outside treats and snacks.

Emergency Procedures

GPELC provides healthcare only:

- With written consent of the parent or legal representative
- If the healthcare to be provided is first aid

Emergency Consent Forms

Emergency consent forms are completed by the parents/guardians upon enrollment. A copy of these forms is on file in the office and always available on the program's Brightwheel app.

Emergency Handbook

GPELC has an emergency procedure handbook to define policies and protocols in emergencies. This handbook is reviewed often, and all staff are trained upon employment.

Immediate Medical Attention

Should a child or a staff member receive an injury while at school, an injury report is completed. The report includes information regarding the time and date of the injury,

what happened, how it was treated, and the signature of the witnessing teacher. This report is provided to parents before the child leaves the center. The incident is recorded in the center's medical logbook.

Fire

Fire drills will be practiced at random times of the day. The drills will occur at least once a month. Evacuation maps are posted throughout the building and are easy to access and always visible. All employees and students will be prepared for the drills and review what happens during a drill often, so that all are prepared! The staff will talk to their students about the alarms, rules and procedures for evacuating the building. The director will sound the alarm, and the staff will execute the evacuation procedure. The children and staff will proceed to their designated outside school meeting spot. Attendance will be taken using the Brightwheel app. During an actual emergency, or unknown alarm reason, everyone will remain outside the building until the director has confirmed that it is safe to reenter. After a drill, the director will fill in the logbook with the following information: date and time of the drill, number of students/teachers, and the length of time it took for the building to be evacuated. Parents will be notified that a fire drill occurred on this day.

Tornado

Tornado drills will occur at least once a month. Evacuation maps are posted throughout the building and are easy to access and always visible. All employees and students will be prepared for the drills and review what happens during a drill often, so that all are prepared! The staff will talk to their students about the alarms, rules and procedures for taking shelter. The director will sound the alarm, and the staff will aid the children to take cover in the designated safe area. Attendance will be taken using the Brightwheel app. During an actual emergency, everyone will remain in the safe area until the director has confirmed that it is safe to return to the classrooms. After a drill, the director will fill in the logbook with the following information: date and time of the drill, number of students/teachers, and the length of time it took to take shelter. Parents will be notified that a fire drill occurred on this day.

Poison Procedures

*The Poison Control Center phone number will be posted on the list of emergency numbers by telephone.

*Poison emergencies or requests for poison information will be made by contacting the Poison Control Center Hotline at 1-800-252-2022 first- unless the person who has been poisoned is unconscious, not breathing, having trouble breathing or is having convulsions. If any of these conditions are present, 911 will be called first.

*Chemicals, medications, pesticides, paints, cleaning agents and other potentially harmful substances will be stored in locked areas that are inaccessible to children.

- *Toxic substances will be stored away from food and food preparation areas.
- *All chemical products and medications shall be stored in their original containers with original labels intact.
- *Poisonous plants are not permitted in the center.
- *Food handling staff will be trained in and follow integrated pest management practices for the prevention of pests.
- *If additional pest control is necessary, only a licensed exterminator will apply pesticides.
- *Pesticides must be EPA approved with natural pesticides that are non-toxic to humans.
- *Pesticides and other potentially toxic chemicals will not be applied while children are present. Application shall be done in a manner that prevents skin contact and other exposure and minimizes odors. A staff member will observe the application of the chemicals and verify that they are applied according to instructions on the label.
- *The director will notify parents and staff before pesticides are used.
- *Following use of pesticides, or other potentially toxic chemicals, the treated area shall be ventilated for the period recommended on the product label before being reoccupied.
- *All staff purses and personal belongings will be securely stored to prevent access by children.

Illness and Medication Policies

The following criteria will be considered in determining is a child is too ill for school:

- *a fever of 100 degrees or higher
- *Inflammation of the eyes (excessive redness, glassy or discharge)
- *Vomiting
- *More than one incidence of diarrhea or loose stool
- *Communicable disease as defined by the Department of Health/CDC
- *Unknown rash
- *Excessive nasal discharge
- *Pain

If your child is sent home due to illness, they cannot return to the program until they have been free from symptoms for 24 hours **(without using a fever reducer)**. This allows your child time to recover and stop the spread of illness to other children and staff.

After your child has been ill, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines when determining if your child is ready to return:

- *Mood, appetite, behavior and activity are normal again
- *No fever for 24 hours (without a fever reducer)
- *Antibiotics have been used for a full 24 hours
- *No vomiting for 24 hours
- *No diarrhea for 24 hours
- *Frequent coughing and/or excessive nasal discharge resolved
- *Pain resolved

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the center if your child has a communicable disease or infestation such as measles, mumps, chickenpox, or head lice. A child may be readmitted without a statement from a physician only if the child has been absent for a period equal to the longest incubation period of the disease as specified by the Department of Health and Social Services. The local health department will immediately be notified of all infectious diseases, and a note will be posted in the parent information center when there has been exposure to a communicable illness in the center. The school will maintain a file of reported illnesses that may indicate possible diseases that are infectious.

When a child becomes ill and the condition may be infectious, the child is:

- kept as far away as practical from the other persons served until the child can be safely removed from GPELC,
- and is monitored by personnel for changes in status.

Children who return to the program showing signs of illness or a communicable disease will not be allowed to attend. This is best for all other children and staff.

Medication

This policy was written to encourage communication between the parent, the child's healthcare provider, and the childcare provider to assure maximum safety in the giving of medication to a child who requires medication during the time the child is in childcare.

Whenever possible, medication should be given at home. Dosing of medication can frequently be done so that the child receives medicines before going to childcare and again when returning home and/or at bedtime. The first dose of any medication should always be given at home, and with sufficient time before the child returns to childcare, to observe the child's response to the medication given. The parents must notify the childcare provider that a dose was given at home, and at what time it was administered to the child.

Medication will only be accepted into the center if the proper documentation is completed and all policies and procedures for accepting medication are followed. Medication will only be used for the student whose name is documented, and the medication has been approved for it. Medication will not be shared. Medication will always be kept in a locked cabinet or container. Medication will be administered in a manner that protects the child's safety.

Medications given at the center will be administered by a staff member designated by the director and will have been informed of the child's health needs related to the medication. The designated staff member will have training in the safe administration of medication. All medication given will be recorded in a log with the date, times administered, dosage given, medication name and signature of the person who administered the medication.

Communication Agreement Between Parents and GPELC Regarding Medication

Information exchange between the parent/guardian and the childcare provider about medication that a child is receiving should be shared when the child is brought to or picked up from the center. Parents/guardians should share with the staff any problems, observations, or suggestions that they may have in giving medication to their child at home. Likewise, the staff will share with the parents. The director or designated staff member is always authorized to contact the pharmacist or healthcare provider for more information about the medication the child is receiving and if a situation arises that requires immediate attention to the child's health and safety, particularly when the parent/guardian cannot be reached.

Accepting Medication

- *All medication will only be accepted in its original container.
- *Medication should be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name.
- *The name of the medication and directions for use must be clearly readable on the container.
- *Medication will not be used beyond the date of expiration.
- *Consent forms from parents and healthcare providers will be completed and on file before medication can be administered.

Storing Medication

- *Medications will be safely stored away from children and in a locked cabinet/container.
- *Medication containers must have child-protection caps.
- *Medications will be kept in a well-lit area.
- *Medication will not be kept in rooms where food is prepared or stored, unless refrigerated in a separate, locked container.

*When a child no longer needs medication, the unused portion, or empty bottle, will be returned to the parent.

*If a medication is near expiration, the director will notify the parents to bring in new medication prior to the expiration date.

*All medication lids will be closed and locked, whether the medication is empty or full.

Prescription Medication

The pharmacy label must clearly state:

*physician's directions for use

*physician's name and phone number

*child's first and last name

*date the prescription was filled

*expiration date

*specific instructions for storing the medication

Prescription medication will only be administered as required by a physician.

Other Policies

Attire for Children

Children need to wear clothing that is easy to manage and safe for the activities they will be participating in while at the program. Please dress your child in simple, comfortable clothing that is washable. Remember when choosing your child's clothing that they will be using paint, glue and other art materials and they will be participating in large movements and outdoor activities often. Children must also be dressed appropriately for the weather. Comfortable, closed-toe shoes are required. Flip-flops are not allowed for safety reasons.

Don't forget to include a change of clothing that can be left in your child's cubby, in case of an accident. All clothing items should be labeled with the child's name. GPELC is not responsible for any lost or damaged clothing.

Media/Screen Time Policy

The use of visual media, such as television, films, and videos shall be limited to developmentally appropriate programming. Media may be used as a special event or to achieve a specific goal, but **not as a regular daily routine**. The director must approve all media, and all screen time must be related to educational programming or used during limited special events, such as a Parents Night Out.

Insurance

GPELC holds a liability insurance policy as required by state law.

State Regulations and Licensing

All GPELC employees must be knowledgeable of the state's childcare licensing rules and regulations. A copy of the local and state guidelines is always kept in the office, and each employee receives a copy upon employment.

Smoking, Vaping and Tobacco Policy

Smoking, vaping or use of any kind of tobacco products is prohibited at GPELC. Parents/guardians who smoke are strongly urged not to do so just before picking up their child from the center, as smoke stays on clothing and hair for some time.

Alcohol Policy

The use of, or being under the influence of, alcohol or any other toxic substance is prohibited at GPELC. If at any time we feel that a parent, guardian, or anyone authorized to pick up a child is under the influence of alcohol, or other toxic substance, the center may refuse to release the child. Another authorized person will be contacted to pick up the child.

Non-Discrimination Policy

At GPELC, we value all employees, job candidates, students, parents, and families as unique individuals. We welcome the variety of experiences they bring to our center. As such, we have a strict non-discrimination policy. We believe everyone should be treated equally regardless of race, sex, gender identification, sexual orientation, national origin, native language, religion, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, pregnancy, or other characteristics protected by law. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, please let the administration know immediately. Every complaint will be appropriately investigated.

Child Neglect and Abuse

All GPELC employees are screened by the appropriate law enforcement agency using the DHS Office of Background Investigations (OBI) and Criminal History Review Results Portal (CHRRP) prior to hire. Adults will never be alone with children on premises unless others can observe them. At the first reasonable cause to believe that child abuse exists, the reporting adult will immediately inform the director, who will determine the course of action to take. The reporting adult will make an immediate phone call to the local law enforcement agency and DHS. As a backup to the phone report, a written report will be completed and filed with the director.

Social Media

Social media includes online electronic tools to help students, parents, teachers, and staff communicate effectively. Specific examples of popular social media tools include Instagram, Facebook, and many others. Upon enrolling a child into our center, all

parents/guardians must complete the social media consent form. This form is used as approval for allowing a child to be seen on our social media platforms.

Confidentiality

Childcare programs maintain confidentiality on a “need to know” basis. Information is shared only when it is necessary. This is important, especially when there are specific health and safety concerns. State and local laws prohibit the sharing of information about children or employees without written approval from the parent, guardian or individual.

Hazardous Items

GPELC has clear guidelines on identifying, using, and storing dangerous products, plants and objects. This policy aims to protect all employees, children, families, and visitors from the risks associated with chemical products, medications, or other dangerous substances or equipment used in the school’s indoor and outdoor environments.

Transportation Policy

GPELC does not provide transportation of children to or from the childcare facility for any reason. Families are responsible for arranging safe and reliable transportation for their children’s arrival and departure.

Revised 9/11/2025

Additions to GPELC Parent Handbook (March 18th, 2026)

Child Absence Communication Policy

Purpose

To ensure the safety, accountability, and continuity of care for all children by maintaining clear communication between families and the center regarding absences. Absences that are communicated help the Early Learning Center prepare for the meals during the day and staff needed in each classroom.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Parents/guardians must notify the center **before the child's scheduled arrival time** if their child will be absent.
- This includes but is not limited to sickness, vacation, staying home with parents, etc.
- Parents notify employers when they are absent from work and public schools when children are absent; the Early Learning Center also requires communication of absences.

Approved Methods of Communication

Parents may report absences using one of the following:

- Phone call to the center
- Text message to the center
- Brightwheel

Illness-Related Absences

- We appreciate parents reporting **specific symptoms or diagnosis** when a child is absent due to illness.

This helps the center monitor for contagious conditions such as: Influenza, COVID-19, Strep, Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease, etc

The center may notify other families of exposure while maintaining confidentiality.

Center Follow-Up

If a child is absent and no communication is received, staff will: Attempt to contact the parent/guardian within **24 hours of missed day**

Document all contact attempts

This ensures the child's safety and whereabouts are confirmed.

Extended Absences

- For planned absences (vacation, appointments, etc.), families should notify the center **at least 24 hours in advance** when possible.
- Extended absences are still subject to tuition policies.

Return to Care After Illness

- Children must meet the center's health policy requirements before returning (e.g., fever-free for 24 hours without medication).
- A doctor's note may be required for certain illnesses.

Documentation

- All absences and communications will be recorded in the child's file or attendance system for compliance and licensing purposes.

Policy Compliance

Failure to communicate absences consistently may result in:

Review of enrollment status: Repeated failure to report absences (**3 or more unreported absences within a 30-day period**)

Extended unexplained absences (e.g., **2+ consecutive days with no contact**)

Inability to reach parent/guardian for multiple attempts regarding attendance

Outside Food & Drink

- Starting immediately, children will no longer be allowed to bring outside food and drink into the classroom. Please do not send any kind of food or drink in their backpacks.

- **Food will only be allowed if enough is brought for every child in the classroom AND only on FRIDAYS.** For example, two small packages of muffins that have 10 total muffins (enough for every child). 10 donut holes, etc.

- Special occasions like birthdays, it is still acceptable to bring treats for the entire classroom. Please leave them in the office for the classroom teacher to serve at the appropriate time.

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Parent Handbook

Date: _____

We/I _____, the
parents/guardians of _____,
have received a copy of the Great Plains Early Learning Center Parent
Handbook.

*We/I agree to create a free account with Brightwheel for the purpose of staying connected to my child's learning. Brightwheel is the primary tool used for communication between families and GPELC staff.

*We/I are aware that, although online tuition payment through Brightwheel is not required, it is highly encouraged.

*We/I agree and understand the policies and procedures listed in this handbook and agree to comply with the program's rules and regulations.

*We/I understand that the policies and procedures listed in this handbook are subject to change to reflect the program's needs. We/I will be made aware of these changes in a timely fashion and will always adhere to the most up-to-date handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date