

# Early Learning Center at Kaune



## PREK FAMILY HANDBOOK

Growing Up New Mexico  
Early Learning Center at Kaune  
1409 Monterey Dr., Santa Fe, NM 87505  
[www.growingupnm.org](http://www.growingupnm.org)  
505-303-3950  
License Number: 4000655

Dear Kaune Family:

Welcome to the Growing Up New Mexico Early Learning Center at Kaune. We are looking forward to a wonderful year with you and your child as they grow and learn. Growing Up NM's mission is to increase opportunities for children and families to achieve their dreams and aspirations, and the Early Learning Center at Kaune is an important part of these efforts. Our goal is to provide affordable, high-quality, extended-day, full-year care to the families of our community.

It is our goal to ensure that every child enrolled in the Early Learning Center (ELC) receives a high-quality learning experience. That means we consider the whole child as we support them in becoming a lifelong learner. While attending our program, your child will participate in a variety of activities that promote skill development across several developmental domains, including literacy; numeracy; scientific conceptual understanding; self, family, and community; physical development; approaches to learning; and aesthetic creativity. Because we believe that it is in relationship with others that the most meaningful learning occurs, the ELC team supports the development of children's social-emotional skills and encourages positive relationships with others. We strive to provide an educational environment full of joy, discovery, and exploration for all our children.

To be successful, your child also needs the support of their family members. For that reason, your involvement in our school is extremely important. We encourage you to get involved with one of our school development teams as well as take part in your child's classroom and education whenever and however you can. We will do our part to keep you updated on your child's interests and discoveries in the classroom. By taking the time to discuss these interests with your child and ask them questions about their day, you, too, can impart to them the importance of education.

Our unique extended-day, full-year program is an exciting collaboration between Growing Up New Mexico, New Mexico PreK, and the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department.

**Please read our Family Handbook thoroughly and let us know what questions you may have.**

Regards,  
*The ELC at Kaune Team*

\*\*\* When requested, Growing Up NM will make every effort to translate this Family Handbook and other information into a language the family prefers. \*\*\*

## **Early Learning Center Leadership Team:**

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## **Services Offered:**

- Infant Care
- Toddler Care
- NM Early PreK and PreK
  - Before Care Services

## **Hours of Operation:**

Monday – Thursday: 7:30am – 4pm  
Friday: 7:30am – 1pm

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## **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Growing Up New Mexico has a long and honored history in Santa Fe. Our strategy is to employ a multi-generational approach, supporting children and their families in a series of high-quality early childhood programs designed to prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

### **Our Mission**

To engage the whole community, bringing together people and resources to create increased opportunities for young children and adults in their lives to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

### **Our Vision**

All children succeed in school and life.

### **Philosophy**

The Early Learning Center is a Reggio Emilia inspired program. We celebrate the joy of learning, the potential that lies within each child, and each child's connection to their family and community. We believe children deserve to be in a learning environment that is nurturing, stimulating, and welcoming. Children are encouraged to explore and question the world around them at their own pace. Our environment of respect and compassion enhances self-expression, peer learning, and teamwork, all of which foster the love of learning.

### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

Growing Up NM does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national or ethnic origin, disability, religion, age, sex or sexual orientation in administration of its policies.

### **Growing Up NM Board of Directors**

Growing Up NM members of the Board determine the organization's mission, vision, purpose, and strategies. They are the fiduciaries who lead the organization toward a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, inclusive, and legal governance and financial policies, as well as ensuring the organization has adequate resources to advance the mission. The Board hires the President/CEO to recommend and administer strategies and policies, and to manage employees and business operations.

### **ECECD Childcare Licensing**

The Early Learning Center at Kaune (ELC) is a licensed facility in accordance with the child care requirements of the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD). The child care licensing regulations are posted in each classroom and available for review by families. We are a nationally accredited program and licensed at Star Level 5, which is the highest level of licensing available in New Mexico.

### **NM PreK**

The ELC is a state-funded NM PreK program. We comply with program requirements, the NM PreK Program Standards, and utilize the NM Early Learning Guidelines. The guidelines reflect current brain development research and early childhood education best practices. They represent the growing consensus among educators that a greater emphasis be placed on young children's conceptual learning, social and emotional development, and active participation in culturally and linguistically relevant and meaningful learning experiences.

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age

8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. The ELC at Kaune is NAEYC accredited, which is considered by many to be the gold standard for early childhood programs across the country. To maintain accreditation, the Early Learning Center must submit annual reports, and is required to undergo the certification process every five years to ensure the high-quality practices that meet NAEYC standards are still in place. The ELC at Kaune successfully completed the accreditation renewal process in 2024.

We are committed to abiding by the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children.

### **Ongoing Program Evaluation and Quality Improvement**

We are committed to the continuous quality improvement of our program. In support of this goal, the ELC administers a family survey each year to elicit feedback and suggestions. Furthermore, families are invited to participate in the Family Advisory Team. Members of this team will meet regularly with a school representative to discuss concerns, questions, and suggestions regarding the center's policies, practices, and procedures.

The ELC Team meets several times a year to review survey responses, consider Family Advisory Team suggestions, and reflect upon the school year, both upcoming and past. With this information in mind, the team creates action goals and takes steps toward accomplishing those goals. The purpose of these team sessions is to develop a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan that supports our goal of providing the best possible services for our children and families.

### **NM PreK Eligibility Requirements**

Children must turn 3 years old before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year to be admitted into the 3-year-old (Early PreK) classroom. Children must turn 4 years old before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year to be admitted into the 4-year-old (PreK) classrooms. Children attending the ELC must reside in Santa Fe County.

### **Priority Status**

***\*\*Priority status does not guarantee a place in our program.\*\****

Priority status is given to children who have participated in Growing Up NM's Home Visiting, Bridges to Opportunity, and/or Great Start programs for at least one year prior to the time of the lottery draw. Siblings of current/previous ELC participants will also receive priority status. One third of all available spaces will be filled from the priority list. Applicants who meet priority status requirements but are not offered a space under our one-third rule will be entered into the general lottery with all other applicants.

Once the classes are fully enrolled, a wait list is created using the same method of random selection as the lottery process.

### **Enrollment Procedure**

Families are encouraged to submit applications between January and April to be included in the lottery for the upcoming school year. Applications are available on our website, [www.growingupnm.org/programs/prek-child-care/](http://www.growingupnm.org/programs/prek-child-care/). If you do not have access to a computer or have any questions, you may stop by the ELC at Kaune and a member of the staff can help you complete the online application. A member of the ELC office staff will contact you to confirm receipt of your application.

If the number of applicants exceeds the current available spots, the ELC team conducts a lottery that will determine which students are accepted for admission. The lottery typically occurs in early May, specific dates are provided on the website. Families will be notified within 14 business days of the lottery whether they received a spot in a classroom or if their child is on the wait list.

The lottery is a random selection process to ensure that children are selected in a non-biased manner. Subject to available applicants, an equal number of boys and girls are randomly selected for each classroom. Furthermore, in keeping with our dual language goals, we make every attempt to enroll an even number of native English-speaking students and English-language learners/emerging bilingual students into each classroom.

The ELC accepts applications on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Applications submitted after the lottery date are placed on the wait list in the order they are received. Spaces that open during the school year are filled using the waitlist. The ELC maintains the right to choose how open spaces will be filled.

### **Registration Requirements**

Parents/caregivers of the children drawn in the lottery, who accept their spot in the program, will meet with ELC staff to complete the registration packet before school begins. Appointments to complete registration are scheduled to occur any time between the lottery date and the end of July. ***All registration materials must be completed before a child can start the program.*** If a family misses two registration appointments or is unresponsive to form requests, they will forfeit their spot in the program.

During the registration process, families are asked to provide information for their child's record, such as: their child's birth certificate and two proofs of address. Student files must also include contact information for two local emergency contacts whom we can reach out to if the parent/guardian are unreachable. Families are required to complete a pick-up authorization form with the contact information for each person authorized to pick up their child. These lists must have a minimum of two people *other than* the child's primary parents/guardians. Children must also meet all health requirements for the program. This includes a copy of your child's updated immunization records or approved exemption, a physical/well-child check from your doctor's office and a copy of their latest dental exam. Other requested information helps us to learn more about your child and family, for example: the home language survey and family culture questionnaire. In addition, families will be asked to complete two documents for participation in the food program.

### **Child Custody Dispute**

Under New Mexico law, individuals listed on a child's birth certificate have the right to be involved in their child's life and will be allowed to visit the classroom and/or drop off and pick up their child from school. Therefore, we ask that you include all legal guardians in your child's paperwork during the registration process. If you are involved in a dispute regarding parental rights and/or custody due to separation, divorce, or any other reason, please inform the ELC team as soon as possible. For our center to accommodate changes to child custody and parental rights, any legal documentation related to the child must be submitted to the ELC. This documentation will be placed in the student's confidential file. The ELC will adhere to all specifications outlined in the court paperwork to the best of our ability. At times, we may request additional detailed information from those involved, such as a custody schedule, to help clarify court requirements. When appropriate, all legal guardians will be asked to sign and/or agree to any documentation (schedules, paperwork, permission forms) submitted by the other parent or guardian.

In circumstances of joint custody, it is the ELC's goal to remain impartial and provide equitable

services to everyone involved. We ask that you do not put ELC staff in the middle of any disputes between you and other guardians in your child's life. The ELC team will not discuss matters related to parents/legal guardians in the absence of their presence. To communicate the same message clearly to all parents/guardians, we prefer to schedule family/teacher conferences, meetings related to a child's development or behavior, and other pertinent conversations with all guardians present at the same time. However, if necessary, we can accommodate requests for separate appointments.

### **Disenrollment Procedure**

Students may be disenrolled for a variety of reasons, including familial decision to withdraw their child from the ELC. This can be a big transition for your child and their classroom peers. Please give the ELC sufficient notice to allow children to say goodbye and for teachers to plan an activity. We also need sufficient time to offer the vacant spot to another family.

**If you choose to disenroll your child, written notification from the child's parents/primary guardians must be submitted no less than 30 days prior to the child's anticipated last day. The family will be responsible for paying all tuition and fees for 30 days following submission of the written notice.**

In rare circumstances, the ELC may elect to disenroll a student for reasons including, but not limited to, the following:

- significant and disruptive absences or tardiness
- familial refusal to comply with vaccination, medical and/or dental health requirements of the program, which jeopardizes the safety and well-being of other children
- nonpayment of child care services and/or lack of adherence to payment policies
- noncompliance with the policies and procedures laid out in this handbook
- intentional falsification of information on enrollment forms, contracts, and other ELC paperwork
- inappropriate or abusive behavior by parents, relatives, guardians, or other parties toward members of Growing Up NM staff and/or other families and children.

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to resolve any issues to prevent disenrollment. The ELC will make every reasonable effort possible to avoid involuntary disenrollment.

### **Brightwheel**

The ELC team uses a phone app called "Brightwheel" to aid communication, billing, tuition payments, track attendance, and more. When completing your registration packet, you will be asked to download and sign up for Brightwheel.

Each person on your Authorized Pick-up list will be assigned a personal code to use when signing your child in and out. Please write it down and keep it in a safe place. It is very important that each person uses their own code, as this is how the center tracks who is picking up and dropping off your child. You can check your code through the app or ask an ELC team member for help if you have misplaced your code.

Teachers may use Brightwheel to share photographs, stories, and notes about your child's day through the app "feed." Each child's parents or primary guardians can decide how much of their child's feed is visible to each person listed on their Pick-up Authorization / Emergency Contact lists.

Teachers and other ELC staff will send announcements, reminders, and other messages through Brightwheel. **Please check your phone daily for these messages.** You can also contact any member of the team through the app. Please remember the teachers' primary focus during the day is

the children, they may not be able to respond to your messages immediately. If there is an emergency, please call the main office to get a message to your child's teacher.

Brightwheel will also be used to send invoices and payment reminders. You may make payments through Brightwheel using a debit or credit card.

## **SCHEDULE OPTIONS AND FEE INFORMATION**

### **Program Year Schedule**

Growing Up NM's goal is to provide affordable full-day, full-year care to the best of our ability. Our program year begins in August and ends in July, please refer to the annual calendar for specific dates. There is a brief 2-3 week break between the end of the year in July and the start of the following school year in mid-August. The Early Learning Center is also closed for a two-week winter break in December and a one-week spring break, typically in March.

### **Calendar**

The ELC program calendar is similar, but not identical, to the calendar adopted by the Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS). Differences in the calendar accommodate family-teacher conferences, teacher planning days, staff training, etc. Please note that our family-teacher conferences and in-service days may be different than the SFPS calendar to accommodate our program's needs and NM PreK requirements. Growing Up NM reserves the right to make changes to the calendar and will notify families and all interested parties if that happens. The ELC program calendar is handed out to families before the beginning of the school year, please keep it in a visible area to reference throughout the year.

The Annual Calendar is included at the end of this handbook.

### **Core Hours Schedule**

Growing Up NM receives state funding from the Early Childhood Education and Care Department to offer NM PreK programming to families. The NM PreK portion of the day is referred to as our "core hours" and is free for families. The core hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Fridays.

### **Before-Care Program**

This schedule includes extended care hours beyond the "core hours" day so that care is available starting at 7:30 a.m. Monday-Friday. There is a flat rate of \$250 per month for children enrolled in the before-care schedule. A program fee of \$100 will be due within the first three months of enrollment for children participating in before-care services. The flat rate fee is subject to change, families will be notified of any changes in advance.

Families will be asked to complete a contract to secure their spot in the before-care program. Financial aid in the form of ECECD Child Care Assistance and/or scholarships may be available to help offset the out-of-pocket expenses of the before-care program. More information is provided in the sections below.

### **Before Care Drop-In Services**

Pending availability, families signed up for the Core Hours schedule may utilize the before care service on a drop-in basis. **Advance notice and approval from the Leadership Team is required for the drop-in service.** The drop-in fee is \$20 for one to two days or \$100 for three or more days within a one-week period.

## **Invoices/Billing**

Invoices for families enrolled in the before-care program will be delivered via Brightwheel by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month that services are requested. Invoices must be paid in full by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and can be paid via cash, check, or debit/credit card. Debit/credit card payments can be made through the Brightwheel phone application (see pg \_\_\_ for more information). Any member of the ELC leadership team can assist you in completing payment. Checks must be made out to Growing Up NM.

Invoices that are not paid by the due date will be charged a \$20 late fee. Failure to submit payment for the invoice, including a late-fee charge, by the end of the month will result in dismissal from the before-care program. Re-admission into the before-care program may be granted later pending availability of space, and full payment of all past due invoices, including late-fee charges.

Any requests for special arrangements regarding payment, such as setting up a payment plan, must be submitted to the ELC Leadership Team prior to the invoice due date. A response will be provided within three business days of the request.

## **ECECD Child Care Assistance**

ECECD Child Care Assistance provides financial support to help cover a portion of child care costs for eligible families. Eligibility and the amount of assistance provided depends on a variety of factors, such as family income and work or school schedule. Family eligibility and the amount of assistance provided is solely determined by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department.

All families interested in applying for Child Care Assistance should speak to a member of the leadership team. Information on the Child Care Assistance program and a list of frequently asked questions, is available at <https://www.nmeccd.org/child-care-assistance/>

For eligible families who successfully complete the application process, ECECD requires a signed contract (“Placement Agreement”) between parents/guardians and a member of the leadership team. Families under contract are responsible for paying any co-payments and other fees beyond what the ECECD Placement Agreement covers.

## **Scholarships**

Families who do not qualify for Child Care Assistance but are still in need of financial support are encouraged to meet with the VP of Early Learning to discuss the availability of scholarships provided by Growing Up NM. Limited funds are available. Families requesting a scholarship will be asked to complete an application and provide proof of income to the ELC to verify they meet income requirements for financial support.

# **OUR CLASSROOMS**

## **Curriculum Statement**

The Early Learning Center is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to learning, which sees children and teachers as competent and capable researchers “*searching for meaning*” in their work (Rinaldi, 2001). Lesson plans are developed by the teachers through a negotiated learning process between the children and teachers. The teachers accomplish this through the reflective process of observation, while also documenting and engaging in dialogue with children about their play experiences. All teaching teams regularly collaborate by sharing their documentation and working together to discover what questions children are asking and what it is they want to learn. Families are also included in the investigative process through dialogue that provokes questioning and information sharing.

Within the classroom environment, we focus on all areas of learning: social-emotional, literacy, numeracy, problem solving, creativity, physical development, and self and community relationships and perspectives. Each area of development is nurtured through play, as well as through projects that are initiated by the children and/or teachers. The teacher's role is to intentionally facilitate activities and projects in a natural and meaningful manner for the children.

For all these reasons, our classrooms are designed with the following areas: blocks, dramatic play, art, sensory table and tools, easels, manipulatives (puzzles, connecting toys, and finger strengthening activities), writing, library, science, and math. The open-ended materials provided in each area are thought of as tools for expressing one's self, as they create a "language" that gives children a pathway for showing us their interests, their questions, and the problems they are solving.

Our mission, vision, and curriculum statement align with the New Mexico Guiding Principles for Full Participation of Young Children, Birth through Age Eight, in New Mexico's Early Learning system. These principles stand for honoring, respecting, and including all children and families through a partnership with community organizations like ours. For more information, look for the Guiding Principles pamphlets in our family resource area.

The curriculum is modified regularly to reflect the values, beliefs, and experiences of families in the program. Each classroom posts weekly lesson plans for families to review.

### **Literacy Curriculum**

At the Early Learning Center, we believe literacy can and should be a multi-faceted experience embedded in meaningful moments throughout the day. By incorporating literacy into our classrooms in this way, we are able to support the wide variety of literacy experiences and knowledge that children bring with them. Some of the ways in which you might see our teachers incorporating key literacy components in the classroom are:

- Children are exposed to **reading** daily and develop an understanding that books can be used for multiple purposes such as entertaining, social connections, and research.
- Children learn about the **sounds of language** as they explore alliteration, rhythm, syllables, and rhyme through books, songs, fingerplays, chants, games, and more.
- Children are encouraged to **write** throughout the day through signs, labels, stories, and letters to friends and family. Teachers acknowledge and build upon children's current skill level, whether children are scribbling, writing symbols, writing letter-like shapes, writing letters and words, or using invented spelling to spell out words
- Teachers involve children in dictation activities such as telling a story or describing their construction/art so that children can see their spoken language transformed into the **written word**.
- Teachers engage children in meaningful conversation to advance **conversational ability** and develop a **wider range of vocabulary**.
- Teachers embed **letter recognition** and **alphabet awareness** into the classroom by exploring print in the environment that is significant to the children through activities such as exploring letters in their friends' names, noticing labels and signs around the school and classroom, and pointing out print in the children's favorite books.
- Teachers introduce the concepts of **letter-sound connections** through word play, chants, songs, and fun activities. When and if children are ready during their time in our center, they can begin to explore this area more deeply with their teachers' support.

## **Classroom Staff**

Each classroom is staffed with one Lead Teacher and one Educational Assistant who have primary responsibility for working with that group of children during the core hours. There is also one Teacher's Aide assigned to each classroom. The Teacher's Aide will serve as the main substitute for relieving the primary teachers for breaks, planning time, and when a Lead Teacher or Educational Assistant is out for the day. From time to time, there may be Substitute Teachers or other support staff in the classroom to cover for teachers who are out for the day, teacher planning time, breaks, and so on.

Other ELC Staff include the VP of Early Learning, the Assistant Director, the Operations Supervisor, and the Administrative Assistant, all of whom may step in as needed to support the classrooms.

## **Teacher Qualifications**

The Early Learning Center follows NM PreK requirements and NAEYC standards for teacher education and preparation. All Lead Teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Educational Assistants and Teacher's Aides are required to have an associate degree in early childhood education or a related field. Lead Teachers and Educational Assistants who do not currently meet these standards must work toward these requirements until they are met. At a minimum, any person working directly with children at our center must attain a Certificate of Completion for the 45-Hour Entry Level Course or its equivalent within six months of hire and a Health and Safety Orientation within 90 days of hire.

Lead Teachers, Educational Assistants, Teacher's Aides and the VP of Early Learning are required to meet certain professional development goals outlined by NAEYC. The ELC team is dedicated to continued professional development and typically exceeds this minimum requirement.

All Growing Up NM employees must have a completed and eligible background check before working with children. Background checks are renewed every five years for all staff. Additionally, all direct-contact staff are certified in pediatric first aid and CPR.

## **Ratios**

Ratios at the ELC meet NAEYC and NM PreK program standards, which exceed those required by child care licensing regulations.

For 3-year-old classrooms, standards state that no more than 16 children will be assigned to one classroom with two teachers, with a required ratio of 1:8 (teachers-to-students). Our 3-year-old classrooms have 16 students with two full-time teaching staff and a teacher's aide who provides additional support throughout the day.

For 4-year-old classrooms, standards state that no more than 20 children will be assigned to one classroom with two teachers, with a required ratio of 1:10 (teachers-to-students). Our 4-year-old classrooms have 16 students with two full-time teaching staff and a teacher's aide who provides additional support throughout the day.

During the before-care hours of the day, children from the 3- and 4-year-old programs may be combined in one classroom. In this case, the ELC maintains a maximum class size of 20 students and a maximum ratio of 1:10. Ratios are maintained during all hours of operation, whether children are inside or outside.

## **Volunteers, Visitors and Observers**

Growing Up NM is committed to building community relationships as well as providing professional development opportunities for educators and other members of our community. For that reason, it is common to find various visitors, observers, practicum students, and volunteers in our center.

Volunteers and practicum students who will be working directly with children have a background check clearance in their file before they spend time in the classrooms. Visitors and observers who are only visiting for one day are not expected to fulfill this same requirement; however, they are accompanied by a Growing Up NM employee during their time in our program. Parents or family members who wish to occasionally join their child's classroom do not need a background check. Volunteers, visitors, and others who are not employed by Growing Up NM are never left alone with a child nor accompany a child to the bathroom. Requirements for supervision of children, as defined in the *Ratios* and *Supervision of Children* sections of the handbook, are always met by an employed member of the Growing Up NM team.

## **Dual-Language Practices**

The ELC is deeply committed to providing a supportive environment that fosters the development of biliteracy and bilingualism as well as an appreciation for diverse cultures. The numerous studies that have shown learning multiple languages benefits brain development supports and solidifies our commitment to dual-language practices. When a child and their family speak a home language other than English or Spanish, the ELC team works alongside the family to bring that language into the classroom. Using intentional strategies, teachers aim to validate, affirm, build, and bridge the child's home language while also supporting English language development.

Because most of the ELC population primarily speaks either English or Spanish as their home language, our team most actively supports these two languages in the classroom. Each classroom has at least one teacher who speaks Spanish as their native language or is fluent in the language, and one teacher who speaks English as their native language or is fluent in the language. When possible, the ELC attempts to employ other support staff who represent the variety of languages and cultures present in our school. The teaching team attempts to use both English and Spanish equally throughout the day by singing songs, sharing conversations, reading books, and playing games as well as using both languages to engage in activities, and provide guidance/direction to children. As previously described in the "Enrollment Procedure" section of this handbook, each classroom is evenly divided by children whose first language is English and those whose native language is something other than English (Emerging Bilingual/English Language Learners). This makes it possible for children to have peer models in their non-dominant language as well as connect with other children who share the same home/native language. This active use of languages and classroom grouping helps affirm a child's experience and minimize the emergence of negative stereotypes.

In addition to doing their own research, teachers help build home-school connections by asking families to share songs, stories, books, and a list of helpful and important words or phrases in their home language. When possible, the ELC team will make its best efforts to translate school materials into a family's native language.

We strongly encourage families with a home language other than English to maintain their native language as much as possible in the home. Research shows that children who continue to receive support of their native language at home are more likely to retain this language. We believe children will have plenty of access to the English language through television, school, peers, and the community in general. It is much less likely that they will have opportunities to hear and practice their native language without the continued commitment at home. The ELC team is dedicated to

supporting this goal in any way possible. In addition to the strategies listed above, families are invited into the classroom to help us bridge a child's experiences of varying cultures and languages. A family might join in the classroom to share a favorite recipe, share a story about an important tradition, or read a book in their home language, thus helping children learn more about each other.

Research for best dual language practices for the early childhood years is extremely limited. Developing practices that we feel align with our school philosophy and are reflective of the latest research is an ongoing process. Therefore, the ELC does not subscribe to one particular "model" or "approach" to providing a dual-language environment. Instead, we are always working to find the strategies and methods that we feel work best for our community, our strengths as a school, and the children and families we serve.

### **Our Commitment to Anti-Bias Education**

The ELC's practices in the classroom are informed by Anti-Bias Education practices. We believe that all people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, age, socioeconomic class, religion, and ability, deserve equal opportunities and resources to meet their hopes, dreams, and goals.

We recognize the value of culture in all our lives and respect how individuals and families choose to define their own culture. We hope that our work supports children in developing self-awareness, confidence, and a positive social identity. We aim to provide an environment where diversity and difference are celebrated and where children, as well as other members of our community, feel empowered to stand up against unfairness when they see it.

Some practices we employ to create this environment include:

- creating opportunities to learn about families' culture and traditions through Cultural Questionnaires, regular conversations, home visits and more,
- encouraging children to consider fairness and stand up when they think someone is being treated unfairly,
- developing the skills children need to feel comfortable standing up against unfairness,
- encouraging children and families to share their traditions in our school setting,
- providing materials representative of different races, genders, family structures, cultures, and abilities; and,
- treating all children and families fairly

The ELC team will not allow any member of our community, including staff, children, or families, to be treated unfairly or discriminated against for being themselves. If you ever feel that you are being treated in this way by another member of our community (teachers, Growing Up NM employees, families), please speak to your child's teacher or the VP of Early Learning.

### **Guidance Policy**

The first step to solving conflicts and challenges in the classroom is to create an environment that avoids these situations to begin with. The goal of our guidance policy and inclusive practices is to eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. Teachers do this by maintaining a well-planned and well-equipped classroom designed to help prevent frustration and hazards. The daily schedule provides a balance of time playing indoors, playing outdoors, getting physical movement or exercise, and resting. Additionally, teachers adjust the schedule to meet the needs of the children on a regular basis. Activities and routines are organized in a way that cuts down on unproductive wait time and reduces the number of transitions throughout the day.

The ELC team also knows it is important to provide an appropriate example of the type of environment and behaviors that we would like to see from the children and families with whom we work. This means that positive and respectful interactions are always central to the work we do. Teachers demonstrate calm, respectful voices and body language, practice respectful listening and observing, and create space for others to share their emotions, needs and wants when appropriate. Teachers focus on encouraging pro-social behaviors in their students where they respect themselves, others, and the materials of the classroom, thereby learning to respect the world around them.

Conflict resolution is an important part of our curriculum. Young children learn by experimenting, testing limits, and experiencing the consequences of their behavior. The teacher's job is to set clear expectations and boundaries that make sense to the age and developmental stage of the child. We use problem-solving, redirection, natural consequences, refocusing of play, and positive statements. The teachers work together to reinforce limits and teach alternatives.

**Positive Statements** – We tell children what actions we *want* to see rather than that what we do *not* want to see. It is easier for a child to follow through with instructions when she clearly understands what she is being asked. For instance, instead of telling a child “no running,” we will remind the child to “use their walking feet.”

**Problem-Solving** – We try to involve children in finding a solution to the problem. We ask them questions to encourage thoughtful consideration of what occurred and how we can continue in a more positive way through questions such as: “What happened?” “Why might that be unsafe/dangerous?” “How can we do that in a way that doesn’t hurt someone else?”

**Redirect/Refocus** – When necessary, we work with children to redirect them towards more appropriate and safe ways of expressing themselves and using materials. For instance, an angry child who is throwing blocks may be asked to throw soft bean bags in a corner of the room where no one can get hurt. If a child is stepping on and breaking toys, teachers may ask them what she would like to make with those blocks to refocus her energy towards something more positive and productive. Sometimes a child may need a teacher to take a more direct approach to helping them choose another activity. In these cases, a teacher may ask a child to work one-on-one with her/him, choose an area for the child to explore, or ask the child to play with a different child for a while.

**Natural or Logical Consequences** – When appropriate, we allow children to experience the natural consequences of their behavior. Teachers will then support children in understanding the consequences of their actions and help them find a way to repair any of the negative effects. This strategy is only utilized when it makes sense for the situation and the child is safe. This strategy is not used if it puts the child in any danger or major distress. For example, if a child's friend decides not to play with him anymore after he has knocked down her block structure, a teacher might work with the student to understand why his actions made his friend angry. The teacher may then work with the child to make an apology letter or drawing to help repair the relationship.

**Taking a Break/Visiting a Calming Space** – Occasionally a child is too upset by a situation to immediately resolve the problem. During these times, a child may be asked to take a break in the quiet area of the classroom and/or they are supported with breathing and calming strategies. Sometimes a child may be overly stimulated or aggravated by their immediate surroundings. In these situations, teachers may find it more beneficial for the child and others in the classroom if they are moved into a calming space within the center (ex: calming room, the atelier, gym, outdoors). The alternative calming spaces allow the child to have a safe space

away from other children to safely express themselves and re-regulate to a calmer energy before returning to their classroom.

Learning how to participate and interact within a group setting takes time to learn. Opportunities to problem solve individually and as part of the group are a part of the curriculum.

Our team does not believe in the use of any kind of physical punishment or time-out room. If a child needs to be separated from the group, he or she will always be supervised by a teacher. Children will never be denied food, rest, or bathroom as punishment. Toileting habits, or lack of, will never be a cause for punishment in any form. Children will not be subjected to any form of emotional abuse, including name-calling, ostracism, shaming, teasing, or using language that threatens, humiliates, or frightens the child.

### **Behavior Support**

There may be rare instances when the methods described in our Guidance Policy are not working effectively for a child. If a child's peers feel unsafe or other children's families express concern to the teachers over a child's behavior/actions in the classroom, the following steps will be followed:

1. The classroom teachers will observe and record the child's behavior. Together, with the VP of Early Learning, the teaching team will review the documentation and note possible triggers to a child's behavior which may include certain transitions, environments, or situations. Teachers will develop a *Behavior Support Plan* to assist a child through these triggering situations through methods such as one-on-one support or extra time allotted for transitions.
2. Teachers, the VP of Early Learning, and the child's parents/guardians will meet to discuss the child's behavior, the support plan put in place, how things are progressing, and possible next steps. The meeting is an opportunity to talk about what methods work or not, both at school and at home, and share strategies. It is incredibly important that the child's family and teachers develop a shared behavior support plan. When a child understands their teachers and family members are working as a team and that expectations and consequences are similar both at home and at school, it is easier for a child to meet these expectations.
3. Next steps in the Behavior Support Plan may include seeking input from outside professionals (consultants, therapists, or others). Written approval from the parents/guardian will be requested before any action is taken regarding outside professionals. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled with sufficient time to put the plan into place and observe positive changes.
4. When the follow-up meeting occurs, teachers will provide recorded documentation of a child's behaviors and responses to the support systems put in place. If the child is still not demonstrating a positive response to the Behavior Support Plan, the ELC team may discuss alternative programs or services for the child's parent/guardian to consider. If the family determines our program is not the best fit for their child, program staff will do their best to support the family through the transition.

### **Incidents and Behavior Support Plans**

The Early Learning Center at Kaune makes every effort to support all children to have a positive experience at our school. In some instances, children may experience big emotions or difficult situations that may lead to challenging behaviors. The following behavior support policy will be implemented when there is concern about the safety of other children and/or teachers due to a child's behavior.

This tiered approach is intended to support the family, children, and teachers with positive coping strategies to minimize future incidents.

ALL INCIDENTS WILL BE DOCUMENTED. The Parent/Guardian must sign an incident report and incident log as confirmation that the report was received. A copy of the incident report will be provided to the family and a copy will be kept in the child's confidential file.

In the case where a child causes injury to another child or teachers, parents will be called immediately to come and pick up their child for the day and a family meeting will be scheduled.

*For incidents involving a child physically harming a teacher:*

1<sup>st</sup> Incident: ELC Leadership will call the child's parent/guardian to inform them about the situation. The teacher(s) will complete an incident report for the child's file.

2<sup>nd</sup> Incident: The incident report is completed for the child's file. A family meeting will be scheduled within one week to discuss the incidents. During this time the teacher(s) and ELC leadership will share information about what has happened, any triggers that have been identified, strategies that have been tried and what has/hasn't worked. The family will be asked to share about similar situations/behaviors that have happened at home and successful strategies for minimizing or preventing physical behaviors that harm others. We may also discuss other aspects of the child's home life that may be relevant to their school day (ex: diet, sleep, screen time, etc).

3<sup>rd</sup> Incident: The incident report is completed for the child's file. In partnership with the teacher, a date and time will be scheduled for the child's parent/guardian to come and observe the child during the period of time that challenging behaviors are typically displayed. Following the observation, a family meeting will be held to discuss alternate strategies, including the child's daily schedule.

4<sup>th</sup> Incident: The incident report is completed for the child's file. The teacher(s), ELC Leadership, and the family create a behavior support plan that includes the following:

- Referrals to outside resources to support the child, including timelines for follow up and documentation requirements for updating the ELC team.
- Goals specific for the child based on the challenging behaviors that have occurred, including strategies for the teachers to implement in the classroom and strategies for families to implement at home to support the overall goal.
- Recommended workshops, trainings, or learning sessions the parent/guardian can participate in to further support overall family goals and child needs.
- Discussion about the child's day and agreement about the schedule moving forward whether it stays the same or is adjusted.

5 or more incidents: The incident report is completed for the child's file. The teacher(s), ELC Leadership, and the family will meet again to review everything that has been tried so far. In addition to resources that have already been shared, the team will discuss the child's needs overall and if/how the ELC at Kaune can meet those needs, with family support. The behavior support plan will be updated as needed and ongoing family meetings will be scheduled.

*Incidents involving a child physically harming another child:*

(Note: the family of the child that is hurt by their peer(s) will also receive an incident report and be offered a family meeting to discuss supports for their child.)

1<sup>st</sup> Incident: The teacher will call the child's parent/guardian to inform them about what happened and

then complete an incident report for the child's file.

2<sup>nd</sup> Incident: The teacher will call the child's parent/guardian to inform them about what happened and then complete an incident report for the child's file. A family meeting will be scheduled within one week to discuss the incidents. During this time the teacher(s) and ELC leadership will share information about what has happened, any triggers that have been identified, strategies that have been tried and what has/hasn't worked. The family will be asked to share about similar situations/behaviors that have happened at home and successful strategies for minimizing or preventing physical behaviors that harm others. Appropriate consequences will be discussed as well as how families can support us by following through with strategies/consequences outside of school. We may also discuss other aspects of the child's home life that may be relevant to their school day (ex: diet, sleep, screen time, etc).

Reoccurring Incident (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>): If the teacher notices that the child is targeting one or more children, based on documented incident reports/logs, a date and time will be scheduled for the child's parent/guardian to come in and observe the child during the period of time that challenging behaviors are typically displayed. Following the observation, a family meeting will be held to discuss alternate strategies, including the child's daily schedule.

Reoccurring Incident (4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>): If another incident occurs with the same child or others, the teacher(s), ELC Leadership, and the family will create a behavior support plan that includes the following:

- Referrals to outside resources to support the child, including timelines for follow up and documentation requirements for updating the ELC team.
- Goals specific for the child based on the challenging behaviors that have occurred, including strategies for the teachers to implement in the classroom and strategies for families to implement at home to support the overall goal.
- Recommended workshops, trainings, or learning sessions the parent/guardian can participate in to further support overall family goals and child needs.
- Discussion about the child's day and agreement about the schedule moving forward whether it stays the same or is adjusted.

Incident 5 or more: If another incident occurs with the same child or others, the teacher(s), ELC Leadership, and the family will meet again to discuss alternate options for the child, including intervention and/or therapeutic support. In addition to resources that have already been shared, the team will discuss the child's needs overall and if/how the ELC at Kaune can meet those needs with family support. The behavior support plan will be updated as needed and ongoing family meetings will be scheduled.

#### *Other Reoccurring Incidents/Disruptive Behaviors*

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Incident: The teacher will call the child's parent/guardian to inform them about the situation. The teacher(s) will complete an incident report for the child's file.

3<sup>rd</sup> Incident: The incident report is completed for the child's file. A family meeting will be scheduled within one week to discuss the incidents. During this time the teacher(s) and ELC leadership will share information about what has happened, any triggers that have been identified, strategies that have been tried and what has/hasn't worked. The family will be asked to share about similar situations/behaviors that have happened at home and successful strategies. We may also discuss other aspects of the child's home life that may be relevant to their school day (ex: diet, sleep, screen time, etc).

4<sup>th</sup> Incident: The incident report is completed for the child's file. The teacher(s), ELC Leadership, and the family create a support plan that includes the following:

- Referrals to outside resources to support the child, including timelines for follow up and documentation requirements for updating the ELC team.
- Goals specific for the child based on the incidents that have occurred, including strategies for the teachers to implement in the classroom and strategies for families to implement at home to support the overall goal.
- Recommended workshops, trainings, or learning sessions the parent/guardian can participate in to further support overall family goals and child needs.
- Discussion about the child's day and agreement about the schedule moving forward whether it stays the same or is adjusted.

5 or more incidents: The incident report is completed for the child's file. The teacher(s), ELC Leadership, and the family will meet again to review everything that has been tried so far. In addition to resources that have already been shared, the team will discuss the child's needs overall and if/how the ELC at Kaune can meet those needs with family support. The support plan will be updated as needed and ongoing family meetings will be scheduled.

### **Screenings and Assessments**

Regular and ongoing screening and assessment is important to our program. Assessments are used to monitor children's learning and progress, inform curriculum development, and inform planning for overall classroom and program improvements. Formal and informal screenings/assessments are conducted at enrollment, and throughout the year, by staff who are trained (through formal training and continuing education classes) to provide these assessments, with parents providing important information from their observations to enhance our knowledge of children in the program.

Children are screened individually with an ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) and ASQ-SE (Ages and Stages Questionnaire Social Emotional), which is completed by the child's parent(s) and/or primary guardian(s). The ASQ is a screening tool developed to assess language, cognition, gross motor, fine motor and social/emotional development. An individual trained in administering and scoring the ASQ is available to aid with this process. ELC staff members also review and score the completed questionnaires. Classroom teachers may follow-up with parent(s)/guardian(s) for further clarification on the information provided in these forms.

Screening results are shared with families and documented in the child's file. Results are used in two ways:

1. They are shared with teachers, who use the information to plan and individualize lesson plans. Teachers adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs and interests of the children based on information gained from child assessment outcomes.
2. If results indicate that further assessment or follow-up may be helpful, the ELC team will document and explain the concern, discuss next steps with the child's family, and provide information and resources for diagnostic evaluation.

Ongoing individual assessments throughout the year are done by the child's primary teachers, who utilize the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) to observe and document progress for each child. These guidelines are aligned from birth through kindergarten to inform learning approaches and ensure that appropriate expectations are adhered to at each stage of development.

ELG assessments are completed three times a year (Fall, Winter and Spring) by teachers who have received training to conduct these observational assessments. These assessments involve collecting and documenting anecdotal notes, photographs, checklists, and work samples that encompass

twenty-five Essential Indicators across eight developmental domains: literacy, numeracy, problem solving, creativity, scientific conceptual understanding, physical development, approaches to learning, and self and community relationships. Information obtained from these observations help teachers to design and adjust activities and lesson plans and make modifications that meet the needs of children. Written portfolios are shared with families to inform them about their child's development and learning. Portfolios and other documentation are reviewed during family-teacher conferences (see more in our *Conferences* section of the handbook).

All completed assessments are kept in a confidential space. If parents have questions about any of the assessment methods or are unsure if these methods will meet their child's needs, they are encouraged to talk to an ELC staff member. If you would like a copy of the Essential Indicators, please speak to your child's teacher(s).

### **Inclusive Practices & Procedures**

The ELC team is committed to serving all children. We will always work to be a resource and support to the students and families that are enrolled. Families are our partners in ensuring that all children receive the best possible care. Teachers maintain on-going observations and assessments of all children enrolled and inform and update parents/caregivers about their child's successes and challenges in the classroom. When a teacher's observations and/or the results of the child's ASQ and/or ASQ-SE scores indicate there may be the need for additional follow-up, the following Screening and Referral Process will take place:

- Teachers will continue to carefully document the areas of concern.
- Teachers will meet with the leadership to discuss concerns and determine next steps.
- The child's family, teachers, and the VP of Early Learning will meet to discuss observations, screenings, and concerns. Together, the team will create a plan that may include the following actions:
  - With family approval, students will be screened at the ELC site or at the Santa Fe Child Find by representatives of the Santa Fe Public Schools
  - Children who qualify for additional support services or therapies will receive these on site when possible
  - To ensure the screening process and therapy sessions are effective, ELC staff will meet regularly to collaborate with the Special Education educators, coordinators, and therapists that are working with our students. As appropriate and when approved by the child's family, other community partners may be included in the process to provide additional services to the child

When a child enters our program with an identified need and/or an Individual Education Plan (IEP), the following steps are followed, with the approval and support of the child's family:

- At the earliest opportunity, the ELC team will obtain a copy of the child's IEP to review and place in the child's file. Teachers will also work closely with the family and agencies providing therapy/services. Information will be reviewed to ensure that consistent strategies are being implemented.
- Teachers will participate, when appropriate, in meetings and in the ongoing

## development of IEPs

- The ELC will provide support, as needed, for outside therapists and agencies to work with the child within their established setting or at our school

### **Transitions**

The Early Learning Center is committed to creating a smooth transition for children and families as they transition into and out of our programs. We believe a positive experience in our classrooms facilitates a seamless transition into the next step of each child's education. Our 3-year-old class stays together as a group along with the same teachers as they enter our 4-year-old program, a procedure we often refer to as "looping."

Several measures are put into place to help children and their families' transition into our classrooms as easily as possible. These include home visits, a "Family Welcome Night," and invitations to visit the classroom with your child. These activities allow children and families to become familiar with school staff, teachers, and the school environment and typically alleviate much of the anxiety and stress felt over making these types of changes. When a child or family requires more time, individual support plans will be worked out with the family, teachers, and, if necessary, the VP of Early Learning. Plans may include steps such as regular check-ins with the family throughout the day, presence of a family member in the classroom that decreases over time, and/or family photographs posted around the classroom.

Beginning in April, teachers of the 4-year-old classrooms plan special activities within the classroom environment to prepare children for the upcoming transition into kindergarten. Our teachers will read related books and initiate discussions with children about the transition and their feelings about the changes. Additionally, teachers open conversations with families about their questions, concerns, and thoughts about transitioning into a new school environment. Families are also encouraged to begin visiting children's schools and classrooms prior to the new school year.

The ELC facilitates a presentation for families to discuss the topic of transitioning to kindergarten sometime in winter. Efforts are made to connect with personnel from the Santa Fe Public Schools so they may be available to answer any questions families may have during the presentation. Front office staff at the ELC also make an effort to inform families about upcoming dates and other information related to Santa Fe Public Schools' transfer and registration process.

Toward the end of the year, teachers complete a summative conference form detailing your child's accomplishments over the year, their current ability level in each of the developmental domains, and a note of next steps/areas of growth for the child. With parent permission, a copy of these forms will be passed on to the child's kindergarten. To further aid transition the following school year, teachers also make themselves available as a point of contact for the child's new teachers.

### **Outside Play**

An important component of our program is outdoor playtime. This gives children a chance to get fresh air and build large muscle strength and coordination. It also provides students with a chance to problem-solve, socialize and to observe/interact with the environment (bugs, weather, plants).

Parents/guardians often wonder if children will go outside during the winter. Outdoor playtime is a childcare licensing requirement. Being outdoors contributes to good health and does not give a child infections or cause viruses. In fact, according to medical experts, exercise and fresh air are critical to improving immunity. Since part of our program involves students being outside, we will make every effort to go outdoors, even if the amount of time must be reduced because of cold temperatures or inclement weather. The Early Learning Center will never take children outside when the weather is

dangerous. Teachers gauge the weather based on a variety of factors like clouds, wind and temperature. As a general guideline, children do not go outdoors if the temperature (including wind chill) is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Children may play outdoors for a reduced time (15-20 minutes) when the temperature is between 32-40 degrees. This is only a guideline and may be adjusted at the discretion of ELC staff.

**Children will be going outdoors almost every day so please send your child in appropriate clothing for the current weather and season.**

### **Dressing for School**

Learning can often be a messy experience. Therefore, we ask that you send your child to school in clothing suitable for activities such as splashing, finger painting, making mud pies, and sculpting with clay. Every classroom has a set of aprons available to help protect clothing, but these are not a fool-proof solution.

Children should wear suitable shoes for running, climbing, and jumping so they can play safely and comfortably in our classrooms and playground. This means shoes that are flat and closed-toed. Shoes with lifted heels, flipflops, and open sandals should not be worn to school.

We play outside almost every day so please be sure your child is prepared for all types of weather. We recommend hats, gloves, snow boots, and winter coats during the winter months. Layers are always a great idea throughout the year.

During warmer weather, we suggest bringing clothes that protect your child's skin from the sun such as wide-brim hats and UV protecting/blocking fabrics.

Leave an extra set of clothing in your child's cubby so they can change if necessary. If there are additional clothing or protective items that you would like for your child to change into prior to going outdoors, please inform your child's teacher.

### **Rest Time**

Time for children to rest and recuperate without a lot of external stimulation is incredibly important for their growth and development. Children are allotted time in the afternoon Monday through Thursday to rest in the classroom. The daily schedule allows for approximately 1.5 - 2 hours of resting time, typically somewhere between 1-3 p.m. For the specific schedule of your child's classroom, please speak to your child's teacher. During rest time, all students are asked to rest quietly on their mat for at least 20 to 30 minutes, even if they do not fall asleep. This allows children to have quiet time and makes it possible for teachers to aid other children in the classroom who do want to sleep. Children who do not fall asleep during the 30-minute period are then able to do a quiet activity such as reading a book or drawing. This time may be adjusted to meet the needs of the children.

Families are asked to supply a blanket, sheet (crib-sheets fit well), a small pillow, and, if desired, a small comfort toy. These materials are left in the child's cubby throughout the week. We send these materials home once a week or whenever soiled so they can be washed.

### **Toys and Items from Home**

We ask that your child does not bring toys to school. Each classroom is well-equipped with a variety of materials for children to use throughout the day. It can be challenging for a child to share materials from home, and there is always the risk of a toy getting lost or broken while at school. Toy guns, water pistols, or anything that your child could use or could be confused for a weapon is not allowed on school property.

If your child would like to bring a toy or other item to share with the class and you are unsure about it, please ask one of the teachers before bringing it in. Teachers may ask you to take a toy/material home if they feel it may be a distraction. Teachers may have show-and-tell days several times throughout the school year, this can be a great opportunity for a child to share a special item from home.

We encourage children to bring in special books, music, or other materials that have an educational or cultural aspect that can be shared within our classrooms. Teachers will do their best to make time for a child to share an item when appropriate. Please check in with teachers if you would like to bring something like this into the classroom.

### **Nutritional Policy and Mealtimes**

To provide children with nutritious meals at no-cost to families, Growing Up NM participates in a meal reimbursement program through ECECD, known as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All meals are prepared in our on-site kitchen at Kaune.

Mealtimes are posted on the daily schedule located in your child's classroom but as a general timeframe, breakfast is served at 9:00am, lunch is served at 12:00pm, and an afternoon snack is served at 3:00pm.

Please encourage your child to eat the meals provided by our school. If you choose to send a meal for your child, please send only nutritious options. Less nutritious choices such as fast food, cookies, chips, and juice drinks that are less than 100% real fruit juice are not permitted. If a child brings one of these items, teachers will ask them to put it away and encourage children to eat the food provided by our school instead. We believe that healthy eating habits start early and ask you and your child to practice this while in our program. A child who tries a variety of foods alongside their family is more likely to try new, healthy options while at school. If your child is having a hard time adjusting to the meals served at school, we encourage you to introduce more of these food items at home. Monthly menus are shared through our Brightwheel app.

The ELC will follow procedures for meals and snacks as outlined in federal guidelines, ECECD Family Nutrition Bureau guidelines and state child care regulations. This includes guidelines for the preparation, serving, storage, and nutritional content of food items.

At a parent's request, children are given the opportunity to brush their teeth or clean their gums at least once daily after meals. If requested, parents must send a toothbrush and toothpaste with their child to school.

### **Special Dietary Needs and Food Substitutions**

Please notify the teachers of any food allergies or special dietary needs of your child. You will need to present a doctor's note that lists the food allergies or intolerances so that we can ensure your child's safety. If your child cannot eat certain foods due to personal beliefs, please write a note and state what your child cannot eat, and we will do our best to ensure your child eats according to these guidelines. The ELC will always do our best to provide an appropriate substitute for special dietary needs but cannot guarantee the ability to meet all family requests. Requests for food preferences not based on personal/religious beliefs and/or allergies cannot be accommodated. Please meet with ELC staff to discuss any concerns or special situations.

## **Field Trips**

There will be occasional field trips and neighborhood walks for your child's classroom. For neighborhood walks, teachers will give families at least 24-hour notice. Families are encouraged to participate in both field trips and neighborhood walks. Families will be given at least one week's notice regarding field trips that require families to drop-off and pick-up at a location different from school. The ELC does not have transportation available.

Teachers count their children numerous times during a field trip to ensure all children are accounted for. That includes, at a minimum, prior to leaving the center, once they arrive at the field trip location, when it is time to leave the location, and again once they return to school.

## **Documentation and Photography**

Documentation of children working either individually or in groups is a key component of our Reggio Emilia approach in the classroom. Documentation is often captured in the form of photographs, video, and audio recordings. Permission forms allowing ELC team members to use these photographs for different purposes, including educational, social media, and marketing are completed during the registration process.

We understand you may take photographs of your child that include other children and members of our school community. We ask that out of respect for every individual's privacy, you do not post such photos on social media outlets. If you have questions regarding the use of photography and video in the center, please speak to the ELC leadership team.

## **SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE**

### **Daily Schedule**

The core hours program at the ELC has a 7.5-hour schedule Monday through Thursday and 4.5-hour schedule on Fridays. This time involves discovery, reflection, and physical activity. It is important that your child engages in and experiences every aspect of the day.

**Circle time/large group time** provides an opportunity for children to greet their peers, sing songs, build community and classroom connections, and/or reflect on their day.

**Outdoor play** increases large muscle strength and exploration of nature (indoor large motor activities in inclement weather).

**Center exploration** allows children to move through a variety of learning centers, including dramatic play, art, library, blocks, manipulatives (fine motor activities like Legos and puzzles), music, math/number activities, sensory experiences, science, and problem-solving learning alongside their peers and teachers.

**Mealtimes** encourage socialization and the development of self-care skills and mealtime manners.

The following is an example of what the typical daily schedule may look like in any of our classrooms. The schedule is subject to change as teachers adjust it as needed.

### **Sample Daily Schedule**

7:30 - 8:30	Before-Care Day Drop off / Indoor or Outdoor Exploration
8:30 - 8:55	Greeting / Indoor Exploration / Clean-up
8:55 - 9:25	Handwashing & Breakfast

9:25 – 9:35	Bathroom & Handwashing
9:35 – 10:35	Outdoor Exploration
10:35 – 10:45	Bathroom & Handwashing
10:45 – 10:55	Circle / Story Time
10:55 – 11:50	Indoor Exploration / Clean-up
11:50 – 12:00	Make Beds
12:00 - 12:30	Handwashing & Lunch
12:30 - 1:00	Tabletop activities / 12:45-1:00 Pick Up (Fridays)
12:45 - 2:15	Bathroom / Rest Time / Quiet Activities
2:15 – 3:00	Wake Up / Put Bedding Away / Bathroom
3:00- 3:20	Handwashing & Snack / Story or Reflection
3:20 – 3:45	Indoor or Outdoor Exploration
3:45 – 4:00	Pick Up (Monday – Thursday)

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

The following procedures must be followed at all times by Growing Up NM staff and families during drop-off and pick-up times:

- No child may leave school with anyone other than those listed on the child’s pick-up authorization form. We will ask for photo identification if the person is unknown to us and/or picking up for the first time. The authorized person must be at least 18 years old. If an emergency arises and a person other than one authorized on the registration form must pick up the child, the ELC leadership team must first secure a verbal (over the phone) verification from the child’s primary guardian(s) before they can allow the child to leave the school.
- Adults must sign a child in and out of the classroom, through Brightwheel, when dropping off and picking up. Adults must also notify the child’s teacher that their child has arrived or that they are leaving for the day.
- Vehicles must be turned off at drop-off and pick up times in parking areas, except if the vehicle needs to idle in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperature.
- No child may be left unattended in a vehicle during drop-off and pick-up.
- Do not block neighborhood driveways when parking by the school.
- The main entrance doors to the building and front office area are open during business hours, between 7:30a.m. – 4:00p.m. on days of operation. The entrance doors into the school hallways are only open from 7:45 – 8:45 A.M. for drop off and 3:45 – 4:00 P.M. for pick up. During these times when the door is unlocked there will be a staff member by the front door ensuring that only authorized persons are entering the building and that children are leaving with someone authorized to pick them up. If you arrive before or after the period when doors are unlocked, you will need to check in at the front office.

Drop-off and pick-up times are a great opportunity to check in with your child’s teacher. At drop-off, please inform the teacher about anything that could impact your child’s day at school (a late night, trouble waking up, etc.). At pick-up, teachers will tell you about your child’s day.

### **Drop-Off and Pick-Up Times**

PreK and Early PreK hours are Monday through Thursday 8:30am to 4pm, and Fridays 8:30am-1pm.

Before-Care: Children enrolled in the before care program can arrive at any time between 7:30 and 8:20am. Families will not be permitted to enter the building prior to 7:30am.

Doors will open at 8:30am for all families to begin drop-off. There is a 15-minute window for drop-off. Please respect the classroom schedule and arrive **no later than 8:45am**. This allows children the

opportunity to settle into the classroom and join large group/circle time, both of which set your child up for a successful day at school. It can be extremely disruptive to your child's day and the other children in the classroom when someone walks in late.

Doors to the school will lock at 8:45am. **Any family arriving after this time will need to check in at the front office and a member of the leadership team will take your child to their classroom.**

Approval for late entrance into the classrooms will be granted for special circumstances only. If you know that you will arrive late, please update the team via Brightwheel or by calling the front office. Frequent late arrivals may result in disenrollment from the program.

**Children should be picked up no later than 4pm.** Doors will open for pickup at 3:45pm. There is a 15-minute window for pick-up. Families are asked to arrive on time. Teachers may not be available to talk with you about your child's day if you arrive after 4pm. Furthermore, late pick-ups will be subject to additional fees, see below for more information. **Contacting the ELC staff to inform them of a late arrival will not waive late pickup fees.**

If you will be late for any reason, please call the office or send a message in Brightwheel to inform us. If a child has not been picked up by 4:30pm and staff have not had contact with any of the child's guardians or persons listed on their pickup/emergency list, the ELC will contact the Children, Youth, and Families Department.

### **Late Pick-Up Fees**

If your child is picked up after 4:00p.m. you will be charged a late fee. The late pick-up fee is \$15 after the first 5 minutes and an additional \$5 for each 5 minutes thereafter.

#### Late Fee Chart Example

5+ minutes late: \$15

10-14 minutes late: \$20

15-19 minutes late: \$25

20-24 minutes late: \$30

Arriving late for your scheduled pick-up time can cause a lot of stress for your child. It is very important that you pick up your child from school when you tell them you will be there. It is extremely helpful to notify us if you are running late or if a different person than your child is expecting will pick them up. This way, the teacher can let your child know we have heard from you and that there will be a change from what they were expecting. This helps ease any tension your child may feel.

**Contacting Growing Up NM ELC staff to inform them of a late arrival will not waive late pickup fees.**

### **Early Pick-Up**

It is very important that children are in school regularly and for consistent times, so they receive the full benefits of our program. We strongly discourage picking up your child early as it can be disruptive to your child and others in the classroom. If you must pick up your child early due to an emergency or appointment, please inform their teacher and the front office staff as early as possible.

### **Attendance, Punctuality and Notification of Student Absence**

It is important that your child attend school consistently. When children miss a day or more of school, they often need extra support to re-adjust to the classroom environment, expectations, and routines. When a child misses school frequently, it can have a significant impact on his or her progress. It is important that children develop a consistent attendance habit that will follow them through the remainder of their time in school.

Students must maintain a minimum 90% attendance rate to remain in the program. This means that a child can miss no more than an average of one day per month. Absences, early pick-ups and late arrivals are tracked, and an excess amount of any combination of these will be brought to the attention of the families and an improvement plan will be developed. If attendance does not improve, a child may be disenrolled from our program.

If you know that your child will be out due to illness, vacation, or any other scenario, please inform your teachers as soon as possible. Doctor's notes/excuses may be requested for the child's file.

### **Snow Days and other Cancellations/Delays**

For the most part, we follow the Santa Fe Public School (SFPS) delays and closings schedule. If SFPS calls a closure due to snow or other reasons, the ELC will close for the day as well. If SFPS calls a two-hour delay, ELC classes will begin at 9:30 AM. Families should plan to arrive no later than 10 A.M.

If SFPS announces a closure after children have already arrived for the day, no more children will be accepted into the program. Families of children present during the closure announcement will be contacted to pick up their child as soon as possible. If ELC staff cannot contact a child's primary guardians, individuals listed on the emergency contact and/or pickup list will be contacted to pick up your child. The ELC will be officially closed for the day once the last child has been picked up.

The ELC makes its best effort to contact families through the Brightwheel phone application whenever there is a school closure or delay. Snow closures can best be determined by checking your phone for communications from the school, watching morning television broadcasts, checking local news station's websites, listening to local radio stations, or calling the Santa Fe Public Schools Transportation Department. It is ultimately your responsibility to stay informed about any snow closures or delays. If there is ever any uncertainty, you can also contact your child's teacher or the office team.

## **FAMILY-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS**

### **Communication**

All messages for families are created in English and Spanish. The ELC will do its best to provide translation in additional languages if requested by one of our families. Communication between our school team and the families we work with is critical to creating a successful school experience for our students. There are several ways communication happens between teachers and families. It is helpful to inform your child's teacher of your preferred method of contact.

- Teachers and ELC staff will communicate via phone call, text messages, email, and/or through the Brightwheel app, depending on the situation.
- During the school day, teachers carry a classroom cell phone for communication with families. Please understand that teachers may not be able to respond right away, as their priority during the school day is the children. Teachers generally work until 4pm each day. Teachers can also be contacted via email.
- If a parent/guardian needs to contact the ELC about an emergency, or a change in the child's pick-up routine, please contact the office team via a Brightwheel message or phone call (505-303-3950). The office team will relay the information to your child's teacher.

- The ELC will use additional forms of communication including fliers, whiteboards, e-mails, text messages, and printed notes sent home for general announcements or informational purposes. Please keep an eye out for any communication from our team.

### **Life Changes - Communicating with ELC Staff**

Please notify teachers as soon as possible if there are any major changes in your child's life (such as moving homes, a death in the family, a separation, a new person living in your home, etc.). Big life changes can lead to behavior changes and disruption in learning. When teachers are aware of changes, they can plan ways to support your child to maintain a positive learning environment. All information is confidential. Teachers, in turn, will keep you informed of any events which may have upset your child during the day, or any significant changes in the school environment that could affect your child's sense of well-being. Teachers value your feedback and concerns and will do their best to facilitate daily communication to foster an atmosphere of honesty, integrity, and kindness in the school community.

### **Home Visits**

Your child's teachers will make an initial home visit before your child begins attending our program. The purpose of the visit is to build a strong bridge between home and school for your child. Home visits may take place virtually or in a comfortable location for families (home, school, or favorite community place). Home visits are an opportunity for families to ask questions and learn more about what they can expect from our program. It also allows children, families, and teachers to become better acquainted, making the first day of school an easier transition. These meetings also make it possible for the teachers to learn from you. Developing an understanding about your child's experiences, likes, dislikes, and interests, as well as any concerns or goals you have for your child makes it possible for teachers to best support them in the classroom. Based on information from families, staff make changes to their classroom practices as appropriate.

If families express an interest in learning more about access to community resources, teachers may also use this time to share that information.

### **Family Welcome Night**

The ELC will hold a Family Welcome Night before the start of the program year in August. We strongly encourage all families who will be entering our program to attend this meeting. ELC staff will share important information and families will have time to ask questions and meet the larger ELC team. Additionally, families will explore the school and classroom environment to become more familiar with the building. We will also discuss ways families can engage with their child's learning.

### **Separation and Transition Support**

It is important to us that your child has a positive experience when entering school. However, each child experiences separation differently and some children may experience separation anxiety. We ask that you be prepared to stay with your child in the classroom if they have difficulty in the beginning. The teacher will let you know when it is time to leave, as there can be a fine line between staying too long and not staying long enough. Teachers are experienced and competent in helping your child make this transition. Generally, if the adults in a child's life are comfortable with the ELC team and environment, the child will adjust quickly. Once you leave your child you are welcome to call the school to check on your child.

In the rare case that your child does not adjust to the classroom environment within a couple of weeks, teachers and parents/caregivers will meet to develop a transition plan to best support your child.

## **Open-Door Policy**

Our school has an open-door policy. Caregivers, family members, and other important people in a child's life are always welcome to visit our classrooms. There are many ways to be involved including volunteering for family teams, participating in the classroom, attending family events, volunteering to help with classroom/school tasks, or simply spending the day at school with your child.

If you would like to participate in the classroom, please let your child's teacher know so you can work together to schedule a time.

When adults volunteer or participate at our school, we ask that they follow the same procedures as the staff. This includes following our guidance policy of creating a safe and respectful environment (see more under the *Guidance Policy* section). Non-staff adults cannot and will not be left alone with any child other than their own. They are also not allowed to enter the school bathrooms if any child other than their own is present.

We also encourage families to reach out to their teachers and/or the ELC leadership team at any time to discuss ideas, questions, concerns, or any thoughts they have related to their child's growth and experience at our school.

## **Grievance Procedure**

Families can address their concerns verbally or in writing, whichever method parents choose. The following process will be followed to reach an equitable solution for all involved. All grievances shall remain confidential. Documentation is required for each step.

**Step 1:** Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss any problems directly with the child's teacher.

**Step 2:** If the problem remains after speaking with the teacher, parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss the matter with the VP of Early Learning no later than five days after meeting with the teacher.

**Step 3:** If appropriate, the VP of Early Learning will schedule a meeting to include classroom teachers, VP of Early Learning, the child's parents/guardians and any other relevant relatives and/or program staff. Together, the team will work to resolve the concerns.

If a problem arises that is suspected abuse or neglect by a staff member, please refer to the section titled *Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect*.

## **Family Teams**

Family teams are one way in which you can be active in our school community. The teams focus on a variety of tasks including planning and organizing school events, reviewing and revising school policies, helping with classroom projects and more. Team descriptions and a signup form are provided during the Family Welcome Night.

## **Family-Teacher Conferences**

Conferences are scheduled three times per year, as noted in our school calendar. During the fall, teachers complete a form which details information on children's progress and next steps the eight developmental areas included in the Early Learning Guidelines and share it with families. Together, teachers and parents/caregivers develop a simple plan to support the child's continued growth at home and at school. In the spring, teachers fill out a similar form. However, it is more focused on

recapping the child's accomplishments throughout the school year. With permission from families, spring conference forms are mailed to each child's kindergarten school to be shared with their kindergarten teacher.

During the winter, the ELC conducts student-led conferences as a way for families to experience a sampling of what happens in their child's classroom. Information may be shared through panel boards, PowerPoint presentations, art shows, etc. An activity will also be planned for families to engage in a hands-on learning experience with their child. These conferences are typically held in larger groups. If you prefer to meet with your child's teachers individually, please let them know so a time can be scheduled.

Conferences are scheduled several weeks in advance. A sign-up sheet will give you several choices of dates and times for the Fall and Spring conferences. There is no school on family-teacher conference days.

### **Family Events**

Throughout the year, the ELC will host several family events. These events vary from year to year depending on what the Event Planning Team develops, as well as interests and goals of the current year's school community. Examples of possible events are literacy nights, winter festivals, field days, or movie nights. It is the ELC's goal that these events are representative of, and open to, the variety of cultures and traditions represented in our school community.

Additionally, the ELC will host several "Coffee and Conversation" events throughout the year. During these events, families are invited to stay at school after dropping their child off in the morning or before picking their child up in the afternoons and chat with teachers, ELC staff, and other families. A variety of topics are discussed during these gatherings. Frequently, this time is used to share stories from the classroom, with classrooms taking turns presenting.

Families are encouraged to attend workshops around topics such as parenting, nutrition, and finances that are frequently offered through Growing Up NM and community programs. The ELC team posts this information in the "Family Information/Community Events" area of the school and sends out invitations to these events via Brightwheel. Please speak to a member of our staff if you are interested in events/workshops about a particular topic.

### **Family Surveys**

Families are asked to complete a Family Survey twice a year. The first survey supports ELC staff on developing goals and plans for the year. The second survey allows us to measure family satisfaction and suggestions for improvement. This feedback is important, and we appreciate families' participation in the surveys.

### **Supportive Resources: Home Visiting and the Bridges to Opportunity Program**

The ELC has several resources available at the school. These include books on parenting, nutritional snack ideas, and tip sheets for specific parenting topics (bedwetting, developing literacy, tantrums, etc.). Furthermore, the ELC team can help families connect with resources available in the community to meet needs such as access to food depots, counseling, and/or medical services.

Growing Up New Mexico's Home Visiting program delivers an integrated curriculum of support and resources that inform a confident, healthy, and stable family life, supporting families with questions and needs. Home Visiting is available for families prenatal until the child is 5 years old (and or kindergarten entry). For more information about the program, contact [postpartum@growingupnm.org](mailto:postpartum@growingupnm.org) or (505) 819-5484.

Growing Up NM also has Bridges to Opportunity Coaches. This program supports families in identifying needs and connecting with community resources that may be of aid and can support families in setting and reaching long- and short-term goals. Please contact any member of the ELC team if you would like more information about resources that may be supportive for you and your family.

### **Birthdays**

At the ELC, we want to acknowledge your child's birthday unless you consciously choose not to celebrate birthdays. It is a special day when we can celebrate their growth and development. We ask that in-school birthday celebrations are simple and arranged with your child's teacher ahead of time. Any snacks provided must be nutritious. Please speak to your child's teacher about allergies in your child's classroom before choosing a snack, and do not bring in food items with nuts. We ask that all snacks be sent in a way that can be washed and prepared by each child individually or in separate, individual packages. If you need ideas that fit these guidelines, please reach out to your classroom teacher or the office staff. *Please do not bring extra items for a child's birthday such as balloons, cupcakes, and or party bags. These items, as well as any snack not meeting our Nutritional Policy, will not be passed out at school and will be returned to the family at pick-up time.* If you are not able to bring a snack to school for your child's birthday, please let us know. If you agree, we will provide a fun, healthy snack for the classroom.

If you are planning an out-of-school birthday celebration, please do not use the child's cubbies/mailboxes to pass out invitations unless you are inviting all the children in your child's class.

### **Holiday Celebrations**

**It is our belief that celebrations held at our center should be inclusive of all families, not religiously affiliated, and accessible to everyone.** The intention of our holiday policy is to honor and respect all families in our program, including those who do not observe holidays. This means the ELC team does not initiate celebrations for Christmas, Valentine's Day, or Halloween, among other holidays. We ask that all families respect the environment we wish to create at our center by cooperating with this policy. **This means not sending your child to school wearing a costume on Halloween or with store-bought Valentine's Day cards.** In alignment with this policy, we ask that you do not send gifts to your child's teachers in recognition of holidays. The school team appreciates your thoughtfulness in wanting to send a gift; however, we also feel this conflicts with our Holiday Celebration policy. ELC team members will happily accept a simple homemade gift from you and/or your child if you would like to make something in recognition of your family's culture and traditions. Handmade cards, for instance, mean so much to our teachers when they come from you and your child!

The ELC acknowledges that holidays and traditions are an important part of life for many people. Children are welcome to openly share, discuss, and play out events that are meaningful to them. Teachers have materials and books available in the classroom that relate to a variety of celebrations and traditions for children to explore. We also encourage and invite families to share their traditions and experiences at our center. We believe an important part of developing celebration for differences (a core value here at the ELC), is learning about others' traditions and beliefs from someone who experiences them. Some examples of how you may want to share at our center include:

- Making/sharing a recipe that is special to your family such as your favorite winter cookies, pupusas, samosas, tamales, etc.,
- Decorating holiday cards or ornaments,
- Sharing a story about Diwali and the *diyas* that your family uses,

- Making *cascarones* during springtime,
- Playing a game of dreidel with your child's classmates,
- Sharing music, dance or other aspects of your culture and celebrations.

We understand our policy may not always feel comfortable to all families. We ask that you look at it from the perspective of respecting and including all our children and families. If you would like to share more about your family's traditions with your child's classroom, but are not sure how, please talk to your teacher or the VP of Early Learning. We will gladly help you with this. We can help you find ways to share even if you do not have time to come into the school and conduct an activity.

## HEALTH POLICIES

### **Immunizations and Health Records**

***Families must provide the ELC with a current immunization record or current vaccination exemption form before beginning school.*** Additionally, families must provide a copy of the child's current completed physical and dental screenings. Immunizations must remain updated during the child's enrollment in our program. All student files must have up-to-date contact information for their family doctor and dentist. If the child's health records do not meet the school's requirements, as set by childcare regulations, families will be notified and given a deadline to provide updated information. Failure to meet the deadline could result in the child's disenrollment.

### **Contagious Diseases**

If your child becomes ill with a contagious disease, please let us know right away so we can alert our families and, if necessary, the ECECD. Families will be notified even if there is a contagious, but not serious, virus going around our school such as stomach flu. This will help parents to be aware of the symptoms and help prevent illnesses spreading.

Contagious/Notifiable Diseases of which the school should be informed immediately include but are not limited to: COVID-19; flu; strep-throat; lice; pinkeye; ringworm; influenza; hand, foot, and mouth syndrome; pertussis (whooping cough); mumps; chicken pox; measles; and any other disease that is preventable by vaccines. If a child in the center becomes ill with a disease for which there is a vaccine, all under-immunized or non-immunized children will be excluded from the program per CDC standards for the disease. This is typically a period of several weeks after the last symptom of the disease has resolved and can mean a child missing over a month of school.

Following a notifiable illness, per the New Mexico Department of Health guidelines, **children may only return to school when a healthcare provider has approved them to return.** For other illnesses, parents should keep the child at home until the child's symptoms of illness have gone away. The program reserves the right to refuse readmission or require documentation from a health care provider if the child continues to display symptoms.

It is incredibly important to alert ELC staff to any symptoms of possible contagious disease in addition to confirmed diagnoses. This allows us to keep everyone in our school community as safe as possible by conducting proper sanitization and limiting contact as needed. Failure to alert ELC staff to any contagious disease that may result in serious health problems for others may lead to dismissal from the program.

### **When to Keep a Child Home**

The two most effective methods to minimize the spread of any illness are handwashing and keeping sick children home. The ELC asks that children wash their hands immediately when they enter the

classroom upon arriving at school.

Please **keep your child home** if they are sick or have had any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Severe rash
- Persistent cough and/or severe congestion (nasal/chest)
- Vomiting
- Sore throat
- Symptoms of pink eye
- Signs/symptoms of any contagious disease

Please **do not** send your child to school if medication is required to reduce any of the above symptoms as your child may still be contagious and the effects of medication will wear off during the day.

NOTE: If your child is not well enough to fully participate in the class activities, including outdoor play, your child should not come to school. This policy applies equally to staff members, volunteers, and any other adults in the program.

### **Sending a Child Home from School**

If your child is at school and develops any of the following symptoms, we will call you immediately and request you pick up your child as soon as possible:

- An oral temperature at or above 101.0 degrees Fahrenheit and/or an underarm temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit while the child is showing signs of illness or behavior changes,
- A staff person observes signs of a contagious disease or severe illness,
- A staff person observes signs of any of the symptoms listed under *When to Keep Your Child Home*.

Documentation from doctor's visits may be requested depending on the diagnosis or severity of symptoms, especially if your child was sent home ill.

Children who appear ill will be separated and observed while waiting for a parent/guardian to pick up the ill child. A mat will be available for the child to wait comfortably.

Your child must be symptom free for 24-hours without medication before they can return to school.

### **Medication (Prescription, Non-prescription, or Homeopathic)**

In situations where children need medication, parents/caregivers should administer non-prescription and/or prescription medication at home as much as possible. In special circumstances, the ELC team may, with written guardian consent, provide limited administration of medication. The medication must be supplied by the family, include the child's first and last name, manufacturer's/doctor's instructions, and be in the original container. A written record will be kept on site and staff will document the amount of medication on hand, the amount given, the date and time administered and other information in accordance with child care regulations.

Medication will be kept in a locked, secure setting. Medications that must be readily available are stored in a safe manner and inaccessible to children, while allowing quick access for staff. In most classrooms medications are kept in a small lock box in the emergency backpack for the classroom.

Please inform your child's teacher if medication must be kept in the refrigerator.

You should never put any kind of medication in your child's backpack or in his/her pocket. This includes everything from prescription medications to non-prescription medications, including, but not limited to lip balm, lotion, throat lozenges, sunscreen, insect repellent, hand lotion, over-the-counter medications, etc..

Parents/guardians must note any allergies to medication on all admission forms.

If a physician or dentist orders a special medical management procedure for a child, an adult trained in the procedure must be on-site whenever the child is present.

### **Sunscreen**

The ELC team feels that it is important to protect children from the sun during outdoor play. For this reason, we apply sunscreen on all children at least 15 minutes before going outdoors during sunny weather. If more than two hours lapses between application of sunscreen and outdoor play, sunscreen will be reapplied. Sunscreen will be applied to any exposed skin including shoulders, face, arms, and legs. The ELC will keep a bottle of sunscreen on hand in each classroom to use on all children. Any family preferring to supply their own sunscreen can do so. Sunscreen must be supplied in the original packaging and have the child's first and last name written on it. Sunscreen will be stored away in a locked cabinet or closet when not in use. Children are encouraged to apply their own sunscreen under the supervision of an ELC team member. Families will be asked to sign a permission form allowing ELC team members to apply sunscreen to their child during the registration process. If you would prefer that we do not apply sunscreen to your child, you may indicate so on the form.

The best method of sun protection is to limit the amount of skin exposed to direct sunlight. Therefore, we encourage all families to send their children to school with thin, breathable, long layers and a hat. These items can be stored in the child's cubby until outdoor play.

### **Diapering and Toilet Training**

Toilet-training is an important part of a child's development and self-independence skills. We request that families support their children in becoming fully toilet-trained before entering our program. However, if a child is not completely toilet-trained, the ELC team will work with families to develop a plan to support appropriate diapering and the overall goal of toilet training for your child as they grow. It is critical that all caregivers in a child's life are working toward the same goal and in a similar manner.

If your child is not fully toilet-trained when they start our program, your child's teacher will ask about your child's diapering routine and any toilet-training strategies you already use as a family. In partnership with you, teachers will develop a plan that best supports your child's needs and your goals. The plan will include information about strategies to use, routines for your child, materials to be used (diapers, wipes, creams, etc) and other relevant information. Teachers will check for wet/soiled diapers or training pants regularly throughout the day, especially when your child wakes up from a nap. Wet and soiled diapers will be changed promptly, clothing will also be changed as needed.

To ensure your child is comfortable and to support their home routine, please provide an adequate supply of your child's diapers, wipes, etc to be used at the ELC. Your child will have a designated storage area for their items, labeled with their name.

There may be times young children have occasional accidents. The ELC team will never punish or demean a child if this happens. When a child needs assistance in the bathroom, we will always make

sure there is a teacher or staff person present. We encourage children to use the bathroom, clean themselves, and change themselves on their own as much as possible and will support them through the process. If a child is not able to complete the process on their own, a staff member will step in to help.

## **SAFETY AND EMERGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Supervision of Children**

Children are never left alone by the ELC team. Supervision occurs primarily through sight, children are always in the line of vision of a teacher or other staff member. Supervision by sound, for short intervals, is permissible if teachers are aware of where children are. Teachers remain nearby whenever children utilize a specific area or piece of equipment where injury could occur. Volunteers do not work alone with children; they are always supervised by regularly scheduled teaching staff. Also, new teaching staff and other program staff do not work alone with children until they have received an initial orientation to the program and their role, and they have received a full eligible background clearance from ECECD.

### **CPR/First Aid**

The ELC team makes every effort to provide a safe environment for our children and families. All staff that have direct contact with children are trained in Pediatric First Aid and CPR.

If an accident occurs and first aid is necessary, a staff member will take care of the child as appropriate. Emergency procedures are posted in every classroom, and staff are updated on these each school year. First Aid Kits are available in all classrooms as well as outdoors. Proper protocol will be followed if a child needs a higher level of care.

### **Incident Reports**

Whenever a staff member must administer first aid, a child is injured, and/or a physical incident occurs between more than one child, the staff member who helped resolve and/or witnessed the occurrence will fill out an incident report. If an incident is severe or the injury was on the child's face/head, the teacher will call the family to share information about the incident as soon as possible and complete the written incident report. Individual reports are filled out for each child involved and will only include information on your child.

### **Child Found Missing**

If a staff member discovers that a child is missing, they will immediately inform the VP of Early Learning or current staff member in charge. While maintaining appropriate ratios in all classrooms, available staff members will search the premises for the child. If a child is still missing from the facility after 10 minutes of thoroughly searching, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately, a call will be made to 911 or the Santa Fe Police Department (505-428-3710), and a report will be made to ECECD.

### **Emergency Drills: Fire, Evacuation, and Lockdown Drills**

All children and ELC staff participate in ongoing emergency drills which include fire/evacuation drills once a month and quarterly lock-down drills. As a school we believe that though situations like these are extremely rare, preparation helps to reduce anxiety and increase overall feelings of safety, for both children and adults. Teachers maintain records of all conducted drills for their classrooms.

During a fire drill, children are asked to line up quickly and in a calm fashion. Evacuation cribs are used, as needed, for babies and toddlers. Classrooms are then escorted to the Santa Fe Vineyard Christian Fellowship church parking lot, our designated safe area for evacuation purposes. Once outside, teachers use attendance logs to ensure all children are out of the building safely. The office team also checks each room of the building to ensure all individuals have evacuated. After attendance is confirmed at the designated safe area, teachers update the VP of Early Learning, or other current person in charge, to indicate that all children in their classrooms are accounted for. In the case of a drill, once all classes confirm their counts with the person in charge, children will return to their classrooms. If the alarm is set off for any reason other than drill purposes, the fire alarm panel instantly contacts the Santa Fe Fire Department. The person in charge will investigate the situation further to ensure it is safe for children and staff to return to the building. This may include a building walkthrough by the Santa Fe Fire Department. If it is an unplanned fire evacuation, families will be notified of the situation once all children are accounted for and it is safe for the team to use communication methods such as cellphones.

Evacuation drills indicate a need to move a greater distance away from the ELC building. This may occur if there is concern that the building itself may be unsafe for any reason, such as a bomb threat or gas leak. A member of the ELC Leadership Team will contact the Santa Fe Police Department immediately if they believe there may be a threat to the building and will follow through with their instructions. Most likely, this will include evacuating the building. During an evacuation, children and ELC staff will follow the same protocol as a fire drill. If the evacuation was initiated for any reason other than drill purposes, ELC staff will await approval to return to the building. This will most likely require Santa Fe Police or Fire Department intervention. If it is an unplanned evacuation, families will be notified of the situation once all children are accounted for and it is safe for the team to use communication methods such as cellphones.

A lockdown takes place when a potentially harmful person enters the building or is in the nearby vicinity. In this situation, teachers and children lock themselves in their classroom or other location within the building for safety. The entire building is locked to prevent anyone from being able to enter it during a lockdown. A member of the ELC Leadership team will contact the Santa Fe Police Department as teachers and other staff members ensure that the building is properly secured. Families are informed ahead of time when lockdown drills will take place. Teachers will begin discussions with children about the drill 1-2 weeks ahead of the scheduled date. Notes providing detailed information on how the ELC team discusses the importance of these drills will be sent to families so they may prepare children at home as well. If the school must enter a lockdown for any reason other than a drill, families will be notified of the situation as soon as it is safe for ELC staff to communicate with families. This may not occur until after the lockdown is lifted.

**If you believe these drills or emergency situations may cause your child overwhelming distress, please speak to a member of the ELC team. Accommodations will be made to the best of the staff's ability for any child that requires them while also considering the needs and safety of all children present.**

Note: If we are in the middle of an emergency situation, we will not accept additional children for drop off. Families will be notified when it's all clear and they can drop off their child. Also, if the fire alarm is flashing or you hear the alarm, please do not approach the building.

### **Contact During School Emergencies**

Staff members always have family emergency contact information with them during any event such as those previously described. ELC's first priority is the safety of children and staff. Therefore, ELC staff will contact families about an emergency situation **when it is safe to do so**. Families will be

contacted via the Brightwheel phone app, text message, and/or phone call. The ELC team will update families with new information as it becomes available and when it is safe to do so. If necessary, the ELC may share additional information in the days following an emergency to inform families of what took place and what is being done to ensure the continued safety of our community.

If an emergency requires a different pick up schedule and/or procedure, ELC staff will contact you and let you know when and how to do so safely. **It is incredibly important that you follow all instructions given to you by ELC staff during an emergency. Do not come to the ELC premises unless expressly asked to do so.** We understand emergency situations can be scary and stressful. As stated before, our priority is the safety of our children and staff. It is important for emergency responders to have clear and immediate access to the building and the surrounding area to do their job. If families rush to the premises, this can lead to traffic jams and roadblocks that could prevent emergency responders from doing their job, putting our entire community at risk.

### **Building Security**

The ELC takes the safety of our children, families, and staff very seriously. We have several measures in place to help us meet our safety goals. This includes camera systems installed throughout the building and automatically locking doors. The entrance doors into the building and front office area are open during business hours (7:30am - 4:00pm). However, the entrance doors into the main hallways of the school, and the spaces occupied by children, are unlocked only for a short period during drop-off and pick-up time. To gain access past these doors, a member of the front office staff must open the door. Visitors will be asked to provide an I.D. and state the purpose of their visit if they are unfamiliar to front office staff. In addition, all visitors must sign in and receive a visitor badge before accessing other areas of the school.

Each classroom, the main school hallways, the outdoor playground, and drop-off/pick-up areas are all monitored by security cameras. Only members of the school leadership team have access to the camera footage. This allows us to monitor the premises and review recorded video as necessary.

### **Emergency Numbers and Change of Address**

It is critical that all contact information in your child's file is current. Parents/guardians can update this information directly through the Brightwheel app. All changes to information must be conveyed to front office staff and your child's teachers as soon as possible. Teachers must be able to contact authorized parents/guardians in case of an emergency or child illness.

### **Confidentiality**

All communications with and observations of families in our program are kept confidential. We serve a small community within Santa Fe County and teachers will be discreet and objective when working with families. Additionally, each child's health and safety file is kept confidential but is readily available to administrators and educators who have consent to access records, the child's parents or legal guardians, and regulatory authorities. We will not share information from files without written consent from the legal guardians of the child unless court ordered or if there is a case of suspected child abuse or neglect. Electronic data is stored in password-protected data systems.

### **Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect**

Children's safety and welfare are critically important to the staff at the Early Learning Center. State law requires immediate notification of authorities in circumstances of suspected child abuse or neglect. We adhere to all state reporting requirements, including those pertaining to verbal and written reports. The ELC will determine whether to notify parents/guardians of the report. The reporting staff member must also report the suspected abuse or neglect to the VP of Early Learning and the CEO of Growing Up NM. Complete documentation of the suspected child abuse or neglect

will be the responsibility of the staff member.

If an employee is suspected or accused of child abuse or neglect, the supervisor must be informed immediately. The individual reporting this suspicion and or the supervisor will report this information to CYFD.

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**Thank you for your partnership and support for your child's education. We look forward to a great year ahead. Please reach out to us with your questions or feedback regarding the handbook or any of our policies/procedures.**

*Final note: This handbook is subject to change at any time by Growing Up NM. Changes will be communicated to parents through notices on a bulletin board posting, through handouts, or through other types of communication.*

# Growing Up NM Early Learning Center at Kaune | 2025-2026 Calendar

*This calendar is subject to change at the sole discretion of the ELC at Kaune.*

JULY 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**4** Independence Day  
**18** Last Day of School (2023-24 Program)  
**21-31** Staff Planning - No School

JANUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**1-2** Winter Break  
**5** Teacher Planning – No School  
**19** Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
**30** Teacher Planning – No School

AUGUST 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

**1-11** Staff Planning - No School  
**12** First Day of School 2025-26

FEBRUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

**13** Teacher Planning – No School  
**16** Presidents’ Day  
**27** Family Teacher Conferences

SEPTEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**1** Labor Day  
**12** Teacher Planning – No School  
**26** Teacher Planning – No School

MARCH 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**10** Picture Day  
**13** Teacher Planning – No School  
**30-31** Spring Break

OCTOBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

**10** Teacher Planning – No School  
**13** Indigenous Peoples’ Day  
**23-24** Family Teacher Conferences - No School

APRIL 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**1-3** Spring Break  
**6** Teacher Planning – No School  
**17** Teacher Planning – No School

NOVEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

**14** Teacher Planning - No School  
**24-25** Teacher Planning – No School  
**26-28** Fall Break

MAY 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**1** Teacher Planning  
**22** Teacher Planning – No School  
**25** Memorial Day

DECEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

**22-31** Winter Break

JUNE 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	*			

**12** Teacher Planning – No School  
**19** Juneteenth  
**25-26** Family Teacher Conferences

\*Program Year will continue through July 2026

**First / Last Days** Programs Family Teacher Conferences- No School for students  
**Holidays- School Closed** Teacher Planning Days- No School for Students

Severe weather closures are determined by SFPS and announced at [www.sfps.info](http://www.sfps.info).

