

Introduction

The Children's Center at Purchase College is a childcare center located on the Purchase College Campus. The center is licensed by the Office for Children and Family Services and accredited by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We provide full-time childcare for children between 18 months and 5 years of age.

A full-time staff of teachers, a director, an assistant director, and an administrative assistant provide the core staff. Because of the college affiliation, there are also student assistants with regular hours during the academic year. In addition to paid student staff, some students come to the center to augment their coursework in psychology, social science, education, and related fields.

Another result of the affiliation with the college is that the center's schedule derives from the schedule of the college. Extended schedules are available for families needing care beyond the academic calendar.

Philosophy

The Children's Center at Purchase College, Inc. (NAEYC accredited) is a campus-based early childhood center and instructional facility. The families served are those of students, faculty, and staff of the college and of the community at large. The primary commitment of the professional staff of the Children's Center is to provide high quality child care in a safe, healthy, happy and stimulating learning environment. Designed to facilitate each child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth, the program emphasizes gender equity and the development of a positive self-concept. These goals require that all members of the staff respect and maintain open, positive communication with the children, their parents, and each other.

Purchase College students utilize the center in conjunction with course work, independent study, field experience, and senior projects. The Children's Center also pays particular attention to the needs of the community by offering parents invaluable informational resources, referrals, seminars, and conferences. The Center tries to be responsive to issues that face communities as a whole, such as public health, child nutrition, teacher training, and mainstreaming

A very important part of our curriculum focuses on the integration of campus resources and early childhood practices. The children visit the Neuberger Museum for a diversified cultural and ethnic experience. We utilize the dance and music buildings to experience sound, rhythm, and movement through the performing arts. The children learn about science through our nature walks and outdoor activities.

In an open environment setting, the Children's Center provides children with developmentally appropriate activities, ongoing assessment of the children's development, and an anti-bias curriculum emphasizing inclusion and anti-commercialism.

Play - the universal language of childhood - is used at the Center to foster the growth of elementary concepts of time, space, number, and color. Games, painting, construction, modeling, dance, outdoor play, and music are used to sharpen cognitive and perceptual processes, as well as to allow children to interact constructively with others. The purpose of these exercises is to create an atmosphere of self-respect and self

discipline, and to provide numerous opportunities for teachers to guide the children as they learn to make their own choices and decisions.

Our Philosophy in Practice

Children's best understanding of new ideas comes through hands-on learning, which is most effectively accomplished during play. While children are playing, they are developing knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings that will influence them for the rest of their lives. As they develop, children's play becomes more elaborate. Interactive dramatic play is a very sophisticated form of play which children reach around the age of three and become highly skilled at during their prekindergarten year. Children accomplish a great deal during this imaginative role play. Because they must interact with their peers, they learn to regulate their behavior. In fact, in a play setting, children can display more self-regulation than in other settings, readying them to extend their self-control to "real life" situations. Imaginative play also fosters important cognitive development. The use of one object to represent another in an imaginary scenario is a step toward the separation of thought from objects - a separation that becomes crucial in later academic pursuits. Therefore, although formal academics are inappropriate for children of this age, their play is perfect preparation for the abstract thinking introduced later in school.

The environment of the Children's Center is designed to reflect the important role of play in children's development. The physical arrangement of the classroom and the schedule of the day are carefully considered ingredients in the learning environment. There are distinct spaces for different types of toys. Children's physical development is encouraged by active outdoor play and large-scale blocks for large motor skills and by small-scale manipulatives for fine motor skills. Props such as dress-up clothes, telephones, plates, pots and pans, and dolls are offered for role-playing. Art supplies from pencils to crayons to paints and more are all used. All areas of the classroom provide opportunities to gain knowledge and to develop skills through the use of materials and the interactions with peers and teachers.

The daily routine is consistent enough for comfort, but also flexible. Lunchtime, naptime, and, in the older groups, circle time are full group activities. The rest of the day is usually divided between indoor free play and outdoor free play. During this free play, the teachers are both observers and facilitators. They watch to learn about each child's strengths and needs, and they step in to provide guidance when appropriate. They guide children in negotiating resolutions to conflicts, and they suggest directions to children's play which will help them to grow beyond what they can accomplish on their own. They may suggest activities and work with children individually or in small groups. They select materials and introduce them in ways designed to foster each child's continuing development.

The principle of respect is employed in the way in which teachers interact with children. A limit placed on inappropriate behavior is generally accompanied by a set of acceptable options. Positive, warm encouragement comes frequently.

A Brief History

The Children's Center was founded in 1973, making it the oldest full-time campus childcare facility in Westchester County. It was founded by Sybil Barten, now Professor Emeritus at Purchase College. In the first year there were eight students enrolled in the program, with one teacher and it operated in a dormitory.

By 1979, the Center had grown large enough to require the addition of a second teacher. The then Director of the Children's Center Linda Lattimer, with the guidance of the president of the advisory board, Suzanne Kessler, and the treasurer, Richard Nassisi, made two major accomplishments: a greater level of financial stability, and, in 1987, a move to its current space in the Butler Building.

In 1992, the Children's Center was accredited by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). From its modest beginnings in 1973, the Children's Center has become the model campus childcare center in Westchester County.

The Current Staff

1. Director - Dr. Patricia Amanna
2. Assistant Director/Head Teacher – Harriet Mendl
3. Administrative Assistant - Virginia Gennusa
4. Penny Rose– Facilitator
5. New York State Approved Head Teachers:
Susan Cannon
Chrissy Brown
Andrew Balsam
Harriet Mendl
6. Assistant Teachers
Joann Edwards
Giselle Diaz
Cindy Quiroa
Lauren Landi
7. Student Assistants
8. Movement Instructor - Wen-lin Murray

Each head teacher plans the classroom program with an assistant teacher and may also be assisted by Purchase College work study and practicum students. There are approximately 25 - 30 student assistants with scheduled hours during the academic year. They come at consistent times to assure continuity for the children. Students may also be placed at the center as psychology interns, to do senior projects, or as volunteers. All students are interviewed, and are required to have medicals, NYS clearance checks, and training sessions.

Parent Participation

The Children's Center tries to address many of the needs of its children, but this goal cannot be achieved without parent participation. Parent involvement is considered an integral part of life at the Center. Parents and teachers interact by sharing their observations, immediate concerns, and long range goals for their children. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the program by sharing their expertise and talking to the children about their work, cultural practices etc. A parent-teacher partnership such as this significantly enhances each child's overall growth and development.

Technology

This generation of children is growing up in a world where the use of technology has reached unimaginable proportions. The children should feel comfortable with the world around them. In an effort to support this, our children are learning via computers, books on tape, educational videos, ect. Technology has allowed us to send weekly news letters to center parents via e-mail for the purpose of keeping them informed of what

their children are learning and how they can expand on this home. We urge parents to realize that this is not a means of communication with the teacher. Teachers will not respond to e-mail. Please contact them at the center by phone or in person.

Social networking has become widely used by many. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and many other forums are used to share up to minute information and photos. We ask that you act with integrity when social networking and do not share center information or photos with other people. Most especially, please do not post pictures of center children other than your own. It is of the utmost importance to the center and its staff that this policy of confidentiality be respected and that parents honor the trust and privacy of other families.

Visitors

Visitors must check in at the administrative office. At that time, they will be expected to sign in the visitor's log. The date, time of arrival and signature need to be recorded. Before leaving the center, the time of departure must also be entered.

Health Information

We work hard to limit the transmission of infection. We have concentrated on the physical set-up of the classrooms. Diapering areas are separate from eating areas. Both staff and children wash their hands frequently, and always before handling food and after using the toilet or changing a diaper. Ventilation, heating, and lighting are all factors that are crucial to the control of infection. Despite these precautions, all children get sick sooner or later. They will get sick whether or not they are in day care, but in a day care center diseases can spread easily because large numbers of children from different families spend hours together swapping germs every day.

When we are ill, our bodies repair tissues and cells while we sleep or rest. We often find that children need a bounce back period - time to be at home with a little more rest and quiet. After an illness, our immune system is weakened, making us more susceptible to reinfection. This is not an ideal time to return to school where the child is put into an active environment with other children (and other children's germs).

Indications of illness to check for in your child include:

1. Fever: one degree higher than normal may indicate illness.
2. Change in behavior: may be an increase or decrease in energy level. This is often the first symptom we see: be alert to your child's unspoken symptoms.
3. Pain
4. Change in appetite
5. Vomiting
6. Diarrhea
7. Rashes
8. Respiratory Symptoms: Sneezing, watery eyes, runny nose, cough, wheezing, and/or shortness of breath. One of the most difficult illnesses to evaluate is cold or upper respiratory infection. (URI) Here are some guidelines:

If the child has a normal body temperature, is normally active and has a normal appetite that child should be allowed to engage in normal activity and play.

Some children with colds get better very quickly, others have persisting symptoms for many weeks. Still others will wind up with ear infections. This happens because

of the nature of the particular virus and the individual's basic genetic disposition to secondary problems.

We cannot and should not isolate a child with a cold. If we did, most two to five year olds would not see another human being all winter long. However, some children with common colds may feel irritable, sleepy, or have a fever. These are the children that should be kept at home, where they can rest and get extra Tender Loving Care.

Droplets pass from one child to another easily as young children are not adept at covering their mouths or using Kleenex. Encouraging this practice at home helps; encourage independence in nose wiping and proper disposal of Kleenex.

9. Drainage: of any type from eyes, ears, wounds, etc.

What you can do to help:

1. Use the above as a guide in assessing whether your child is able to attend school. If you have reservations, it's best not to send him/her. If your child becomes ill during the school day, we will send the child home. Your quick response to our calls about a sick child is important.
2. Keep the staff informed of your child's moods, behaviors, falls, aches, etc. when you drop him/her off. This is helpful in determining a change in a child and noting signs of illness quickly.
3. Please notify staff if your child has been taking medications. Some medications may cause symptoms that normally indicate illness.
4. Reactions to immunizations are not contagious, but children are often listless and uncomfortable enough to warrant sending them home or keeping them at home.
5. Familiarize yourself with the Center's health policies.

The best way to be prepared for unavoidable illnesses is to plan ahead. Think ahead as to what your choices are:

- If you work during the day, find out your employer's sick leave policies.
- If it is difficult for you to take time away from work, find an alternative caregiver. This might be a relative, neighbor, friend, or other dependable adult you could call when your child is too sick to be at the Children's Center.

Children's Center Illness and Medication Policy

A CHILD SHOULD NOT ATTEND IF S/HE:

1. Has a temperature of 100 degrees or more.
2. Has a communicable disease (rashes, strep throat, pink or yellow eyes).
3. Has vomiting/diarrhea.
4. Has severe whooping or croupy cough.
5. Has difficult or rapid breathing.
6. Is unable to participate in usual daily activities.

A CHILD MAY RETURN WHEN:

1. Fever is absent for 24 hours.
2. Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea is absent for 24 hours.
3. Contagious stage of communicable disease has passed.
4. A strep infection has been under treatment for twenty-four hours
5. Child under doctor's care has received MD permission to return.

6. Child feels well enough to participate in all activities.

MEDICATION WILL BE ADMINISTERED IF:

1. We have written medical permission in accordance with NYS regulations.
2. We have doctor's and parental consent as required to dispense prescription medication.
3. We have written parental permission to administer over the counter topical medication, such as sunscreen, A&D ointment, etc. Other over the counter medication, such as Children's Tylenol, Benedryl, etc. must have both parent and doctor consent. (Medication label should specify dosage by age, especially for younger toddlers.)
4. The child has already received the first dose. (Teachers may not give the first dose.)
5. Medication is in original container and labeled with: child's name-medication name-dosage
6. A MAT form must be filled out by parent and/or parent and doctor (depending on type of medication)

Teachers record the time of each dose given and the staff member who administers it.

Minor injuries are noted in an accident report, a copy of which is given to the parent. When a child suffers serious illness or injury while at the Children's Center, the head teacher sees to it that the child (and the child's file with the Emergency Health Care Permission and Medical Forms) is taken to the college Health Services. The parent is called and told of the illness or injury, and the teacher will stay with the child until the parent can come to take custody. If an ambulance is needed, the director or a teacher calls 911 or campus security.

CAMPUS EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Purchase College Security - 251-6900/Emergency - 251-6911

Nutritional Information

The Children's Center serves breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. The center is licensed by the State of New York and our menu follows the US Department of Agriculture guidelines for balanced and nutritious meals. Our menu is a four week cycle menu and is posted on the main bulletin board located in the entry hall of the center. A licensed nutritionist from the state reviews our menu every two years, making changes if necessary, and approves the menu for usage. A state approved menu is necessary in order to be licensed, and we are required by law to serve these meals daily to the children. Only appropriate substitutions are allowed if necessary. Any child who cannot have the food we serve must provide a doctor's statement claiming medical or religious exemption with reason. This allows us to serve the child other foods and still be in compliance with our license. It is not, however, possible to serve a child food from home because it is a parent's preference.

It is just as important to serve approved afternoon snacks as it is to serve approved breakfast and lunch. In order to ensure this, the Children's Center has a birthday snack policy in place. This will include activities based on our philosophy and a celebration with wholesome and nutritious foods that follow the USDA criteria. Please confer with your child's teacher for a choice of foods.

School Schedule

MORNING

8:00-9:30 CHILDREN ARRIVE: Please have your child here *no later than 9:30*.
Free play periods in classrooms
Teachers greet children and parents

8:30-9:30 BREAKFAST: Children eat as they arrive in the morning.

8:30-10:00 FREE PLAY: Children select from one of the interest areas:
Art; Blocks; Library Corner; Table Toys;
Computers; House Corner; Sand and Water.

10:00-10:15 CLEAN-UP: Children put away toys and materials: as they finish they prepare for group time.

10:15-10:30 GROUP TIME: Conversation and sharing time; music, movement, rhymes, fingerplay, etc.

10:45-11:45 OUTDOOR PLAY: Children select from climbing activities, wheel toys, balls, hoops, sand and water play, woodworking, gardening, and child initiated games.

11:45-12:00 CLEAN-UP: Children prepare for lunch

**The length of group and story time varies with the ages of the children. A group of three-year olds, or three and four- year-olds with limited group experiences may have difficulty participating in a 15-minute group time. A shorter activity will be planned and lengthened during the year as children's abilities to interact with the group expand.

LUNCH & REST

12:00-12:45 PREPARE FOR LUNCH, EAT LUNCH & CLEAN UP:
As children finish lunch, they go to the bathroom in small groups and then read books on their cots in preparation for nap time.

12:45-1:00 QUIET ACTIVITY PRIOR TO NAP: Story, quiet music, or story record.

1:00-3:00 NAPTIME: As children wake, they read books or play quiet games such as puzzles or lotto on their cots; children who do not sleep or who awaken early are encouraged to do quiet activities.

AFTERNOON SCHEDULE

3:00-3:30 SNACK AND PREPARATION TO GO OUTDOORS

3:30-4:30 OUTDOOR PLAY: Children select from climbing activities, wheel toys, balls, hoops, sand and water play, woodworking, gardening and child-initiated games.

4:30-5:00 FREE PLAY: Children select activities requiring minimum clean- up time.

5:00-5:15 PICK UP TIME: Remaining children are brought to the main entrance to await the arrival of their pick up person. We have found late pick-ups to be disruptive to your child's routine and sense of security.

Arrival in and departure from the center are risky times of the day. In order to reduce the likelihood of accident, we ask that you follow the procedures outlined below when bringing children to the center in the morning and picking them up in the afternoon.

Upon arrival, we ask that parents bring their child into the building, escort him or her to the classroom, and confirm that s/he is under the supervision of the teacher before leaving. When picking up the child, the adult escort should make certain that the responsible teacher has been told that the child is leaving for the day. As part of this process we ask that you sign your child into the center upon arrival and sign out at departure. There is a book posted next to the classroom door for this purpose.

For safety reasons, we ask also that you closely supervise children in the driveway, lobbies, and elsewhere in the center. In addition, we must also ask that you help your children continue to follow the center guidelines regarding walking (rather than running) while in the center. We recommend that children exit from cars on the curb side of the driveway and be offered a hand to hold while approaching the entrance. When departing, children should wait for their adult escort before exiting the center.

Calendar

The Children's Center offers three program calendar options. The Academic year program coincides with the college's academic calendar. Children attend only when college classes are in session. (This option is available only to Purchase College affiliated parents who are students or whose contract is for the academic calendar.)

The Modified (June) year program provides continuous service beginning with the first day of class and ending the last Friday of June, excluding holidays and recesses. The Extended year program provides continuous service beginning the first day of classes and continuing through the last Friday in July, excluding holidays and recesses.

Please notify the Center if your child will be out for an extended period of time. An absence of more than two weeks without notice may result in that space being given to another child.

Bad Weather Information

1. The Purchase College weather hotline is 914-251-7500. If the college closes, we must also close.
2. If the weather is bad, we will open the doors as soon as the first staff person is able to get here, which will be as close to 8:00 a.m. as possible.
3. If bad weather develops during the day, please make arrangements to leave work early. We don't want children and staff stranded at the Center.
4. If we call you during the day to say that the Center is closing early due to serious weather conditions, you need to pick up your child by the designated time. If you will not be in your office or home, please be sure to leave a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.
5. We take the children out to play in the snow. Please send your child with snow pants, boots, hat, mittens and a warm jacket. The extra clothes are important in case clothing gets wet.