



# **The Early Learning Program**

## **Family Handbook**

**4205 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104**

**215-222-5480 fax 215-222-5487  
[www.parentinfantcenter.org](http://www.parentinfantcenter.org)**

# PIC Family Handbook

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# Welcome to The Parent-Infant Center

***The Parent-Infant Center supports parenting by enabling children to grow and learn in a safe, stimulating, loving environment.***

*PIC provides an enriching environment of love, security and community to children between the ages of 6 weeks and 13 years, their parents and their families who work and/or live in the diverse community of West Philadelphia. Through developmentally-appropriate experiences, our children learn respect for others, self-confidence, social skills, to develop curiosity about the world and to appreciate people who are different from them. They grow emotionally and physically and they build a foundation of competence and confidence that prepares them for every day situations and, ultimately, for school.*

All of us connected with the Center think that PIC is a pretty special place. The years of early childhood are formative ones for children and their families. PIC believes that quality child care is a learning experience for parents and children alike, and it is from this philosophy that our Center derives its name and its unique approach. The families and staff of The Parent-Infant Center hope this handbook will be a useful resource as you get acquainted with the Center. It will provide you with a guide to the Center's structure, policies, and procedures. We hope it answers all of your questions, but if it doesn't, just ask the Executive Director, another staff member, or a parent.

PIC serves children from six weeks to sixth grade. Younger children are enrolled in our early learning program and children in kindergarten through sixth grade attend the After School Center (ASC). We are generally able to provide an adult:child ratio of 1:3 in the infant rooms, 1:4 for toddlers, 1:6 for preschoolers, 1:8 for pre-k, and 1:10 in the school-age program. In all cases, these ratios exceed those required by the Commonwealth. We believe this makes an important difference in the quality of child care because it allows individual attention for children who need it.

PIC is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. We are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National AfterSchool Association. PIC has achieved a 4-star designation, the highest level, within Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS quality initiative.

We select staff for their education, experience, creativity, sensitivity in working with young children and skill in communicating with families. Our Executive Director is responsible for administrative and educational supervision of the Center, and she functions as the primary liaison between staff and parents. All staff members undergo background checks as required by law and all classroom staff are trained in pediatric first aid, with lead teachers also trained in CPR.

The Parent-Infant Center values diversity among our families and staff. The center enrolls children and employs staff regardless of race, religion, sex, age, national origin or family structure. We will do our best to adapt our program for children with special needs, and to accommodate the special needs of our staff. We welcome families in publicly funded child care and maintain a modest scholarship fund.

*Revised April 2011*

## **Educational Program**

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

Teachers plan a curriculum that is geared to the specific needs of our children. There is a balance of active and quiet play, with both individual choices and planned teacher-directed activities to promote skill development. A mix of ages reflects family life and provides younger and older children a chance to learn from one another. The children develop trust through responsive and consistent interaction with our staff in a safe and secure environment. Weekly schedules and lesson plans are posted in the classrooms so that you know what your children will be doing during the day.

Our infant classes, for children from 6 weeks to about 2 years, are designed to provide lots of sensory stimulation through individual and group play, spontaneous and planned activities. There is plenty of time for cuddling, reading stories, and playing outdoors. The routine is flexible and can be adapted to your child's needs, although children 14 months and older tend to follow the same routine.

Children move to a toddler classroom at about age 2, or as space becomes available. In toddler classrooms, a more structured day is planned. Activities help foster independence, socialization, cooperation, and decision-making. While there are group activities, a child who prefers not to participate in the planned project may choose to play with other toys or books nearby. Most children begin or master toilet learning during this year.

Preschool classes are for children ages 3 to 4; pre-k classes are for ages 4 to 5. Our part-day class for ages 3-5 serves families that do not need full-day care. We also have one Pre-K Counts classroom, a state-funded part-day preschool initiative for ages 3-4 that operates on a September-June schedule. For ages 3-5, activities are planned to encourage independent dramatic play, block building and manipulative activities. Art, music and movement activities encourage creative expression. Through their play activities, children develop fine and gross motor skills, pre-reading and writing skills, and social skills that are important to school success. Children learn to use books for pleasure or learning. Planned activities help children learn about the ways people are different and alike. Excursions become an important part of the curriculum.

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

The program is housed in three buildings. The Sweet Building, along Locust Street at 42<sup>nd</sup>, has one infant and one toddler classroom; two pre-k classrooms; two part-day preschool classrooms; and administrative offices on the garden level (Executive Director, Accounts Manager and Family Life Coordinator). The Spruce Building, east of the Penn Alexander School, has three infant classrooms, two toddler classrooms, two preschool classrooms, and school-age care for grades K-1. The Director of Early Learning Programs, the Director of School Age Programs, the Operations Manager and the Director of Development/Communications are located in the Spruce Building. The "stucco" building, south of the Spruce Building, houses school-age care for grades 2-6.

### ***Learning Differences***

Some children begin to demonstrate evidence of learning differences while they are at PIC. While our staff are not trained to identify the cause of learning differences, experienced teachers are very helpful in recognizing difficulties in reaching developmental milestones. If needed, teachers and the Family Life Coordinator will work with your family to identify resources to address any developmental challenges.

## **PIC in the Community**

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

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

For grownups, this involvement means that some PIC families and staff are involved in local community groups and events. We provide meeting space for community organizations. Our staff provides leadership in a variety of area early childhood organizations.

Our Board and staff are always interested in exploring other ways we can support parents in our community by working with them to find solutions to parenting problems. In the past we have had grants to train and support family child care providers and to offer supervised play in area health clinics. The After School Center grew out of parents' need for care for older children. Our parent-child playgroups introduce parents of young children to one another and enable their children to have some of their first group experiences. We occasionally sponsor special events open to all neighborhood families.

We also believe in advocating for quality, affordable child care for all families who need it. We encourage parents to participate in the local, state and federal electoral and legislative processes, including lobbying policy makers to improve the quality and accessibility of child care. We think that, in the long term, the best solutions to the child care needs of families lie in partnerships between government, employers, and families. If you are not a registered voter, you may pick up a registration form at PIC.

## **PIC as an Educational Resource**

The Center serves as a practicum and research site for high school and university students in a variety of fields. Anthropology students observe the development of language skills; psychology students test the development of cognitive skills; nursing and medical students learn about child development. High school students gain experiences that will make them better baby sitters or parents. Students may also be working under the federal work-study program as part of their financial aid packages at area colleges or fulfilling professional internships.

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

## **Family Involvement at PIC**

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

### ***Parent-Teacher Communication***

Regular communication between families and teachers is an important element of this partnership. Each group posts the schedules of its teachers and the schedule for the day on a bulletin board outside the room. You'll also find posted lesson plans. The teachers write daily descriptions of the group activities and sometimes write notes about your child; teachers of infants provide more details about feedings, naps, and diapering. Please let us know about important events in your child's life—a visit from relatives, a special outing, teething or sleeping problems, times of unusual stress such as a family death or divorce. This information will help us be more responsive to your child's needs. There is a classroom phone so you can easily contact your child's teachers for a quick message (215-222-5480). It's best to schedule a time to call during naptime, from about 1:30 to 3pm. Sometimes there is time to exchange news at the beginning and end of the day if the children do not need the teachers' attention.

### ***Parent-Teacher Meetings***

The quality of our care for your child will be influenced by the quality of our communication with you. Receiving accurate, frequent information about your expectations, needs, and feelings about your child's care

enables us to do our job more effectively. Please do not hesitate to drop a note, send an e-mail, or arrange short conference times with your child's teachers, the Program Director, or the Executive Director, especially when you have been unable to stop and chat with the classroom staff at drop-off or pick-up time.

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

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

Parents of school-age children may not feel the same need for formal conferences but are encouraged to request one at any time. Our staff are glad to talk with you about how things are going and share news.

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

### ***Confidentiality***

All employees are required to maintain strict confidentiality regarding files, records and other information regarding children or their families. No information can be shared with any persons and/or organizations outside of the agency without the signed consent of a child's parent or legal guardian. Disclosure of confidential information among agency staff is for professional purposes only and done in a setting that assures privacy. All records with personal information are maintained in locked files by the Family Life Coordinator or in password-protected electronic files.

### ***Board of Directors***

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

Parents and guardians of children enrolled at PIC comprise the legal membership of the organization. At the annual membership meeting in May, members elect the Board of Directors, review the proposed budget, and hear from the Board and staff about plans for the coming year. Participation in this meeting is so important that your family earns one hour of PPP credit for attending.

### ***Family Life Activities***

PIC has a strong Parent Involvement Committee whose mission is to motivate parents to be involved in the life and direction of the center, and to build a stronger community of families at PIC. There also are Room Parents, overseen by a subcommittee of the Parent Involvement Committee, who establish and sustain center-wide connections in order to strengthen the PIC community and promote the best possible experiences for children and families.

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

## ***Visiting PIC***

We welcome visits from the families of children enrolled at PIC. While parents are welcome to drop in at any time, we appreciate knowing ahead of time if you're bringing grandparents or friends to stay awhile and see what goes on in your child's day at PIC. With a little advance planning, we'd love learning about our visitors and sharing their interests and family traditions with our classes.

You'll find that some children tolerate visiting family more easily than others. For some children it's hard to share visitors or it may be tough to have them leave. You and your child's teachers will want to plan so that these visits are fun for everyone.

## **Parent Participation Program**

Active parent participation is one thing that makes PIC different from most other child care programs and it's one of the features we consider very special about PIC. We really *are* a parent-run center. It contributes to a greater sense of community among our families and builds a strong sense of ownership of the Center and its programs.

Each two-parent family in the full-day early learning program is expected to invest 24 hours per year, regardless of the number of children enrolled. Single-parent families invest 12 hours. Two-parent families enrolled in the half-day program invest 12 hours per year, and single-parent families in this program invest 6 hours. Two-parent After School Center families have a 10-hour commitment, while single-parent ASC families have a 6-hour commitment. There is no PPP requirement for families enrolled only in the summer camp program.

These are some of the jobs parents do to support the work of the Center:

picking up litter	marketing and publicity
maintaining playground equipment	organizing fundraising events
laundering dress-up clothes	providing legal services and medical advice
making games	taking photographs
cleaning	chaperoning trips
painting	teaching children about special cultural events
serving as a room parent	helping with a special interest club in the ASC
fixing computers	building climbers
grocery shopping	gardening
writing grant proposals	making small and large repairs
serving on the Board or one of its committees	running errands
organizing family social events and parenting workshops	organizing refreshments for special events
	...and many more.

Requests for assistance are announced in the Circle Time newsletter, posted on bulletin boards or in your classroom, or e-mailed to the center-wide listserv. You may see a task that needs doing yourself or have an idea for a special project. Talk with your child's teachers or one of the Center administrators about your idea.

## ***PPP FAQ's***

Here are the answers to some of the most frequent PPP questions:

### ***HOW are records kept?***

When you do a project, record the task and the time spent give to the Family Life Coordinator (via e-mail, stop by her office, or drop in any tuition box). Hours are recorded and you receive quarterly updates of your PPP standing in your parent mailbox.

### ***WHAT IF we work the hours and forget to record them?***

Record them when you remember. They don't expire. Hours beyond your commitment carry over to the following year

***WHAT IF I say I will work but can't make it? What if I don't manage to get all my hours worked during the specified time?***

If you have made a commitment to work and are unable to fulfill your responsibility, we expect *you* to find another parent to fill in for you. Whether it's a workday, a class trip, or a special project, other people have made plans that count on your involvement. If you are especially busy during one quarter, you may choose to complete your obligation during the next quarter or you may pay off those hours.

At the end of PIC's fiscal year (June 30), you will be billed for any outstanding hours at the rate of \$15 per hour.

***WHAT IF I purchase items for the classroom? Does that expense count toward PPP?***

No. The time you devote to a project may be counted (ie, shopping). Please submit receipts for monies expended and you will be reimbursed for approved expenses.

***WHAT IF I still owe hours when our family leaves PIC?***

The hours owed will be deducted from your tuition deposit before it is returned to you.

## **Development**

While the Center generally meets its operating expenses from fees paid by families, we depend on contributions and fundraising events for scholarships and capital improvements. Special projects are generally funded by grants.

### ***Fundraising Events***

We count on the participation of all PIC families to assure the success of our annual fundraising events – the spring plant sale and the fall silent auction. Proceeds from the plant sale support our scholarship fund; ArtStart, the fall silent auction, raises additional monies used for scholarships or other Board-directed activities. Parent committees provide critical support in planning these events and volunteers lend their hands-on help at each fundraiser.

### ***Grants***

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

### ***Contributions***

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

PIC is eligible to receive funds through the United Way Donor Choice plan. We hope you will keep this in mind the next time you are urged to give to the United Way. Our number is 2671. In the Penn's Way Campaign, our number is 55-2671. You can also designate PIC through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Each year PIC conducts an annual appeal to friends and alumni of the center to raise funds for capital improvements and scholarships. You may be invited to suggest names of friends or relatives whom you think we should include in this appeal.

We appreciate donations of toys and dress-up clothing for use in our classrooms. We may also be able to use spare furniture or other valuable "junk" and wonderful bargains you run across. If you see great deals, take a chance; we can probably use it. Watch the trash or check out yard sales for great surprises. If you would like a record of your contribution for tax purposes, please give the Development Director a list of the items you have contributed.

When children graduate from the Center, some families choose to designate their tuition deposits as a contribution to our fund for scholarships, capital improvements, or the staff development fund – a thoughtful



farewell gesture that is always appreciated. The Aleksander Grill Endowment was created in memory of a child who was briefly at PIC and whose sister and brother grew up here. Managed by The Philadelphia Foundation, it is earmarked for scholarships. The Marni Sweet Staff Tuition Assistance Fund was created to honor the contributions of our former Executive Director.

## ***Center Communications***

### ***Family Mailboxes***

Family mailboxes are often used to disseminate information to families throughout the center. You will find monthly newsletters, quarterly PPP reports, notes from the administration, completed artwork, and much more in your mailbox. Families should check their PIC mailbox periodically to be sure that you receive information in a timely manner. Consult the Family Life Coordinator if you can't find your mailbox.

### ***Newsletters***

The Center's monthly newsletter, *Circle Time*, includes news of classroom activities, announcements of upcoming events, public policy updates, and other information. Parents are welcome to contribute articles to share information, express concerns, or make suggestions. We also publish a semi-annual newsletter for the broader community to reach current and alumni families, PIC neighbors, business and professional contacts, legislators and policy makers. The spring community newsletter also functions as our annual report.

### ***Website***

PIC's website, [www.parentinfantcenter.org](http://www.parentinfantcenter.org), also contains PDFs of current newsletters, a copy of this handbook, and basic information about the center, including calendars, a staff roster, phone and e-mail contacts. The website's photo gallery shows classroom activities and documents special events such as PIC parades or celebrations.

### ***E-mail***

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

PIC's Family Life Coordinator maintains an e-mail list for general announcements and queries to parents. Classroom teachers and Room Parents use e-mail for reminders or special announcements. If you reply, please remember that teachers are tending to your children and may not have an opportunity to respond for a day or two.

### ***Bulletin Boards***

To find information about center and classroom activities, check the bulletin boards near entrances and outside classrooms. The bulletin board just outside the small gym in the Spruce Building will have information about child care issues and legislative activity. The bulletin board inside the small gym is the place to post notices for the community at-large

## **Hours and Closings**

Our regular program hours are from 8AM until 6PM, Monday through Friday. For a small additional fee, parents can arrange to drop off their children between 7:30 and 8AM. We are closed on the following days:

Martin Luther King's Birthday  
President's Day  
Memorial Day

July Fourth  
Labor Day  
Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving  
Christmas Day through New Year's Day (and at least part of December 24)  
*We also close two days a year for staff in-service training.*

### ***Drop-off Time***

Children should arrive before 10AM so they will have a chance to be personally greeted. This also allows parents and staff a chance to exchange information and gives the child some important free-choice play time. Children who arrive in the middle of an activity often feel out of sync with their friends. If your child will not be coming to school, or if he/she will be dropped off after 10AM, please call the teachers and let them know. Occasionally the teachers will let you know that children need to arrive at an earlier time for a class trip.

Adults must always accompany their children to the classroom to be sure that they safely reach their destination and so that you can sign in for the day.

### ***Pick-up Time***

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

If, because of an emergency, you cannot arrive before 6PM, please call ahead. Staff can reassure your child by explaining what has happened and can adjust their own plans, if necessary. Children who have not been picked up in their classrooms by 6PM will be taken by a staff member to the ground floor entrance of the Spruce Building.

Half-day classrooms close at 2PM. Please understand that teachers may have a scheduled break or other commitments after that time, so we ask that you respect the closing time and exit the classroom by 2PM.

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

Please remember that nobody likes to be interrupted when busy. Your child may resist leaving his or her friends and activities when you arrive. We encourage you to warmly greet your child and tell him or her that you will gather belongings and check with staff about the day so that there will be a few more minutes to play. This notice often prevents difficult struggles when it's time to leave.

When you arrive for pick-up, please remember that you are responsible for your child even though staff members are present. This clarification of *who's in charge here?* is important to prevent disruption of program and potential problems that can occur at transitions when there is confusion about responsibility.

Parents must sign their children out at the end of the day. For some families, permitting the child to "sign out" with your assistance becomes a helpful leaving ritual.

### ***Late Fee Policy***

Any child who has not been signed out by 6PM (2PM in the half-day program) will automatically be charged \$15.00 per family for any part of the first 15 minutes and \$5.00 for every part of each additional five minutes thereafter. Remember that cell phones are an accurate time keeper if there is a question about lateness. You, along with the staff member waiting with your child, will be asked to sign a "late fee" form, and the fee will be billed to your account.

### ***Snow Closings***

The Center tries to remain open regardless of the weather. If we will not be open for the day, that information will be on our website by 6:45AM. If it becomes necessary to close the Center early, parents will be notified by

phone and must come to pick up their children as soon as possible. If the University of Pennsylvania is closed due to weather conditions, the Center also will close. Call (215) 898-MELT for the University's operating schedule. Parents may also listen to KYW NewsRadio 1060AM for school closing information. Our school number is **3018**.

### ***Emergency Preparedness & Parental Notification***

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

- Immediate evacuation: All children and staff will be evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility or to another building nearby in the event of a fire, smoke, or related emergency. Evacuation locations are (progressively): the adjacent Penn-Alexander School; St. Mary's Nursery School (Locust Walk at 40<sup>th</sup> Street) and the Penn Children's Center (3160 Chestnut St.).
- In-place sheltering: Sudden occurrences, weather, or hazardous materials may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- Modified Operations: Circumstances may dictate cancellation and/or postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building issues, however, they may be necessary in a variety of situations.

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

We will reach you using the telephone numbers that you have designated on your emergency contact form. We will release your child only to persons whom you have listed on this form. Please check to be sure that your telephone numbers and escort lists that we have on file are always up-to-date. *You must verify and sign this form at least every 6 months.* The safety of the children in our care is our first priority. Thank you for your support and cooperation regarding our plans. Should you have additional questions regarding our emergency operating procedures, please talk with our Executive Director.

## **Tuition**

The budget of the center is based on 12 months of operation and takes into account our practice of closing between the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Tuition is payable in advance and is due on the first business day of the month. A late fee of \$10 per week will be assessed on all payments not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> business day of the month. You will receive a mid-month reminder if you have forgotten to make a payment. All families receive statements at the end of the month; statements are e-mailed unless you would prefer a printed statement delivered to your PIC mailbox.

Tuition checks should be made payable to the Parent-Infant Center (or PIC) and placed in locked tuition mailboxes designated for that purpose in the Spruce Building (outside the ASC Director's office or by the ground floor reception desk) or Sweet Building (near the Administrative Assistant's office, first floor). If there is something unusual about the amount of your payment, it's helpful if you write a memo so we know what you have added. Families with more than one child at PIC receive a 10% discount on the oldest child's tuition.

PIC accepts credit card payments for all tuition and other center expenses (minimum charge \$10). Tuition payments made by credit card, or automatic withdrawals from your credit card, will be assessed a 2% surcharge to cover banking fees. There is no surcharge for automatic withdrawals from checking or debit accounts.

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

Tuition deposits are held in escrow and returned by the Center upon withdrawal, less any outstanding tuition payment or PPP obligation. The deposit is \$750 per child for children in the full-day program; \$350 per child in the half-day program; and \$250 per child in the After School Center. Families with more than one child enrolled at PIC pay the full deposit for the youngest child and one-half of the usual deposit for each additional child enrolled. The deposit is adjusted or waived for families receiving child care subsidy.

### ***Child Care Expenses and the IRS***

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

## **Part-time Care**

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

When you enroll your child, you must specify which days of the week she or he will be attending. The After School Center requires a minimum of three days and the early learning program requires a minimum of two.

You may not change those days from week to week, or even month-to-month. Additionally, you may not “swap” one day for another in any given week. If it becomes necessary to make a change to your schedule of days for an extended period of time, please check with the Family Life Coordinator to see whether there is a space available on your preferred days. This policy is in effect to assure a comfortable routine for the children, as well as to maintain classroom routines. It is not uncommon for families whose work schedules vary (e.g. with the academic year) to change their schedules periodically in order to accommodate their child care needs.

If your child is absent, due either to vacation or sickness, you may not make up those days by coming another day and you are required to pay for your regular days.

Except for the winter break, families enrolled less than five days per week are allowed to make up days that they miss because the Center is closed. If the Center is scheduled to be closed on one of your regular days, you may substitute another day *within two weeks before or after the closure*. You must arrange the make-up day with your child’s Lead Teacher; she/he will work with you to select a day based on maintaining appropriate teacher:child ratios in the classroom.

If you need to add an unscheduled day, you may do so IF there is room in your child’s classroom that day. You must consult with the Lead Teacher to see if your request can be accommodated. If you add a day, you will be billed at the drop-in rate for an extra day. If you expect to need extra days with any frequency, you may want to consider adding a day to your regular schedule to simplify record keeping, and to be sure those extra days are available.

Because the Center counts on a reasonably steady income, children may not ordinarily be switched back and forth from full-time to part-time during the fiscal year, and the number of part-time days may not be changed from month to month. If a family seeks to switch from part-time to full-time, every effort will be made to accommodate that request. **A decrease in the number of days requires 30 days’ written notice.**

Exceptions can be made, at the discretion of the Executive Director, if a change in parent’s job status or the birth of a sibling suggests that a switch is appropriate.

Our half-day program is designed to accommodate families with children ages 3 to 5 whose childcare needs are limited to the hours of 8:30AM to 2PM. The same policies regarding part-time enrollment outlined above apply for children enrolled in this program.

*Part-time families in the full-day and after school programs have the same parent participation requirements as other families in their respective programs. We think it's just as important that those parents build a relationship with staff and other parents and that they have that important feeling of ownership. This also helps keep the cost of part-time care as close to full-time hourly rates as possible. While part-time children don't come every day, many of the costs of enrollment are the same regardless of the number of days a child attends: enrollment and orientation, parent conferences, storage space, bookkeeping, notices and newsletters—these don't vary.*

## **Vacations**

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

### ***Summer Vacations***

Families will be permitted to take extended vacations under the following circumstances:

- Four- to ten- week vacations may be taken between June 15 and August 31 **only**.
- Families must notify the Center *in writing* of their extended vacation plans no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Families must pay, in advance, two weeks' tuition (the average vacation of most families). In addition, families must pay one month's nonrefundable tuition for the month following their return.
- Families must settle all financial and PPP accounts before departure.
- An effort will be made to return a child to the same classroom, though space cannot be guaranteed.

### ***Other Vacations***

Arrangements may be made, on a case-by-case basis, for extended vacations due to maternity leave, planned sabbatical, or some other form of extenuating circumstances, through consultation with the Family Life Coordinator and the Executive Director.

## **Your First Day at PIC**

Upon arrival, please check in with the Family Life Coordinator. She will welcome you and check to be sure that you have completed all required forms. She will then help you find your classroom and introduce you to administrators and the classroom staff. The teachers will have set aside a cubby for your child's clothing and extra supplies and will have assigned a crib or cot for naptime and a space to store diapers.

On the first day, please plan to spend a part of the day with your child. As your child explores the classroom and becomes familiar with the staff and children, it's reassuring to have you there. You will want to talk with the staff about classroom routines and tell them everything you want them to know about your child. Your child's teachers will have read the developmental history you have provided prior to your arrival, and they may have questions. We welcome any additional information you would like the staff to have.

At the end of the first day, discuss with the staff the plan for the following day. Sometimes it's the parents who need a little more time getting comfortable at the Center, and sometimes the children need some additional time getting to know new friends. Many families find it helpful to stay for a shorter period on the second and third mornings. You and the teachers will be the best judges about how long this process should take. Remember that when you leave, you are welcome to call the Center to inquire about your child's adjustment. Thereafter, once your child has entered into an activity or gotten connected to a staff member, you may say a casual good-bye, reminding your child that you will return at the end of the day. It's best not to hover at the door because children get confused about whether you are staying or leaving.

On the first day, be sure to have these **LABELED** items for your child:

- two changes of clothes
- diapers and wipes, if appropriate
- bottles and formula, if appropriate
- sheet, blanket for naptime, maybe a soft toy for reassurance
- photo of your child and one of your family
- lunch in lunchbox
- toothbrush for toddlers and pre-kindergarten children

## Every Day at PIC

### *Food*

Families provide lunch each day for their children. We encourage healthy foods at PIC and teachers may offer advice or suggest resources if they see that a child's lunch could be more nutritious. There is a refrigerator in the classroom as well as a microwave. Please cut foods into appropriate size portions when packing it so staff will have an easier time preparing all those lunches. Children don't master chewing until around age 4, so foods should be cut into bite-sized pieces (no larger than ½ inch, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics). Parents of infants sometimes bring food for a week at a time.

If a child has a food allergy, warnings will be posted inside and outside the child's classroom. For the health and safety of our children, we appreciate your understanding and must insist on your cooperation in following rules about excluding foods that could cause a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction.

**Please label everything** - lunchboxes, bottles, cups, thermoses, plastic containers, etc. Toddlers and pre-kindergarten children should also bring a toothbrush; please remember to replace it regularly.

Every Thursday is pizza day. If your child would like, you can order a special pizza lunch, which includes juice and fruit. *You must pay for this each week with cash.*

Mothers are welcome to come and nurse their babies. Some enjoy sitting in the classroom to chat with the children and staff, while other parents prefer a quiet, private visit with their children. In fact, any parent is welcome to come and join us for lunch whenever you are free.

We purchase some snack foods centrally to take advantage of bulk purchase savings. However, each classroom has funds for making additional snack purchases that will tie in with program themes or food preparation activities. Teachers are encouraged to follow USDA snack guidelines, and we hope that you will do the same at lunchtime. In amounts varying with age, lunches should include one serving of fluid milk, two servings of fruit and/or vegetable, one serving of bread or grains (bread, pasta, noodles), and one serving of meat or meat alternative (eggs, cheese, beans, nuts, yogurt). You can find information about food and nutrition and ways to create nutritious snacks and meals on the USDA website: <http://www.nal.usda.gov>. Though we all break these rules occasionally on special occasions such as birthday parties, good food habits are learned at an early age! Working together we will establish healthy habits that last a lifetime.

### *Naps*

We provide cribs, mats or cots for napping, and children are supervised even when sleeping. You are expected to bring bed linens, including a crib-sized sheet, seasonally appropriate covers, and a *small* pillow if your toddler or preschooler uses one. If your child has a special blanket, or stuffed toys that will help in settling down to sleep, send that along, too. Bed linens should be taken home and washed weekly. **Please label everything.**

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

## ***Diapers***

Parents of children in diapers must provide an adequate supply. If you would like us to use commercially packaged wipes or other diapering products, please bring them along. Your child's caregivers will inform you when supplies are running low. If you use cloth diapers rather than disposables, please make arrangements with the teachers for storing and picking up soiled ones.

## ***Clothing***

Your child will have his or her own "cubbie" for storing extra clothes. Children of all ages have occasional accidents. Two complete changes of clothing should be brought to the Center on the first day and should be replaced as needed. This supply should include a sweater and extra shoes and socks. Many children will need to have extra pairs of pants and underpants. The type of clothing should be appropriate to the season. **Please be sure to label all articles of clothing clearly.** Use first name and initials- there could be several Matthews or Samiras. Staff do their best to keep children's belongings together, but it's a lot harder with no names.

Children should wear sturdy, comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing in which they can play. Please remember that our play is sometimes dirty. **The children go outside all year round**, so be sure they are dressed warmly in the winter and that they have mittens and waterproof boots. In summer, don't forget a hat and sun block.

Parents of walkers or crawlers should send children in sneakers or other soft-soled shoes. Sandals are not good for climbing. Waterproof beach shoes should be provided for summer, when children are playing in the sprinkler, so they need not run around barefoot.

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

## ***What NOT to bring to PIC***

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

## ***Lost and Found***

PIC's lost-and-found box is located by the Operations Manager's office on the ground floor of the Spruce Building. *You will be surer to find lost items if they are labeled with your child's name.*

When classes are closing outdoors, each group places its things along the fence. Check those locations before you leave to be sure you have everything. If you leave it behind, it will probably be placed inside the Spruce Building.

## **Moving to New Classrooms**

Children develop differently, so moving a child from one classroom to another is determined by the child's chronological age and individual signs of readiness as assessed by the Lead Teachers. When a child exhibits the behaviors of the next developmental stage, a move may be indicated. Other factors that influence the decision to move a child to the next classroom are seniority and space availability.

The Lead Teacher will notify parents when their child has been identified as ready to move up. Before the child moves, please schedule a time to observe in the new classroom and arrange a get-acquainted conference with the classroom staff. During the transition time, the child visits the new room with a familiar staff member and classmates, spending an increasing amount of time in the new setting until she or he is essentially integrated into the class.

Please remember that a good deal of time is spent on making room assignments. We try to balance ages, genders, races, cultures, personalities, as well as new and familiar children. Since it is impossible to give all variables equal weight, we make professional judgments about the best matches. While we are glad to know if you have a specific request, but we can't always accommodate your preferences.

## **What to Do If You Have a Concern**

Occasionally, a parent will find he or she has some concerns about something happening in the classroom or the center. Open communication usually solves most problems in the classroom. If you're comfortable talking with the Lead Teacher, that's the place to start. If you'd prefer to talk with someone outside the classroom, it's best to schedule an appointment to talk with the Program Director who is responsible for supervision of your child's teachers. She can help you think about how best to address the issue or speak directly with relevant staff members. If she is not able to help solve the problem, please feel free to speak with the Executive Director or Family Life Coordinator. Your Room Parent(s) may also help you locate the appropriate person to address your concern.

## **PIC Traditions**

### ***PIC "Push"***

It's a PIC tradition to "push" your folks out the classroom door in the morning. Maybe it provides some closure for the child whose parents are leaving for the day. Maybe the children are saying "Now, I have my work to do, and you should go and do yours" or "Don't worry, folks, I'll have a good day and will see you later." Whatever the case, for many children at the Center, it's a helpful ritual that you may want to adopt. Your child may devise his or her own!

### ***Birthdays***

Perhaps there is no day more exciting than your very own birthday! Three-year-olds may spend the entire year inviting and un-inviting people to the celebration. We appreciate the celebration of birthdays as landmark events and recognize the importance of sharing a special activity with others. We ask that you plan your child's birthday observance with the classroom staff. Eating a birthday snack together isn't the only way to make the day special. An interesting game, excursion, or unusual experience is also quite meaningful. Your child may have some very specific ideas! Some families like to observe our tradition of giving the classroom a book in celebration of a birthday. This tradition promotes the importance of reading and sharing while helping to build the classroom library. We keep a box of bookplates in the Executive Director's office so that you can inscribe your gift. The birthday celebration can then focus on sharing and reading the birthday book. Lead Teachers can make suggestions about appropriate books for the classroom.

*We ask that families NOT bring hats, balloons, candy or party favors for birthday celebrations. Special or costumed personalities are not a good idea, as they often frighten small children. Birthdays will always be special occasions for our children, but a simple and controlled celebration in a loving and caring setting will be best for all the children.*

Birthday parties at PIC may not be the only celebration of your child's special day. We ask that you not distribute invitations to home parties at the Center unless your plans include all the children in the classroom. Hurt feelings happen among even very young children and can easily be avoided. PIC's small gym may be used on weekends for a donation to cover cleaning and staffing. Contact the Operations Manager to schedule a party.

### ***Holidays***

We want our Center to reflect the most important facets of each family's life, and so we learn about a variety of holidays. Children can learn best by experiencing the concrete activities of those holidays rather than the abstract and subtle features of those celebrations. Consequently, our activities include foods, the use of symbols,



playthings and traditional activities associated with holidays. We appreciate suggestions drawn from your family's celebrations, and we are pleased when parents are able to visit the classrooms to share their family traditions.

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

### ***Special Events***

Among our other traditions are these activities we "always" do:

Parades for July Fourth and Halloween

Classroom Potlucks in the Fall

"Grandfriends" days for grandparents and special friends during Thanksgiving week

Holiday Celebrations in December

PIC Community Potlucks in the Spring

Family picnics in June and July

We like to try new experiences, but it's reassuring to have a few things you can count on!

## **When it's Time to Leave PIC**

Though we hope you will stay in touch with your PIC friends for a long time, the day will come when you outgrow us or are moving away. **Families are required to give 60 days' written notice of your intention to leave the Center and pay tuition for two months, so that we can have adequate time to fill your child's space.** Your deposit, minus any tuition and a charge for uncompleted PPP obligations or unreturned key fobs, will be returned about a month after you leave the Center at your request.

### ***Graduation***

PIC doesn't have a graduation, since there is no single time when all the children leave for kindergarten. However, most children enjoy a "Leaving Party" – it's just like a birthday party, but you leave out the candles.

When children graduate from the Center to kindergarten, some families choose to designate their tuition deposits as a contribution to our fund for scholarships, capital improvements, or staff development—a thoughtful farewell gesture that is always appreciated.

### ***Kindergarten Transition***

In order to help children make a smooth transition to kindergarten, we like to establish connections with the schools our children attend. Once you've made that decision, let us know. Sometimes we can arrange class exchanges. With your permission, we will send the kindergarten teacher a letter and brief assessment that will help him or her prepare to welcome your child.

## **Health Policies**

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

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

1. Your child will not get well as quickly as she or he will in a more isolated, quiet, home environment.
2. There is an increased chance of other children and the staff getting sick.
3. Staff who are giving extra attention to sick children cannot give adequate attention to the rest of the children in the classroom.

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

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

1. Any of the following conditions suggest possible severe illness: fever (temperature of 101) accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness, lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or other manifestations of possible severe illness, such as a quickly spreading rash. If any of the above occurs while at PIC:
  - You must pick your child up immediately and take him/her home.
  - Your child may not return to the Center until his or her condition and temperature have been normal for 24 consecutive hours.
2. Children with persistent coughs and runny noses that do not improve may need to be seen by a doctor. A doctor's note may be requested to prevent exclusion from day care if such symptoms extend beyond that commonly seen in this age group.
3. Diarrhea is defined as loose, watery stools of at least twice the normal daily frequency. There are infectious and non infectious causes. If it is not contagious and if the child has no other symptoms, we *may* allow his or her continued attendance at the Center. However, sometimes the added demands on the staff, or stress for the child, may suggest that the child be sent home. When diarrhea is accompanied by fever or a negative change in behavior we ask that children be kept at home until stools are normal for 24 hours.
4. Mouth cold sores are infectious in beginning stages, particularly in children who cannot control their secretions (drooling). Your child must stay home until the sores are dried.
5. If your child shows signs of conjunctivitis, such as pink or red, swollen, or purulent eyes, you must see a doctor and obtain a doctor's note before returning to the Center. A child with bacterial conjunctivitis may return once the course of treatment has begun. A child with viral or allergic conjunctivitis may return with a doctor's note.
6. Head lice are common among young children. Lice are transmitted through direct contact with an infected person or their personal belongings, especially clothing or head gear. Treatment is complicated, so we urge each family to make regular head checks at home. When a child is infested and treatment has been completed, we will continue to check for nits, as you should.
7. Illnesses requiring a doctor's note for readmission include, but are not limited to: hepatitis, scabies, ringworm, pinworms, scarlet fever, strep throat, or treatment for exposure to shigella, salmonella or E. coli bacteria. Please inform your child's teacher as soon as your child becomes ill at home from any cause. We can warn other parents to be alert to similar symptoms or take appropriate preventive measures. It is important that you also let us know if your child ever needs hospitalization.
8. Nearly every day our activities include outdoor play. Children well enough to be at the Center are expected to be well enough to go outside. We generally don't have enough staff to be able to have a caregiver inside with one child while the others are outdoors. If your child's medical needs require an exception to this rule, we will require a letter from the pediatrician specifying the circumstances under which a child is to be kept indoors.

### ***Medication at PIC***

Prescribed medications or Tylenol/Motrin/generic substitute ("GS") may be administered at PIC. Staff will not administer any other over-the-counter medications without a doctor's note. The following policies govern administration of prescribed medicines:

- Prescribed medication is provided in its original container with the prescription indicating the dose and frequency to be given; and
- A "Medication Consent and Log" form is on file in the classroom giving teachers permission to administer the medicine, including exact instructions, amount, and time of administration. This should be signed by the parent and dated each day.

Medication consent forms are available from classroom staff. All medicines will be placed in a locked container that is not accessible to children. Medicines must not be put into a child's lunchbox or cubby. If medicine needs to be refrigerated, be sure to include that information on the "Medication Consent and Log" form.

Staff will give Tylenol, Motrin or GS for the onset of a fever or pain. Examples of pain include: teething pain, ear pain from a diagnosed ear infection, or pain after immunizations.

The following policies govern the administration of Tylenol/Motrin/GS at PIC:

- A signed Special Permissions form must be in your child's permanent file. These forms are completed at enrollment and when a child moves up to a new age group.
- A Medication Consent Form, complete with dosage, must be on file in the classroom. Forms are available from the teacher.
- If your child requires Tylenol or Motrin (or GS) for one of the reasons listed above, then you will be asked to fill out a form each day this medication is required.
- PIC will not administer Tylenol or Motrin (or GS) to "prevent" a fever. A fever may be a sign of illness and needs to be recognized.

If you have been called to pick up a sick child, with your permission, the staff will give a dose of Tylenol, Motrin or GS to bring down fever while awaiting your arrival.

### ***Examinations and Immunizations***

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

### ***Special Care Plan***

When the parent or legal guardian informs PIC staff that the child has a special need (such as an allergy or asthma) or disability, a special care plan needs to be completed and signed by a parent and/or health care provider(s). This is kept in your child's file by the Family Life Coordinator. If your child has an IEP, or an IFSP, please provide a copy for your child's file. You are encouraged to invite your child's teacher to future IEP or IFSP meetings.

### ***Mandated Reporting***

Staff are required by law to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect. A designated staff member will forward all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to PA ChildLine

### ***Emergency Medical Attention***

In case of an emergency, we will take your child to the Emergency Room at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 34th and Civic Center Blvd. We will call you immediately, and you can meet us at the hospital to authorize treatment. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP YOUR HOME, BUSINESS, AND EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS CURRENT AT OUR OFFICE.**

## Security and Safety

All of the doors at PIC are kept locked. *When you ring the bell for entrance, please let the person who answers know who you are and whom you are picking up.* Be certain to close the door securely behind you. Be sure you know anyone whom you are inviting to enter with you.

Families are expected to abide by the following rules:

- Drop-off time: All children must be brought into the classroom by a parent or another responsible adult. Please be sure that a staff member knows that your child has arrived and that you have signed in.
- Pick-up time: When you pick up your child at the end of the day, you must notify one of the regular staff that you are signing out and taking your child home.
- Change of escort: Please notify the teachers ahead of time when there is someone new who will pick up your child, and make sure that person is added to your Emergency Contact form. Any pick-up person not known to the staff will be asked to show identification.
- **Contact information: You are responsible for reporting any change in address or phone numbers or changes in employment to the Family Life Coordinator. Remember to keep the information for your Emergency Contacts up to date (verified every 6 months). It is essential that we know where and how to reach you at all times.**
- If you wish to ask another Center parent to pick up your child(ren), please call those parents ahead of time to make that request. It is not appropriate to ask classroom staff to negotiate those plans for your family. Also, please be sure to inform the classroom staff of the change.
- Key fobs: Families may request a key fob to PIC so they don't have to wait for the door to be answered. There is a \$50 fee to have the fob replaced and it must be returned for the full return of your deposit. See the Operations Manager for a key fob.

## Parking

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

## Transportation

PIC has two vans to transport children on trips. All of our drivers are over 25, are insured and have a safe driving record. All occupants must use seat belts at all times. Passengers in the van under age 8 or 80 pounds are required to use age-appropriate child safety restraints. If a trip requires renting another vehicle, it is our policy to rent buses equipped with seat belts.

When classes take trips, toddlers and preschoolers may ride in the van. One adult must be present in addition to the driver. Teachers may recruit parent volunteers to drive their own children, as the vans cannot accommodate an entire class.

Some children come to PIC by stroller. Please park strollers for infants on the ground floor of the Spruce Building or the Sweet Building, or in the "corral" in the small gym. We ask that you fold your stroller so that there will be room for others, too.

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