PARENT HANDBOOK

Child Development Laboratory
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Dr. Carol Hagen, Director

http://www.coe.unt.edu/cdl
Fax # 940-369-7662
AA/EOE/ADA

The University of North Texas and the Child Development Laboratory do not discriminate against any child or family based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion or disability. Reasonable accommodations will be made to provide services to all children enrolled in our program.

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INTRODUCTION

The University of North Texas Child Development Laboratory is an early childhood program within the College of Education. We provide early childhood classrooms and observation areas where students may observe and practice appropriate guidance techniques and plan and carry out curriculum based on the developmental needs of young children. This is done under the supervision of degreed early childhood/child development specialists in a model setting. The laboratory facility is used by the College of Education and other programs within the University, including the department of psychology, communication disorders, journalism, the play therapy program and various other instructional programs and research projects.

While the education and care of young children cannot be separated, the Child Development Laboratory exists as a preschool, and the university does not have a child care center.

PHILOSOPHY

Our program is based on the following beliefs:

1. Young children learn by doing. They construct and acquire knowledge through interaction with the physical and social world. Children are motivated to learn by their desire to make sense of the fascinating world around them; their primary mode of learning is through play.

2. Because of the way young children learn, which is based on their sensory and motor development, teachers act as guides and facilitators rather than lecturers. They prepare the environment, observe children's understanding, and work along with them, answering questions, suggesting ways they can extend their activities, and introducing new words and ideas. This takes place in a classroom environment using a centers approach, with ongoing changes in materials and activities.

3. Each child is unique. This is expected, accepted and used in the planning of appropriate activities. Children differ in their cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. Differences in abilities, maturation, and learning style occur in the areas of physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth. Experiences are provided to meet children's needs in all these areas.
4. All interactions, activities, and learning materials are designed to develop self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning.

5. Exploration and opportunities to make choices are considered in the planning of classroom activities and in on-going daily routines. Children are involved in discovery learning, and are expected to be physically and mentally active. Creativity and problem-solving are encouraged.

6. Children work mostly in small informal groups or individually. Large group interactions are kept to short periods of time related to the development of the children in the group.

7. Materials used are concrete and “hands-on”. They encourage child involvement and manipulation and are relevant to the child's life experiences.

8. There is a focus on the development of self-control rather than adult-control. This is fostered by the use of positive guidance techniques, including modeling, encouraging expected behaviors, redirecting, and the setting of clear limits. Opportunities for developing social skills such as cooperation, negotiation, and assisting others are provided to children, and competition is not stressed.

9. An abundance of opportunities which provide meaningful experiences in language and literacy are included on a daily basis. Instruction in isolated skill development is not relevant for young children, and activities are individualized. Appropriate activities include hearing stories and poems, dictating individual and group language experience stories, going on campus field trips, participating in dramatic play and other experiences which allow for active communication by children.

We acknowledge and welcome the different cultural backgrounds of the families who use our center, and value the multi-ethnic composition of our families and our staff. We want all children in our program to develop strong self-esteem and to feel valued by others. We believe that this, along with the modeling of anti-bias attitudes by adults, allows children to be accepting and understanding of others. We work hard to create a bias-free environment, and ask parents to support us in this goal and provide suggestions which might help us in our work.
The curriculum which is used in the Child Development Laboratory is not a pre-determined and fixed set of information. Rather, it is an ongoing plan of action, based on the program philosophy and the individual children enrolled in the program. Each semester, head teachers cooperate to design a program of topics or themes. These are generally similar for all sessions (i.e., Chinese New Year, Ponds and Puddles), but are implemented by each teacher to meet the needs of children in that group. This topic outline also allows the many pre-professionals involved in the program to plan and prepare for their participation in the classroom.

Weekly lesson plans are written by each teacher. These are posted in the classroom for use by practicum students, and are available for observers of the program, including parents. Teachers' plans for the individual needs of children may not be posted, according to the discretion of the teacher.

Children at the Child Development Laboratory are provided with many opportunities for growth and learning in the following areas:

1. **Knowledge.** This includes facts, concepts, stories, songs, and other types of information which may be useful or enjoyable for the child to know. Material should relate in some way to the lives of the individual children, as well as being relevant to young children in general.

2. **Skills.** Skills are small units of action, easily observable, which occur in a relatively short period of time. These may include motor and social skills, printing, counting, etc., which can be improved through practice that is most often child initiated.

3. **Dispositions.** Dispositions are tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways, and can be thought of as habits of mind. Friendliness, creativity, curiosity and cooperativeness are examples of dispositions which we hope to foster. They are learned primarily from interacting with those who have and exhibit these characteristics, and by being given opportunities to act in such ways, so that these behaviors can be acknowledged, appreciated, and strengthened.

4. **Feelings.** While some feelings may be innate, many are learned. Developing feelings of confidence, competence, and security is important for young children,
and encourages the ability to understand and let others know what one’s particular feelings are at any given time.

In all four of these areas of learning, children should not only be exposed to, but actively engaged in the learning process. The total curriculum seeks to develop intellectual and personal competence by fostering the development of problem-solving skills, openness, autonomy and personal integrity.

The program uses the following developmental goals to help children:

- Develop a positive self-concept and a sense of belonging
- Learn to give and receive affection and to share
- Understand and respect social and cultural differences
- Learn about social roles and apply rules of group living
- Develop independence, autonomy and self control
- Begin to understand their own bodies
- Acquire basic physical skills, both gross and fine motor
- Construct knowledge of the physical world
- Develop language and literacy ability
- Question, think critically, make choices and solve problems

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Guidance strategies in use at the Child Development Laboratory are designed to help the child develop self-discipline. Teachers focus on modeling and teaching respectful interpersonal relationships with others rather than on the punishment of misbehavior. Physical punishment of any kind is never used. Language used with children during any incident of misbehavior may be firm but is always respectful. “Time out” as punishment is not used. Parents are encouraged to discuss concerns about appropriate guidance for preschool children, either at school or at home, with teachers and with the director. The most common guidance strategies in use are:

- modeling of expected behaviors
- redirecting of children’s inappropriate behaviors
- an expectation that children will act with kindness toward others
- the setting of firm and fair limits on behaviors
- teaching, encouraging, and supporting actions that show respect and fairness to everyone
Three basic rules are taught and modeled:

1. We respect and help care for all other living things (people, pets, plants, etc.)
2. We are careful in our use of all personal, classroom, and outdoor materials, and we don’t waste resources (clothing, toys and books, paint and paper, water, etc.)
3. We help maintain a learning environment that allows everyone to do their best (use quiet voices, wait our turn, don’t interrupt, listen to others, share materials, etc.)

The teaching staff accepts responsibility for modeling and teaching these guidelines to children. Children are taught and re-taught appropriate behaviors as necessary. Teachers help children reflect on any actions which may be harmful to others, and encourage feelings of remorse and empathy when they are appropriate. Children are provided with time to reflect and are encouraged to make amends as best they can (help clean up, repair materials, comfort a crying child, etc.) Children may be removed from the group for this purpose, but are encouraged to return as soon as they are calm and ready to participate in a way that is respectful to others and supportive of the learning environment.

PROGRAM

The Child Development Laboratory follows the same semester schedule as that of University of North Texas classes, and is in session as well during exam week. You will receive a Yearly School Calendar annually.

Three through five year old children may be enrolled in any or all of the following sessions:
- Morning 8:00 AM - 12 Noon
- Supervised Lunch 12:00 Noon – 1:00 PM
- Afternoon 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

A combination of sessions can provide a full-day program, should a family require this. Children who attend the program are enrolled from both the UNT and the Denton community at large, on a space-available, paid tuition basis.

Families who anticipate enrolling a child in the program should plan to come with a child and stay for half an hour to an hour on at least 2 or 3 separate occasions, so the child may become familiar with the classroom and staff before being left for the first time. These visits are unstructured and may occur at times that are convenient for the family. They are designed to help both parents and
children become comfortable with the program and lessen any separation anxiety.

    Lunches are brought from home and must meet licensing standards for good nutrition. Lunches should be sent using either cold packs or thermoses, as needed, since we do not have equipment to heat or refrigerate them.

    A nutritious snack is provided for each child during both the morning and afternoon sessions. A snack list is posted in the classrooms on Monday mornings for parent review. Snacks provided by parents to be shared with their children's classmates must be commercially prepared or prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials.

    Classroom placement for all children in the Child Development Laboratory is determined by maturational development, as well as chronological age. Generally, children are placed in Room 1 (four and five year olds) or Room 2 (three and young four year olds.) This placement is determined upon enrollment by parents and staff, and is then subject to continuing teacher and parent review. Two classrooms function simultaneously and autonomously during each session, sharing the use of a multi-purpose room, the entry area and the playground.

    PARENT INVOLVEMENT

    Parents are involved in the educational process at the Child Development Laboratory through parent conferences, meetings and classroom activities. Parents are asked to schedule a conference with the teacher at least once a semester. Additional conferences with the director and with teachers are held at any time upon request.

    Parent programs are provided on a regular basis. These include social activities such as family picnics and children’s singalongs, as well as opportunities to discuss issues related to children. We welcome parents who wish to become involved in enriching our curriculum or who have other ways of participating in our program.

    ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

    Tuition

    Tuition costs at the Child Development Laboratory are assessed for the period of a semester. Before the beginning of each semester, a first payment (which is part of the total tuition fee) is made. Upon acceptance of this fee, a
place is held for the child. This fee is NOT refundable. The remainder of the tuition may be paid under either of two (2) plans.

Plan 1 - full tuition, minus the first payment, paid on the first day of the semester.

Plan 2 - full tuition, minus the first payment, paid in four (4) payments as listed in the Tuition Form.

Summer terms operate on a different plan, because they are only 5 weeks long. After the first payment is made, the balance is due on the first day of the 5 week term. Please see our annual Tuition Schedule for exact details for the current year.

Parents may request an alternative payment plan, which must be approved by the director, but all payments must be made at least two weeks in advance of services. Payments must be made by check or money order made payable to UNT CHILD DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY. Please note, CASH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Payments may be hand delivered in the office or mailed to the director at the address on this handbook. DO NOT SUBMIT PAYMENTS TO TEACHERS AND STUDENT STAFF. Again, a first payment made in any semester to hold a place for a child is NOT refundable.

Immunization Requirements

A copy of your child’s original immunization record that is signed by your child’s physician or other health care professional is required on or before your child’s first day of attendance.

Vision and Hearing Screening

First time enrollees who are four years of age or older and all children who are four by September 1 of each year must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems prior to completion of the first semester of enrollment or within 120 calendar days of enrollment, whichever is longest. Evidence of screening conducted within one year prior to enrollment is acceptable.

Attendance

The Child Development Laboratory is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Families may drop off and pick up children at their convenience, to suit the family schedule. Children must be signed in and out
accurately on the class roster, and these records are kept for at least 6 months. A call to the school if your child will not be in attendance is appreciated.

Designated pick-up times are 11:50 a.m.-12:00 noon for the a.m. session, 12:50 p.m.-1:00 p.m. for the a.m. & lunch session, 4:50 p.m.-5:10 p.m. for the p.m. session. **Children MUST be picked up by the designated pick-up time.** After one reminder, a late fee of $1.00 per minute will be assessed. This is a standard practice and amount in programs for young children. Families who disregard this policy may be dropped from the program, as stipulated in the contract signed by parents and the university.

**Pickup of Children by Other than Parents**
Children will be dismissed only to parents and to persons designated by the parents on the child's Emergency Card. Designated persons should have been personally introduced to the classroom teacher and carry identification. Parents will fill out a message form (available in the classroom) indicating the name of the person who will be picking up their child. Last minute calls designating persons who are not known to staff will not be accepted. Please plan ahead.

When a child is not picked up at the scheduled time, we will make repeated attempts to contact family members and others listed on the Emergency Card. If you have an emergency, please call the Child Development Laboratory (940-565-2555) or try the director, Carol Hagen (940-484-6422). As a last resort, the Child Development Laboratory may contact other agencies for help.

**Farewells**
Initially, children may need parents to stay with them in their new environment. Parents should allow time for this in their schedule, in the first days of a child’s attendance. When parents decide to leave, it is important to make farewells brief, positive, and cheerful.

**School Closings: Weather, State Holiday, etc.**
The Child Development Laboratory will close due to inclement weather conditions or on any other occasions when the University of North Texas is closed. Closings related to weather are announced on radio and TV.
Medication

If a child must take medicine while at school, a medication form must be completely filled out. Forms are available in each classroom. Medications must be unexpired and in their original containers with the child’s name on the label. All medications should be hand delivered to the director or the teacher along with the completed medication form. Do not leave medicines in children’s cubbies. By state law, only medications in the original container can be administered.

The CDL staff does not administer the initial dosage of a medication, except with physician’s written permission for life-threatening situations (ex., EpiPen.) All medicines are stored in a locked refrigerator, cabinet or container and are inaccessible to children.

Parents or a health care professional must provide (1) written instructions that include signs and symptoms, and (2) a demonstration and any special care after use when medication delivered by a device is needed. Medication, including medication delivered by a device, is given only by trained staff.

Illness

Children must be kept home for the day if:

1. a physician has diagnosed, or the director has reason to believe (because of other illness in the school) that a child may have a contagious disease.
2. the child has had fever, vomiting, or diarrhea within the last twenty-four (24) hours.
3. the child cannot function normally due to an illness or other debilitating condition.

If children are well enough to attend school, they will be expected to participate in the program, including outdoor play. Because of staffing requirements and licensing regulations, exceptions to this policy are not made.

The head teacher will conduct a brief health check when greeting each child as he or she arrives, and is attentive throughout the day for anything out of the ordinary that might signal a child is ill. If a child becomes ill at school, they are moved to a supervised area away from other children.

Every attempt will be made to reach parents and others they designate when a child becomes ill or injured at school. In case of severe illness or injury, the parents hereby authorize the CDL staff to call for an ambulance and to take the child to the nearest facility which offers emergency treatment, on behalf of the parents.

After an illness, children must be fever and symptom free for 24 hours before returning to the CDL. When on antibiotics for an illness, the child must have been taking the medication for 24 hours before returning to the CDL.
Allergies and Food Limitations
Written information concerning a child’s allergies must be provided. In addition, parents are requested to discuss a child's allergies, medications, or other treatment, as well as any food limitations, with the head teacher(s) responsible for their child. Snacks will be provided to meet the individual needs of all children in attendance each day.

Medical Emergencies
There is at least one staff person who has received CPR and First Aid training on duty in each classroom at all times. Should children become ill or injured during the school day, immediate attempts are made to contact parents and/or all persons listed on the emergency information card kept on file for each child. In case of severe illness or injury, the Child Development Laboratory will call 911 for an ambulance and will provide first aid and CPR following the advice which is given when the call is made, until medical personnel arrive. The child will be taken to a hospital which offers emergency treatment if necessary, on behalf of the parents. If critical illness or injury requires immediate attention of a physician, the child’s physician will also be contacted. Parents have an obligation to inform the office in writing when there are changes of address, telephone number, or persons designated to pick up a child, so they can be easily reached in case of an emergency.

Accidents
In the event that a non-emergency incident occurs while your child is in our care, parents will be notified by phone call, and also in writing. A written report of how the incident occurred will be shared with the parent. The parent is required to sign the report indicating they have reviewed and received a copy of the report within 48 hours of when the incident occurred.

Insurance
All children enrolled in the University of North Texas Child Development Laboratory are insured for accidents which occur at the facility during regular hours. The policy is provided by Forest T. Jones Insurance. The insurance company retains the right to require a deductible fee be paid by parents. This school policy becomes effective after payment has been made by the primary policy held by the family.

Emergency Drills and Relocation
Tornado and fire drills are practiced on a regular basis. Office personnel listen to radio reports during inclement weather, to remain aware of changing conditions. Emergency information, including a building diagram and exit routes is posted near each door. The head teacher will count and record children present when leaving the school, and recount and record attendance at the designated alternate location.

If evacuation and relocation away from the Child Development Laboratory becomes necessary for any reason, the university has designated the parking lot on the corner of Welch and Highland as our relocation site (east side of Wooten Hall, 1121 Union Circle, Denton, TX) and we will walk there, or as we are directed by the UNT Risk Management Office. If indoor shelter is required, we will enter Wooten Hall. In case of an extreme emergency (a large scale campus-wide disaster), the University will designate a family relocation center, which will be broadcast on radio & TV.

Emergency phone numbers are placed at each phone, including Poison Control, UNT Risk Management Office, 911 information, and family telephone numbers, and calls to these offices will be made as appropriate. Family phone numbers and addresses are kept in both of the center’s offices, in the classroom attendance clipboard pocket, and on line, where they can be accessed from an off campus location.

**Clothing**

Since children who are worried about "getting dirty" may refuse to engage in valuable learning experiences, clothing that can be easily laundered should be worn. Clothing appropriate for the day's weather conditions is essential (sweaters, coats, hats, mittens, etc.). Well-fitting shoes which the child can manage easily are important. Boots, thongs and some sandals are unsafe for many outside activities and are discouraged. A small resting blanket will be provided and regularly laundered by the school.

For the convenience of student observers in the observation room and student teachers in the classroom, all children will wear a name tag pinned to the back of their clothing.

Parents are to provide their child with an "emergency pack" to be kept at school for accidents. This pack should contain a change of clothing that is
appropriate for the season, including socks and underwear. All items, including the pack, should be labeled with the child's name.

**Inside/Outside Play**
Learning center activities and outside play are part of the everyday routine. All children will participate in both inside and outside learning center activities, every day except during extreme weather, and should be dressed accordingly.

**Water Activities**
During summer terms the children may engage in water activities with signed parental permission. The water activities include splash/wading pools and a sprinkler, with careful adult supervision.

**Naps**
Nap time at the Child Development Laboratory is individualized to the needs of each child. The nap room is available to children who attend the program for the full day. Parents are requested to inform the afternoon teacher as to whether or not their child still sleeps during the day, and the duration of the usual nap time. A form is provided for this information. Children have their own cot, pillow, and blanket, and nap in the same place in the nap room each day. Parents may send bedding from home, or elect to use what we have available; in either case, the bedding is washed at school once a week.

Children enter the nap room when they have finished lunch and brushed their teeth, usually between 12:30 and 12:50 p.m., but no later than 1:00 p.m., so that children falling asleep will not be disturbed. Nappers are awakened no later than 2:30 p.m. The nap teacher marks the "Did I Sleep?" chart (posted near the classroom door for parent convenience).

**Field Trips**
Occasionally the University of North Texas invites us to join activities held on campus, such as visits from the Fort Worth Zoo or joining in the International parade. Parents will receive at least 48 hours notice before the scheduled event that requires us to leave the Child Development Lab. Children are not transported to field trips off campus.

**Classroom Pets**
Occasionally our teachers have classroom pets. In the past some of these pets have included fish, hermit crabs, frogs, birds, hamsters and even a rat. When applicable, a statement of health is kept on file for certain types of animals.

**Toys**

The Child Development Laboratory provides a rich assortment of toys and learning materials. Children may bring a soft toy from home if it is needed to help the child sleep at nap time. This item will remain in the child's nap bin during the rest of the day. Other toys should not be brought to school, since they may be broken, lost or carried home by other children.

**Birthdays**

On occasions such as a child's birthday, a parent may want to bring refreshments for a party. This should be arranged in advance with the classroom teacher. If parties are to be held away from the school with invitations sent only to some children, parents are requested to send the invitations by mail, not through the children's cubbies, so that uninvited children's feelings are not hurt.

**Staff**

Staff meets and often greatly exceeds licensing regulations as to annual training hours, including CPR/First Aid, Child Abuse and Neglect reporting, Medical documentation of fitness to work in the program is kept on file.

**Breastfeeding in the Center**

Mothers who are breastfeeding may ask for a place to sit with their child. The request may be made in the program's office

**Observation Booth**

Parents are invited to use the observation booth at any time during the day, but are asked to remain quiet. Children under the age of 16 are not permitted in the observation booth.

**Videotaping, Recording of the Children**

Because of the laboratory nature of the school, children may be photographed, videotaped, recorded, and/or quoted for instructional or other university related purposes. Parents who have concerns should discuss them with the director, and provide specific written instructions detailing limitations of a child’s participation. The director will decide whether these limitations can be accommodated or will inhibit the functioning of the school.
Testing, Assessment, Evaluation of the Children

Parents understand that children may be tested, assessed, or evaluated as part of the professional preparation of university students. However, no child will participate in a research project unless a parent has signed a form giving specific permission.

Facebook

The UNT Human Resources Office provides our staff with training on the maintenance of appropriate relationships with the people we serve. The practice of “friending” our families on Facebook is discouraged by the University, and will not be used by our staff. We are concerned about the appearance of being in a “special” relationship with some of our families, and the implications of favoritism that might arise. We encourage your impromptu discussions with us and will also gladly plan times to talk with you during scheduled conferences at your request.

CDL Web Site

The Child Development Laboratory maintains a web site at www.coe.unt.edu/cdl. Photos of children are only used if permission from the family has been obtained.

Cell Phone Use

Because we encourage parents to talk with their children and the teachers during drop-off and pick-up time, we ask that cell phone conversations be completed before families enter the center and not be restarted until after leaving the building.

Babysitting

The Child Development Laboratory does not facilitate the care of children who attend the center during hours that the center is not open. Though we cannot mandate what staff do when they are off duty, Human Resources Office training indicates that off-campus agreements between UNT staff and UNT customers may put the university at risk, should there be problems.

Gang-free Zone
As required by the Texas Legislature families are being informed that the area within 1,000 feet of the Child Development Laboratory is designated as a gang-free zone. Criminal activity within this area is subject to increased penalty.

Grievance
If families have questions or concerns related to classroom activities, they are requested to talk with the head teacher in charge of the session their child attends. If this will take more than one or two minutes or you prefer to talk in privacy, we can schedule an appointment time convenient to all parties. This meeting can be attended by the director or followed by a meeting with the director, if you choose. If there are questions or concerns related to the overall program, to finances, or to other topics you deem to be more appropriate to discuss with the director, please ask for an appointment. If you feel we have not addressed concerns adequately, you may contact Dr. Nancy Nelson, Chair, Teacher Education & Administration, 206 Matthews Hall, 940-565-2920.

This handbook has attempted to address the basic policies of our program. Parents may have many other questions relating to their individual child and family. Other policies may be present in the acknowledgement form families sign with the University of North Texas when children are enrolled. Families are required to sign both the UNT acknowledgement form and a statement verifying that they have read this Parent Handbook. We will be happy to meet with you to answer any questions and to listen to your suggestions at any time.

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL!!

ATTENTION PARENTS

You are entitled to see the following information. You may ask the center director to show you the most recent copy of:

- the Minimum Standards for this Licensed Child Care Center (these are also available on the web at www.dfps.state.tx.us or at your local Licensing office located at 553 South Loop 288, Denton, TX 76205, (940)381-3401,
the most recent Department of Family and Protective Services Inspection/Investigation Report (compliance information) is available on the web at 381-3401www.dfps.state.tx.us, from your local Licensing office at (940) 591-6271, and is also posted in the CDL front hallway,

documentation of liability insurance that complies with Human Resources Code, Section 42.0491,
the most recent Fire Marshal’s Inspection Report,
the most recent Gas Pipe Inspection Report, and
the Child Care Center’s operational policies.

The Texas DFPS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline is at (800) 252-5400.