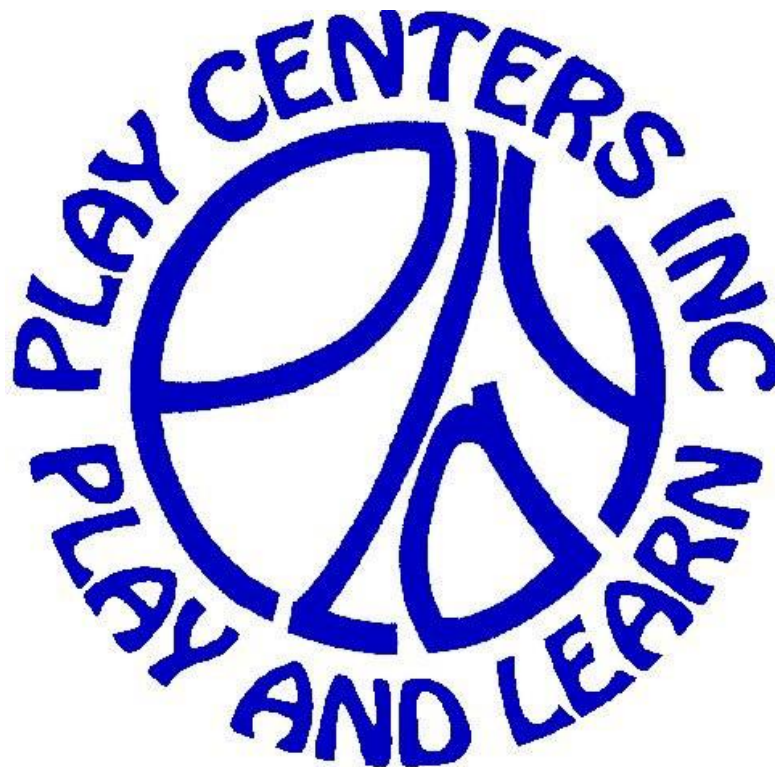


PLAY CENTERS, INC.
SCHOOL AGE
PARENT HANDBOOK



2414 E. JOPPA ROAD
PARKVILLE, MARYLAND 21234

Revised 11/22



Play Centers, Inc. / Play and Learn
"Your First Choice for Quality Child Care and Education"
in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City,
and Baltimore County

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
 - A. Phone Numbers/Website/Fed ID Number
 - B. Welcome Letter
 - C. History/About Us/Structure
 - D. Programs Licensed by MSDE
 - E. Guide to Regulated Child Care
 - F. Additions & Amendments
 - G. Mission Statement/Goals/Code of Ethical Conduct/Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer
 - H. Philosophy
 - I. Inclusion & Non-Discrimination Policy
 - J. Developmental Differences & Mixed Age Groupings
 - K. Quality Initiatives

II. Enrollment & Tuition Procedures & Policies

- A. Waiting List
- B. Enrollment/Required Paperwork
- C. Financial Policies/Tuition Rates/Drop-In & Additional Days of Care/
Discounts/ Scholarship & Subsidy/Tuition Payment Procedures/Changes in
Enrollment/Additional Fees/Past Due Accounts/Refunds
- D. Additional Financial Policies (Flexible Spending Accounts/ Tax Statements/
Donations/Late Pick-Up Policies/Special School Age Care in Designated Play
& Learn Locations

III. Operating Procedures & Policies

- A. Hours of Operation
- B. Holidays & Scheduled Closings
- C. Inclement Weather/Emergency Closing Policy
- D. COVID/Pandemic/Quarantine Closing Policy
- E. Dropping Off & Picking Up Children
- F. Absence Procedure
- G. Media Release
- H. Screen Time Policy
- I. Babysitting Policy
- J. In-House Field Trips/Center Visitors

IV. Health & Safety Policies

- A. Open Door Policy and Center Security

- B. Fire Drills/Shelter-in-Place Drills/Emergency Preparedness
 - C. Oops! Notes & Medical Emergencies
 - D. COVID Health & Safety Procedures & Links
 - E. Illness & Communicable Diseases Policies
 - F. Medication Policies
 - G. Immunizations & Lead Tests
 - H. Child Abuse & Neglect
 - I. Food & Nutrition Policies
 - J. Clothes & Shoes
 - K. Classroom and Locker Access
 - L. Outdoor Play & Physical Fitness
 - M. Positive Behavior Management
 - N. Pets
 - O. Volunteers
- V. Learning Opportunities at Play Centers, Inc.
- A. The Power of Play
 - B. Staff Qualifications and Clearances/Ratios/Staff Development
 - C. Your Child's First Day/Items from Home
 - D. Enrichment Activities Statement
 - E. Materials
 - F. Daily Activities/Daily Routines/Schedules

VI. Family Engagement

- A. Communication Policy
- B. Confidentiality Policy
- C. Grievance Policy
- D. Parent Resources
- E. Family Engagement Opportunities

VII. Quotes on the Importance of Play

I. Introduction

A. Welcome Letter

Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn would like to formally welcome you and your child to our program. We are pleased that you have selected us for your quality child care needs!

Our goal is to provide children with a wide variety of appealing, age-appropriate activities that foster growth and learning in all developmental areas. We look forward to providing a positive learning experience for your child.

The information provided in this handbook describes our philosophy, programs, policies, and procedures. We ask that you thoroughly read the handbook before signing the handbook receipt. Please feel free to contact your Center Director or the Play Centers, Inc. Administrative Team with any questions or concerns.

We look forward to a bright future together!

Diane Mellott
Executive Director

B. Phone Numbers/Website/Federal ID Number

School-Age Programs

Play Centers at Carney Elementary School	443-804-6991	CARDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Carroll Manor Elementary School	410-592-6948	CMDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Cromwell Valley Technical School	410-321-9011	CVDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Elmwood Elementary School	410-665-8210	EWDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Jacksonville Elementary School	410-666-3055	JAXDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Jemicy School	410-493-4057	JEMDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Our Lady of Hope/St. Luke's School	410-288-3310	OLHDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Pinewood Elementary School	410-561-0885	PWDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Stoneleigh Elementary School	410-337-2744	STODirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Warren Elementary School	410-628-7111	WARDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at West Towson Elementary School	410-494-7134	WTDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Norwood Elementary School	410-805-3378	NORDirector@playcenters.org
Play Centers at Middleborough Elementary School	667-355-9218	MBDirector@playcenters.org

Preschool Programs

Play and Learn at Annapolis	410-263-4029	APDirector@playcenters.org
Play and Learn at Community Place	410-987-3312	CPDirector@playcenters.org
Play and Learn at Eastpoint	410-282-2057	EPDirector@playcenters.org
Play and Learn at Hunt Valley	410-785-7077	HVDirector@playcenters.org
Play and Learn at Scribbles	410-467-6702	SCDirector@playcenters.org

Administrative Personnel

Administrative Office	410-296-4880	www.playcenters.org
Office Manager / Program Support	EXT. 100	playcenters@playcenters.org
Human Resources Director	EXT. 102	BSimms@playcenters.org
Finance Director (CFO)	EXT. 104	Finance@playcenters.org
Personnel Director	EXT. 107	JGarrow@playcenters.org
Accounts Receivable Coordinator	EXT. 110	ARCoordinator@playcenters.org
Subsidy Specialist / School Age Accounts Receivable Coordinator	EXT. 111	KThomas@playcenters.org
Executive Director (CEO/COO)	EXT. 113	DMellott@playcenters.org
Accounts Payable Coordinator	EXT. 114	APCoordinator@playcenters.org
Payroll Coordinator	EXT. 117	payroll@playcenters.org
Program Quality Specialist	410-296-4880	AFleming@playcenters.org
Preschool Curriculum Specialist	410-296-4880	NJefferson@playcenters.org
Administrative Support Specialist	410-296-4880	KOldewurtel@playcenters.org

Federal Tax ID Number: 52-1259566

C. History/About Us/Structure

Play Centers, Inc. has been in operation as a not-for-profit educational corporation since September 1982. Play Centers, Inc. offers programs for school-age children in various schools throughout Baltimore County. Originally, our school-age programs were housed exclusively in public schools. Today, however, Play Centers, Inc. provides quality school-age care in both public and private Baltimore County schools.

In addition, Play Centers, Inc. offers infant/toddler/preschool programs known as *Play and Learn*. These programs for our younger participants are located in Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel County.

Play Centers, Inc. has an extensive history of providing high quality childcare to Maryland's children and families for nearly 40 years and we work diligently to be your first choice for quality child care and education!

D. Programs Licensed by MSDE

Each Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn program is licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education – Office of Child Care (MSDE-OCC) and functions within the purview of the Code of Maryland Regulations governing childcare centers. A copy of the Regulations is available at your child's center and online at <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/regulations>. All Play Centers, Inc. programs are inspected annually by MSDE-OCC Licensing Specialists and Inspection Reports are available online.

E. Guide to Regulated Child Care

The MSDE Office of Child Care *Guide to Regulated Child Care* pamphlet contains important information about licensed child care facilities in Maryland. A copy of this pamphlet is included in your enrollment folder, a copy is posted in the parent information area of your child/ren's center, and it is also available at:

https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/2/guide_to_regulated_child_care.pdf.

F. Additions & Amendments

This handbook may be amended at the sole discretion of the Administration at any time during the year. Additionally, new policies and procedures may be added by the Administration on either a trial or permanent basis throughout the year, and the Administration has the authority to deviate from these policies if they deem it appropriate and/or to meet new federal, state, or

local regulations. An electronic version of this handbook is available on our website. In the event that additions or amendments are necessary after the publication of this handbook, they will be reflected on the website. Families will be made aware of any changes through a message, email, and/or flyer.

G. Mission Statement/Goals/Code of Ethical Conduct/Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Mission Statement

To be the first choice for quality child care and education!

Goals

- The safety and well-being of the children in our care will be our priority.
- Our program will offer inclusive, engaging, enriching, and intentional hands-on learning through play experiences in well-developed and developmentally appropriate environments.
- Our staff will be professionally trained and experienced in child development, individualized programming, curriculum implementation, quality learning environments, child engagement, and parent/community involvement.
- Our programs will respond to a variety of individual family needs.

Code of Ethical Conduct

Play Centers, Inc. will use as a guide the *National AfterSchool Association's* Code of Ethics.

Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all of our children and families, staff, vendors, and other partners.

H. Philosophy

Play Centers, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation providing quality care and education to children ages 6 weeks – 11 years. Our programs are age and developmentally appropriate and reflect the interests of the children, their primary languages, and their cultural background. We focus on the whole child, specifically the child’s physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. We welcome children of all abilities, including children with disabilities and/or special health care needs who meet the basic eligibility requirements of our programs. All children are fully included and are given access and support needed to participate in our programs. Throughout our program design is a strong emphasis on learning through play, as well as opportunities for discovery, hands-on activities, and guided choices which serve to enrich learning. The children are offered a balance of the following categories of activities: child-initiated and teacher-directed; indoor and outdoor; quiet and active; and individual, small group, and whole group.

I. Inclusion & Non-Discrimination Policy

Play Centers Inc. is committed to the inclusion of children with varying abilities in our programs. We strive to address the needs of all children, including children with special health care needs, children with disabilities or developmental delays, children in poverty, as well as children who are English learners, immigrants, refugees, migrant, homeless, or in foster care. We welcome the opportunity to fully include individuals with a wide variety of abilities who meet the basic eligibility requirements of our programs.

Play Centers, Inc. programs operate in line with the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, “...inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every child and his/her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results for inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality programs and services are access, participation, and supports.”

We also work with our families and early intervention or special education service providers to support child and family outcomes. This may include (but not be limited to): scheduling therapy sessions at the centers, possibly meeting one-on-one with the specialist, as well as, working with the child through small group or one-on-one instruction daily. If your child has an IFSP/IEP, please include a copy of it, along with a schedule of services, with your enrollment packet.

Our Center Directors and lead staff participate as team members and work with IFSP/IEP teams to make modifications and accommodations for children with special health care needs or disabilities.

J. Developmental Differences & Mixed Age Groupings

Every child enters our program with a different set of experiences, circumstances, and interests. Consequently, each child demonstrates individual and varying talents, abilities, and needs. Our expectations of children are not uniform and consistent throughout a group or even between two children. We see each child as a unique individual and we make every effort to meet the individual needs of each child within the group setting.

The individual interests, needs, and past experiences of children within the group are carefully considered when planning the program. We determine the readiness of the children, take cues from them, and then build a program based on this information. A great amount of creative planning is essential to accommodate the variety of needs within a classroom.

Play Centers, Inc. strives to provide an environment that is most beneficial for each child, which includes spending time in mixed age groups. This arrangement offers children the opportunity to develop relationships across all ages, for older children to serve as mentors and leaders, and for younger children to learn skills from, and to develop positive relationships with, older peers. Through focused and sensitive adult supervision and guidance, these interactions are beneficial to the individual child and to the group as a whole.

K. Quality Initiatives

In an effort to continually assess and make improvements to our programs, Play Centers, Inc. participates in a variety of State-recommended program quality assessment and continuous quality improvement initiatives. The following formal quality assessment tools identified by the

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are utilized:

- School Age Care Environment Rating Scale
- Quality Assurance Program Improvement Plans
- MSDE's "Maryland EXCELS" Quality Rating Improvement System
- MSDE Child Care Center Accreditation Standards
- MSDE's Workforce Development Program and Individualized Staff Development Plans
- Annual Parent, Vendor, and Partner Surveys

Each of these systems for enhanced program quality and staff development identifies key areas for program and staff assessment, as well as a designated pathway toward continuous improvement. Play Centers, Inc. staff receive ongoing development and support in the classroom for implementing each of these initiatives, under the close supervision and guidance of the Center Director.

II. Enrollment and Tuition Procedures & Policies

A. Waiting List

Upon request, your child's name will be placed on the waiting list for the appropriate center.

Although no guarantee can be made that a space will be provided for your child on the desired start date, Play Centers, Inc. will do everything we can to facilitate your requests. When your child is assured of a space, time is of the essence. Failure to adhere to the communicated deadlines will result in the loss of your enrollment opportunity; however, you will remain on the Waiting List.

Your child's enrollment will be complete when Play Centers, Inc. has received all required paperwork and payment has been made of the fees due at enrollment time.

B. Enrollment/Required Paperwork

Enrollment at one of our locations can be facilitated by contacting the Center Director at the location of your choice. There are several enrollment forms that are required, including an enrollment contract. In addition, MSDE-OCC requires a variety of forms be completed and on file for each child, including Health Inventory/Blood Lead Testing Certificate, Immunization Certificate, and Emergency Form. The full enrollment packet must be complete in order to facilitate your child becoming enrolled in the program.

MSDE-OCC and Play Centers, Inc. forms are available through our Administrative Office and/or your Center Director. It is important that parents/guardians complete periodic paperwork and contact information updates to ensure that the Center Director has accurate records at all times.

Please note that your contract with Play Centers, Inc. includes the information contained in the Registration Contract as well as the information contained in the Parent Handbook.

C. Financial Policies

Play Centers, Inc. reserves the right to cancel and/or modify the contract at any time. Play Centers, Inc. is not responsible for errors caused by USPS, by financial institutions, by child care reimbursement programs, and/or by electronic transmission of information.

Tuition Rates

Tuition is billed monthly for our school-age programs. Rates are evaluated on an annual basis and any change in tuition rates will be communicated in writing 30 (thirty) days prior to the effective date of the change.

Drop-In & Additional Days of Care

Play Centers, Inc. offers full-time and some part-time schedules as well as a flexible “drop-in service” at most of our locations, for an additional fee. Contact your Center Director for the rate associated with your requested schedule.

In order to utilize our “Drop-In” service, you must:

- be preregistered, with all required paperwork in place,
- be enrolled in the Automatic Payment Program, and
- confirm with your Center Director **at least 24 hours in advance** that there is a space available in the program for the day on which you need care.

It is the parent’s responsibility to communicate with your child’s school teacher and the school’s Main Office regarding your approved plan and schedule to utilize Drop-In Care at Play Centers, Inc. to ensure that everyone has the information they need to implement an occasional shift in the child’s typical dismissal plan.

Discounts

There is a 10% discount for the second child using our centers, a 20% discount for third child, and a 30% discount for the fourth child. This discount is applied to the highest tuition rate and all children must be enrolled full-time. An additional 5% discount is applied for Military families. Play Centers, Inc. discounts do not apply to Drop-In Care/Additional Days of Care, or Additional Services.

Child Care Scholarship/Subsidy Programs

Play Centers, Inc. accepts child care vouchers from a variety of child care scholarship and subsidy programs. Please note that until Play Centers, Inc. is in receipt of a valid child care voucher, parents/guardians are responsible for payment of fees/services billed at rates as established by Play Centers, Inc.

OCC Child Care Scholarship Program: MSDE provides income-based scholarships through CCS Central. Learn more about Child Care Scholarships (CCS) by visiting their website at money4childcare.com (<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/child-care-scholarship-program>) or by calling them at 1-877-227-0125.

Child Care Aware Subsidy program serving military families: Learn more about this at <https://www.childcareaware.org/>.

For specific questions regarding utilizing Scholarships and Subsidies for our programs, please contact the Play Centers, Inc. Subsidy Specialist at 410-307-1424.

Payments

TUITION PAYMENTS: Tuition payments must be made by the 15th day of each month for the following month's tuition. Play Centers, Inc. will not send a bill each month! Payments may be made by check, money order, by phone or online at <http://www.myprocare.com> with a Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express. Payments in the form of cash or starter/non-imprinted checks will not be accepted. To ensure proper processing, please make checks or money orders payable to Play Centers, Inc. Please write your child's name and school on your payment. Tuition payments, by check or money order, must be either mailed or personally delivered to our Main Office, located at 2414 East Joppa Road, Parkville, MD 21234. The Center Staff cannot accept monthly tuition payments. Monthly tuition payments remain the same regardless of holidays, Winter Break, Spring Break, inclement weather, vacation, illness, pandemic, or acts of nature. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR MONTHLY TUITION PAYMENT! Failure to keep an account up to date will result in denial of participation in the program.

Automatic Payment Program

For convenience, Play Centers, Inc. offers an Automatic Payment Program whereby Play Centers, Inc. will automatically charge the monthly tuition on the 15th of the month for the following month's care. Payments for additional fees will be charged to a Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express debit/credit card on file. Please contact the Director or the AR Department for further information. (NOTE: The Registration Fee will be charged upon receipt of this contract.)

Changes in Enrollment

Changes in enrollment, including withdrawals, must be received IN WRITING by the Director of your child's program by the 12th of the month to be effective the 1st day of the following month. Failure to receive the letter or loss of the letter does not excuse non-payment or late payment of tuition and any additional monies, if applicable. Failure to notify Play Centers, Inc. of a child's withdrawal by the appropriate deadline may result in additional charges. Temporary changes in enrollment for drop-in care during the month of December will not be honored. Requests to change to a drop-in status for April, May and/or June will not be honored. Requests to withdraw after April 1st will not be honored.

Deposit

Your deposit of \$100.00 per child will be applied to your child's last tuition charges of the school year.

Additional Fees

Deposit: \$100.00 per child

Enrollment Fee: \$50.00 per family (non-refundable)

Balance Fee: \$25.00 (assessed on the 17th day of each month)

Returned Check Fee: \$35.00

Drop-In Fee/Additional Day of Care: (Please contact Center Director for availability and rates.)

Chargeback Fee for Invalid Credit Card Dispute: \$25.00

Copies of Attendance and/or Sign-In Sheets: \$1.00 per page, per child

Past Due Accounts

If a child is suspended from the program due to non-payment, payment of the entire unpaid balance is still due. If a past due account is not paid in a timely manner and it becomes necessary to refer the account to our Collection Agency, a Referral Fee = 33% of the past due balance will be billed. Any reasonable interest, collection fees, court costs, and/or attorney's fees imposed by our Collection Agency will be the responsibility of the person(s) who have signed this contract.

In addition, repeated late payments/returned checks/declined cards/past due accounts may be cause for expulsion from the program.

Tuition Refunds

Payment for unused days, for whatever reason, will not be refunded. No substitutions may be made for scheduled days a child is absent or for days the center is closed. Overpayments of \$30.00 or less at the

conclusion of the school year will not be refunded or applied to future fees.

D. Additional Financial Policies

Flexible Spending Accounts/Tax Statements/Donations

Contact the Finance Department at 410-307-1425 for more information.

Late Pick-Up Policies

If a child is picked up late, a charge will be imposed at the rate of **\$1.00 per minute, per child**. This fee is due when the child is picked up. It may be paid with Current Autopay, or by a check/money order made payable to Play Centers, Inc. Please note that in the event of a scheduled or unscheduled early closure, the late pick-up charge will be imposed beginning at that adjusted closure time. Repeated late pick-ups may be cause for expulsion from the program.

III. Operating Procedures and Policies

A. Hours of Operation

Play Centers, Inc. Before School Programs open at 7:00 a.m. and our After School Programs close at either 6:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m., depending on the location. Specific program operation hours vary.

Play Centers works with the schools regarding the opportunity to offer on-site full day care on days when schools are closed for Professional Development. Care on these days would incur no additional charge for regular participants scheduled for that day. Drop-in care is also available on these days and would incur a fee.

In addition, Play Centers, Inc. works with the schools regarding the opportunity to offer on-site extended day care on days when there are scheduled early dismissals. Care on these days would incur no additional charge for regular participants scheduled for the After School Program on that day. Drop-in care is also generally available on these afternoons and would incur a fee.

B. Holidays and Scheduled Closings

The Before and After School Program follows the schedule of the school system regarding most school closings. Refer to the calendar issued by your child's school for the dates of closings.

When school dismisses early for non-weather or non-emergency reasons, Play Centers will, with school permission, provide care for children who are registered in our After School Program for that day, from the early dismissal time until the program's regular closure time. Should you need drop-in care on these days, please call the Director of your center to make sure there is space available and all required paperwork is in place.

C. Inclement Weather/Emergency Closing Policy

The Before and After School Programs offered in Baltimore County Public Schools are required to follow the decisions of the BCPS Superintendent regarding program cancellations due to inclement weather or other emergencies. The decision to close the program for the morning, afternoon, or for the full day is made by the BCPS Superintendent and is out of the hands of the child care provider.

The Before and After School Programs offered at Our Lady of Hope/St. Luke School are required to follow the directive of Our Lady of Hope/St. Luke School with regard to delayed program openings and early program closures due to inclement weather or other emergencies. When school is closed for the full day due to inclement weather or other emergencies, the Play Centers, Inc. program at Our Lady of Hope/St. Luke School will also be closed.

The After School Program offered at Jemicy School is required to follow the directive of Jemicy School with regard to early program closures due to inclement weather or other emergencies. When school is closed for the full day due to inclement weather or other emergencies, the Play Centers, Inc. program at Jemicy School will also be closed.

For all locations, in the event of an inclement weather or emergency closure of the After School Program, please be sure to provide the emergency plan for your child's care under "program closure circumstances" to your school's Main Office and your child's school teacher, in writing. This will allow you to work with the school and your child's teacher to ensure that your preferred plan is able to be implemented in response to a program closure. A good plan, properly communicated, will support your child's safety and well-being. Be sure to also explain to your child what the emergency plan will be and give reminders during periods of inclement weather. Parents/guardians are reminded to regularly update that emergency plan with the school and school teacher.

Parents/Guardians should establish alternative child care arrangements in advance in the event that center closings occur.

The Play Centers' Emergency Closing Policy for your child's school is distributed at your child's center and is also available on our website. In addition, websites such as www.bcps.org, your child's school website, and www.wbal.com, as well as apps such as *TEAM BCPS* may serve as good information sources regarding school closures.

D. COVID/Pandemic/Quarantine Closing Policy

Play Centers, Inc. centers also must follow any current mandates from local, state, and federal government agencies, such as MSDE-OCC, the Department of Health, and the CDC, regarding COVID-19 and any other possible future health-related pandemics that require partial or full quarantining/closing of centers. We must also follow all mandates regarding operations, such as: cleaning procedures; changes to child/staff ratios and/or room capacities; and closing of the child care program to all but staff and children.

These mandates change frequently in an active pandemic situation. Families will be kept informed of any changes through email and text alerts.

Every situation is different when a center must close due to a pandemic. The CEO/COO (Executive Director) and CFO (Finance Director) will determine whether tuition will be modified based on the length of the closure. Families will be informed of any decision that is made.

Parents/Guardians should establish alternative child care arrangements in advance in the event that center closings occur.

E. Dropping Off & Picking Up Children

Upon arrival at the center, parents **must sign their child in to the program AND deliver him/her to the staff person in charge**. Similarly, staff must be told when a child is leaving for the day and parents **must sign their child out of the program**. Please be sure to include the time that your child arrived at and left the center.

For safety reasons, we request that parents not permit their children to move around the building and/or playgrounds areas unsupervised. *Parents are responsible for the direct supervision of their child before he/she has been signed in and once he/she has been signed out.*

Be reminded that it is a misdemeanor to leave a child under the age of 8 unattended, including leaving the child in the car, while dropping off or picking up another child in the center. In addition, staff may call 911 (and emergency contacts) to report children or pets locked in cars and/or in the event that a parent/guardian arrives at the center intoxicated or impaired.

A child will only be released to a person authorized to pick up the child. Written notification must be given to the staff person in charge if someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up the child on any given day. A valid ID must be presented upon request.

In custody issues between parents/guardians, **legal documentation** must be on file at the center stating the specifics of any visitation or pick-up restrictions. Otherwise, staff will have no alternative but to grant access to both legal parents/guardians.

F. Absence Procedure

For the safety of your child, it is important that you contact the center if your child will be absent on a day for which he/she is regularly scheduled to attend. In our shared efforts to ensure child safety and well-being, we very much appreciate you following this important request.

G. Media and Internet Release

Play Centers, Inc. may develop, conduct, participate, or be the subject of presentations and events which highlight your children participating in various educational activities that take place during their enrollment at Play Centers, Inc.

The media used of your child and his/her projects and activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Photographs
- Slideshows
- Videos

The events and presentations may include, but are not limited to:

- Classroom Activities/ Projects
- Community festivals, exhibits, fairs, etc.
- Public relations campaigns/ Radio Advertising / Newspaper Publications/ Company Website/Social Media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.

A Media and Internet Release form is included in your Enrollment packet. It is also available on our website or you may request a copy from the Center Director.

*It is your responsibility, as the parent, to provide written notification to the Center Director if your child **will not be** permitted to participate in photos/videos/evaluations.*

Additionally, we ask that all parents be mindful that our families hold a range of views on posting pictures and videos of children to social media. Before publicly posting any pictures or videos of a school event, please consult with the parents of any children appearing in those images.

H. Screen Time Policy

In the best interest of our children's health and well-being, computers and other media devices are used only when directly related to a lesson plan, classroom objectives, or other facilitated learning experiences. The types of screens available to children during program hours vary from site to site, but may include screens for viewing curriculum-related enrichment activities, virtual field trips, etc.

The staff will utilize all screen experiences as a way to enhance the learning experiences for each child and each staff person will be fully and actively involved in that process.

Access to screens will be limited and would not occur on a daily basis. On days when screens are utilized, that access would be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes.

In the event that a child does not wish to participate in a screen-related activity, he/she will be given the opportunity to pursue an alternative activity that is related to the same learning objective.

Screen Time Tips for Children and Families are available on our website and in the Parent Resources area of the Center.

I. Babysitting Policy

We do not recommend that our staff members babysit for center families; however, we recognize that parents may want individual staff members to provide in-home babysitting for their children on occasion. Please realize that Play Centers, Inc. assumes no responsibility for our employees when they are off duty, nor for our students when they are not signed in to our centers during regular business hours. All contracts for babysitting are solely between the parents/guardians and the individual providing the service. In addition, no babysitting is allowed on center premises at any time.

J. In-House Field Trips/Center Visitors

In-House Field trips and presentations by special Center Visitors may occur throughout the year. Details and permission slips will be provided in advance.

IV. Health and Safety Policies

A. Open Door Policy and Center Security

Play Centers, Inc. programs have an Open Door Policy. This means that parents will have access to all areas of the childcare center during operating hours in order to contact their children, to observe activities, to confer with the center staff, etc., (unless such access is limited by an outside agency, as occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic).

As school buildings, however, that access is only available via a Play Centers, Inc. staff person, via the entrances established for our use by the School Principal. Doorbells and walkie talkies assist us in making the drop-off and pick-up process as safe and prompt as possible. We also ask that families do not hold the door for anyone. Please allow the staff to take the lead on providing access to the building. We know that this is a difficult “good-manners” habit to break, and we genuinely appreciate everyone’s help and understanding regarding this important safety practice.

B. Emergency Preparedness

Fire Drills are conducted monthly at various times of the day. The Fire Drill Record may be found in the Parent Information Area.

Center Directors complete Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Training and are professionally guided in the development of an Emergency Preparedness Plan for Child Care Centers. The Emergency Preparedness Plan is utilized to train staff in emergency preparedness protocols, both as a part of each staff person’s New Employee Orientation and during regularly scheduled protocol reviews held throughout the year.

Safe locations for sheltering-in place within the building have been identified and Shelter-in-Place Drills are conducted annually. Emergency Evacuation Drills are also conducted annually. Written Evacuation Location Agreements have been prearranged so that there is a viable and approved location for our program to move to in the event that the building must be fully evacuated due to an extreme emergency. Please be assured that, for safety reasons, Emergency Evacuation Drills are only conducted to the property line and we would only leave the property to go to the evacuation location in the event of a true emergency, under emergency personnel direction. The Emergency Preparedness Drill Record and the Emergency Preparedness Plan may be found in the Parent Information Area.

The primary responsibility of Play Centers' staff is to maintain each child's safety and well-being during an emergency. In the event of either an Emergency Evacuation or Shelter-in-Place, every effort will be made to contact parents as quickly as possible. To facilitate the children's comfort and well-being during an emergency, staff are prepared with easily transportable emergency food, water, medications and other supplies, children's books and other activities, etc. that may be needed or helpful in the event of an evacuation or shelter-in-place event.

C. Oops! Notes & Medical Emergencies

The staff are trained to implement policies and procedures to assure a healthy and safe environment.

An Oops! Note will be completed in the event that a child is injured during his/her hours of care. A Parent/Guardian must review the report and sign the form. The family then keeps the yellow copy and the white copy is kept in the child's file.

Parents/Guardians will be called immediately about any injury to the head (regardless of how minor it appears), a cut that appears deep or bleeds for an extended period of time, excessive swelling that occurs following an injury, or after a bee sting.

In the event that the parent/guardian is not available during a medical emergency, a staff member will accompany the child in the ambulance to the hospital. A copy of the child's emergency forms will be taken with them. **It is important that information on all emergency forms be kept up to date.**

If a parent/guardian takes a child to the doctor/dentist/clinic/emergency room as a result of an accident or incident at the center, parents/guardians must inform the Center Director as soon as possible.

D. COVID Health & Safety Procedures and Links

Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn follows all current MSDE-OCC/Health Department/CDC/State and Local Government regulations and procedures regarding COVID. These regulations and procedures change frequently and include a wide variety of topics, including group size restrictions, mask regulations, temperature recording, symptom and quarantine rules, cleaning rules, restrictions on admittance into the building, etc.

For the most current guidelines, speak with the Center Director or view the websites below.

- <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/early-childhood-grants-programming-and-initiatives-maryland-during-covid-19-state-emergency>

- cdc.gov
- coronavirus.maryland.gov
- governor.maryland.gov

E. Illness and Communicable Diseases Policies

Sick Children

- Children should be well enough to participate in regularly scheduled activities, including going outside. Our centers are not equipped or staffed to isolate sick children for long periods of time. Therefore, we cannot honor requests for your child to remain inside during outside time. If your child is not well enough to go outside, then it may be best that he/she stays home.
- Some of the signs and symptoms of illness, for which a child will be excluded from care, include, but are not limited to:
 - Fever (100.4 F or higher) (**must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning to care**)
 - Vomiting and/or Diarrhea (**must be 24 hours incidence-free before returning to care**)
 - Rash; Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye); Ringworm; Hand, Foot, & Mouth Disease; 5th Disease; Impetigo; Chicken Pox; illnesses that require antibiotics, such as strep throat (**While these illnesses may require a doctor's note to return to care, at all times MSDE-OCC Licensed Child Care Programs in Maryland must follow the current Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's *Communicable Diseases Summary for exclusion and physician's note protocols*, regardless of communications or recommendations by a child's physician or other health care provider.**)
 - Severe Cough and/or wheezing
 - Stomachache, headache, earache, or sore throat
 - Abnormal Behavior, such as excessive fatigue or irritability, or refusal to eat or drink
- In the case that your child should become ill during the program hours, we will call you to pick up your child. You or your emergency back-up person must be able to pick up the child within **one hour** of being notified. We are not licensed to provide care for sick children.
- After an absence due to illness for three days or more, Play Centers will readmit your child after the Center Director has been given a written statement by the parent or physician that the child may return.

Communicable Disease Reporting

Child care centers are obligated to report the name and address of any child or staff member who appears to be infected with any designated reportable communicable diseases or has been exposed to any designated reportable communicable diseases as well as should there be an outbreak of any communicable disease.

For some illnesses that occur in the center, information will be shared with families that indicates the name of the illness (such as chicken pox), but not the name of the child(ren) who have it.

A child care center may not knowingly admit a child to childcare during the period of communicability of a communicable disease unless the child is undergoing treatment and the child's readmission is approved, in writing, by a licensed practitioner.

Please note that if a child is diagnosed with a communicable disease – such as those listed in the current Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's *Communicable Diseases Summary* and other CDC or Health Department communications to Licensed Maryland Child Care Programs – we must follow Maryland State Department of Education – Office of Child Care Regulations regarding all exclusion and return to care requirements, regardless of communications or recommendations by a child's physician or other health care provider.

Head Lice

If you believe that your child may have been exposed to head lice, please consult with your health care provider immediately to determine his/her recommendation for treatment and the timeframe for returning to care.

We require that our families adhere to the Head Lice protocol established by the school or school system within which our school-age program is located. Please refer to the information provided by your child's school for specifics.

In addition, please report this information immediately to the Center Director so that families may be alerted to check their children for signs of head lice and so we may take appropriate cleaning measures.

F. Medication Policies

Medication Authorization Forms

- Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn staff will only dispense prescription (Rx) or over-the-counter (OTC) medications with written consent from both the parent/guardian and the licensed health practitioner.
- A Medication Authorization form is required for each medication (OTC and Rx). This form includes the child's name, medication name, dosage, side effects, parent's and physician's signatures, etc. Details on administration are also recorded on this form.
- A new Medication Authorization form is required at the beginning of each 12-month period, for each specific medication, and each time there is a change to dosage or time administered.
- Medication Authorization forms must be specific as to dispensing information. Directions to give doses as needed (PNR) are insufficient. Detailed information must be provided as to the specific conditions under which a medication should be administered by staff.

Medication Guidelines

- The parent/guardian must bring all medications to the Center Director. All expired medications will be returned to the parent. Non-expired, authorized medications are required to be on-site at all times that the child is in our care.
- Prescription (Rx) medications must be in the original container, labeled by the pharmacy or physician with the child's name, dosage, expiration date, etc.
- Over-the-counter (OTC) medications must be in the original container with the label intact, clearly labeled with instructions for dosage and expiration date.
- All medications will be stored in a medication box in the center.
- Play Centers, Inc. staff are not permitted to give the first dose of any medication.
- It is preferred that maintenance doses of medication be given at times other than during program hours, if at all possible.
- If medically indicated, a child 6 years or older will be authorized to self-carry an emergency medication. Specific procedures are in place for facilitating this *emergency* health situation *and must be fully preapproved before self-carry may begin*. Please see the Center Director for more information.
- Accidents or medical problems resulting from false information will not be the responsibility of Play Centers, Inc.

Sunscreen/Bug Spray/Lotion/Lip Balm

Topical ointments, creams, lip balm, sunscreen, and insect repellent, when used as a *preventative* measure, are not considered to be medications, and may be applied by staff with parent-only permission. Physician authorization is not required unless the ointment, etc. becomes a *treatment*.

Asthma Action Plan

If your child has asthma, then you will be required to complete an Asthma Action Plan. The plan should be completed by your child's physician and signed by both the physician and parent/guardian. If the plan indicates that your child requires an inhaler and/or other medication, then the medication will need to be on-site at the school with a Medication Administration form (see above).

Allergy Alert Plan

If your child has an allergy requiring an emergency medication that would need to be administered onsite (Benadryl, Epi-pen, etc.), then you will be required to complete an Allergy Alert Plan. The plan should be completed by your child's physician and signed by both the physician and the parent/guardian. The medication will need to be on-site at the school with a Medication Administration form (see above.)

Please note that none of our programs are entirely peanut/tree nut free. **We cannot guarantee that our program spaces will be food allergen-free zones.**

Center Special Attention List

All children and staff with allergies (other than mild seasonal), asthma, and/or other pertinent medical conditions are listed on the Center Special Attention List that is kept in the emergency binders and snack cabinet, so as not to be visible to the public and other families.

G. Immunizations & Lead Tests

Prior to enrollment, families must submit documentation of age-appropriate immunizations as defined by MSDE or provide supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health care professional) or the family's beliefs.

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure that their child's health forms remain current. Whenever children are scheduled to get shots or have a lead test, parents should get a new copy of the health form from the Center Director for the doctor to complete, or bring in a copy of the immunization records and/or lead test results after such a doctor's visit.

H. Child Abuse & Neglect

All staff members are required by state law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services.

I. Food & Nutrition Policies

Nutrition Policy

Nutritional snacks are an important aspect of the daily program and are provided by the center. Each Director is able to consider food allergies when selecting the monthly snack items; however, it may not be possible to accommodate all dietary restrictions. In those cases, parents will be responsible for providing snacks for their child each day. Additionally, while we cannot guarantee that we are 100% peanut/tree nut/gluten/egg free in any of our centers, child allergies may require that we request that families alter the foods that they send in for their child, depending on the nature of a particular allergy for a particular child. In that event, it may require that the entire center be kept as free of the allergen as possible. In that event, we would ask families to provide foods for their child that would not trigger an allergic reaction in another child in care.

Snacks that may be served include whole grains, fresh fruit and vegetables several times each week, low-fat cheese, 1% milk, and a variety of other healthy foods. Foods containing excessive fat, salt, sugar or other added sweeteners, and caffeine are avoided in provided foods and beverages. Water is available to children at all times.

It is the parent's responsibility to provide a nutritionally-sound lunch on program days when school is closed. Play Centers, Inc. will provide and/or supplement a child's lunch as needed to ensure he/she has sufficient nutritional options. Parents are provided, via the Parent Resource Area, information that promotes healthy eating, including healthy choices that are appealing to children, appropriate serving sizes for young children, the advantages of eating whole foods and grains, and more.

Birthday Celebrations

Parents are encouraged to celebrate their child's birthday in the center. Please see your Center Director in advance to make arrangements for their special day.

We ask that you consider non-food items, such as a small art or craft project or other creative activity, for these occasions, in case any of the children in your child's classroom have food allergies. **If you must bring food, it must be store bought and it must have all ingredients listed. Candles and latex balloons are not permitted.**

J. Clothes and Shoes

At Play Centers, Inc., your child will be learning through play. Please dress your child in clothing that he/she can easily manage, is comfortable, and is appropriate for indoor and outdoor activities. We ask that no flip-flops or sandals be worn by children for outdoor play as they can become a safety hazard. Please send your child to school with socks and sneakers.

Parents may choose to provide an extra set of clothing, but those items must remain in the child's backpack.

K. Classroom and Locker Access

Children, parents, and staff may not go to the children's classrooms or lockers once the children have signed in at Play Centers, Inc. Families who wish to enter the school outside of school hours must go to the main entrance of the school for access permission.

L. Outdoor Play & Physical Fitness

Outdoor play and opportunities for physical activity are an integral part of the development of all children and are built into the daily schedule. The children will go outside every day, weather permitting. Additionally, activities are offered throughout the day that focus on each child's physical fitness, health, and well-being.

It is important that your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor activities. In addition to closed-toe and closed-heel shoes, please send seasonally appropriate outdoor attire, including a jacket/coat, hat, and mittens. Please be assured that Play Centers, Inc. follows appropriate protocol for assessing daily temperatures and air quality when determining outdoor play schedules.

If your child cannot go outside, then it may be best that he/she does not attend the program. Please discuss your concerns with the Center Director.

M. Positive Behavior Management

The Positive Guidance and Behavior Supports Process creates positive climates, focuses on prevention, describes clear and appropriate expectations, and addresses behavior.

Staff guide children on what is acceptable and appropriate behavior through a wide variety of positive supports and strategies, including, but not limited to,:

- providing a variety of appropriate choices,
- anticipation and elimination of potential problems,
- ignoring minor attention seeking behaviors,
- problem solving,
- encouragement and praise,
- modeling appropriate choices,
- redirection,
- opportunities for reflection, and
- behavior modification programs (rewards and reinforcements).

Play Centers, Inc. makes every effort to facilitate each child's success in the program. Occasionally, however, our program may not meet the specific needs of a particular child. When this becomes the case, a variety of tools will be utilized in the progressive evaluation process, including, but not limited to, a modification of the environment or choices, a behavior log, discussions with the child, a parent/child/teacher conference, etc.

Parent involvement is strongly encouraged and actively facilitated.

The staff will do everything possible to deal with difficult situations on-site; however, parents will be notified immediately if a child is in danger of hurting himself/herself, others, or the environment.

Suspension and dismissal may ultimately be considered; however, all of the above strategies will be explored and implemented as fully as possible prior to that action being decided upon.

N. Pets

Pets are not permitted in the buildings or on the grounds of any Play Centers, Inc. program. This includes family dogs, even if leashed.

In addition, no Play Centers, Inc. School Age Program located in a school will have any classroom pets.

O. Student Volunteers & Professional Observers

During the school year, early childhood education students from area colleges and universities may be assigned to one of our Play Centers, Inc. locations as part of their learning experiences. We also accommodate professional observers, including medical and physical therapy students and pediatric fellows. Additionally, developmental screening experts and/or early intervention specialists may be called in by parents to observe and assess their child.

These student volunteers and professional observers will be screened and handled according to MSDE-OCC childcare regulations and will not be left alone with children.

Parents will be notified in advance should arrangements be made for student volunteers or professional observers to be visiting their child's program.

V. Learning Opportunities at Play Centers, Inc.

A. The Power of Play

Enrolling a young child exclusively in activities with a heavy academic emphasis may result in that child being temporarily capable of what seem like remarkable accomplishments.

However, it is unlikely the long-term outcome will include solid educational foundations, impressive imagination and creativity, a strong love for learning, good social skills and a healthy self-esteem – all of which are required to ensure the child's ultimate happiness and success. Also, as time goes by, a child will have ever-increasing chances and a steadily growing capacity to improve her prospects through formal instruction in specific academic concepts. But early childhood constitutes a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to benefit fully from the power of play.

(an excerpt from "The Power of Play – A Discussion About Early Childhood Education", by Michael K. Meyerhoff, Executive Director, The Epicenter, Inc.)

B. Staff Qualifications and Clearances/Ratios/Staff Development

Staff Qualifications and Clearances

All childcare providers in the State of Maryland are required to have a recent medical exam and have a state and federal fingerprint/criminal background check. Additionally, all staff must complete the MSDE-OCC Child Care and COVID-19 Training, the MSDE-OCC Basic Health & Safety course, and also remain current in First Aid & CPR.

All staff receive a Center Orientation and Aides must complete an Aide Orientation course. Teachers have additional courses that they take in order to meet or exceed the MSDE-OCC requirements for their position. Center Directors take designated education and administration classes and have experience in professional school-age child care.

Play Centers, Inc. employs an extensive team of dedicated and fully trained child care professionals whose credentials, criminal background histories, and references have been fully cleared prior to entering the programs.

Staff : Child Ratios

Maryland's Child Care Regulations require 1 teacher for every 15 school-age children, but, through the placement of additional staff in most programs, we strive for a much lower ratio whenever possible.

In addition to having a full team of regularly scheduled on-site staff, Play Centers also has additional staff who enrich the programs and act as substitutes when needed.

Staff Development

MSDE-OCC Regulations require Aides to take 6 hours of continued training per year and Teachers and Directors to take 12 hours of continued training per year. Because of our commitment to quality, our staff also take part in the MSDE Credentialing program which requires 12-24 credits per year at increasing levels. Professional content areas include Professionalism; Child Development; Curriculum; Special Needs; Health, Safety, & Nutrition; and Community.

In addition, staff meetings are held monthly, or more frequently as needed, to ensure that new information and critical updates are passed on to each staff member in a timely way.

Staff receive an annual evaluation based on job performance and continuing education plan completion.

C. Your Child's First Day/Items from Home

Your Child's First Day

Since this may be your child's first experience in a before and after school child care setting, it is very important that you prepare your child for this new experience. How your child handles the separation and the adjustment will strongly influence his/her behavior and attitudes in future development.

Following are some suggestions for helping your child's transition to go as smoothly as possible:

- Prior to your child's entrance into the program, visit the program often to acquaint your child with the center, the staff, and the program setting.
- Prior to your child's first day, discuss what to expect at the center.
- Initially there may be a change in behavior either at the center, at home, or both. This a natural reaction to a new environment. Try to understand that it takes time for children to become fully comfortable.

Items from Home

Although parents and children may want to bring play items from home, for a variety of reasons, we have found that it is best if your child's toys are best left at home. **At no time does Play Centers, Inc. assume any responsibility for loss or damage incurred to personal items.**

D. Enrichment Plan Statement

Our educational program meets the needs of students by focusing on the following key areas further described below:

- Weekly Thematic Curriculum and Learning Opportunity Enrichment Activities
- Topic-specific Enrichment Clubs
- Homework Club
- Time for Physical Fitness, Play, the Arts, and Social/Emotional Growth in our Activity Zones
- Access to Outside Tutoring and/or Special Service Providers, as needed
- Access to Baltimore County Recreation & Parks Activities and School-Sponsored Activities, where available

Enrichment Clubs occur daily. Club themes, durations, and schedules are determined by the children in the program. Past themes have included STEM Club, Languages Club, Drama Club, Gardening Club, Needlework Club, Environmental Club, Book Club, and Fun with Science Club, Creative Writing Club, and many others. Children may participate in as many Clubs as they choose.

Homework Club occurs Monday through Thursday for at least 1 hour, depending upon the needs of the children.

- Supplies, resources, support, and guidance are provided to students in a quiet and focused environment.
- Charging stations for school devices are provided.
- Staff work with families to ensure that the homework participation and completion process meets the needs of each family.
- Upon request, Play Centers Inc., works with the school and the parent to develop an enhanced Homework Club experience with regard to recommended areas of additional focus for a particular child, grade, or subject.

Weekly Enrichment Plans are developed around themes and include age and developmentally appropriate, engaging, domain-based activities that are reflective of the children's interests, styles of learning, and skills. The activities are play-based, multi-sensory, allow for open-ended outcomes, and promote choice, challenge, and creativity. The enrichment plans also support the school curriculum.

- Domains of Learning include Personal & Social Development; Language & Literacy; Mathematical Thinking; Scientific Thinking; Social Studies; The Arts; and Physical Development & Health.
- Examples of Weekly Themes include:
 - Outer Space
 - Oceans, Lakes, and Rivers
 - Rocks and Minerals
 - Secret Spy School
 - Bugs and Butterflies
 - Legomania
 - Fun with Experiments
 - Rainforest
 - Become an Inventor
 - Express Yourself
 - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
 - Olympics
 - Around the World

Physical Fitness, Play, the Arts, and Social/Emotional Growth are important components of comprehensive program that meets the needs of the whole child.

- Year-round outdoor play and opportunities for physical activity are built into both the morning and afternoon schedules. Activities are offered throughout the program that focus on each child’s physical fitness, health, and well-being.
- Play Centers, Inc. follows school guidelines, as well as Child Care Weather Watch when determining appropriate conditions for outdoor play.
- Throughout our program design is a strong emphasis on learning through play, as well as opportunities for discovery, hands-on activities, and guided choices.
- In addition, our focus on the character-building components of the curriculum serves to encourage and develop social-emotional skill building.

Activity Zones provide opportunities for children to choose from a variety of activities. There are opportunities for large group activities, small group options, and time and space for individual pursuits. Activity Zones include:

<i>Creative Zone</i>	<i>Exploration Zone</i>	<i>Parent Zone</i>
<i>Community Zone</i>	<i>Fitness Zone</i>	<i>Special Activity Zone</i>
<i>Communication Zone</i>	<i>Games Zone</i>	<i>Technology Zone</i>
<i>Construction Zone</i>	<i>Homework Zone</i>	<i>Theater Zone</i>
<i>Engineering Zone</i>	<i>Imagination Zone</i>	<i>Zen Zone</i>

We work with families to ensure that children have full access to outside tutoring opportunities and/or special services, as needed. This may include, but not be limited to, parent-scheduled tutoring, therapy sessions, behavior specialists, etc. Our *Academic Service Provider Tracking Tool* is utilized to ensure that families, staff, and academic service providers remain consistently informed regarding the scheduling details of these special services.

Play Centers, Inc. partners with our schools, families, and the Baltimore County Department of Recreation & Parks to facilitate the opportunity for program participants to also participate in a wide variety of onsite, school-sponsored, and Recreation and Parks-sponsored before and after school clubs and activities.

Weekly Enrichment Plans address the age, developmental levels, skills, and needs of each child, are guided by ongoing assessments, observations, and information gained from families about their children, and also include information from an IFSP/IEP, if provided.

While we use many resources to develop a high quality, comprehensive environment, our plans and activities are designed on a foundation and understanding that children’s play is their “work.” Play is essential and critical to each child’s healthy and successful development.

E. Materials

The environment and materials are selected and utilized in the classrooms and/or on the playground in an intentional manner in order to elicit curiosity, risk-taking, discovery, and success, the building blocks of scaffolding of learning opportunities and positive growth and development.

The children’s materials:

- Are age and developmentally appropriate
- Are safely accessible to children from bins located on low shelves
- Promote multiple modes of exploration and learning
- Reflect the children’s interests, cultures, languages, and learning goals
- Support children of all abilities
- Are rotated regularly to facilitate children’s interest, to ensure that items remain in good repair, and to ensure that items remain appropriate to the needs of the group

F. Daily Activities/Daily Routines/Schedules

Daily Activities

The daily schedule consists of opportunities for the children to explore the various activity and learning Zones inside and outside of the classroom where the children can be actively engaged in meaningful learning.

Ongoing opportunities are offered throughout the day for enhancing social-emotional skills through play, active outdoor exploration and gross motor development, working with peers in large and small groups, differentiated activities, literacy, snacks, health and safety skill building, and more.

Daily Routines

Consistency is important to the young child’s appropriate growth and development. A daily routine helps children know what to expect next, and predictability develops confidence and security. At the same time, flexibility and ongoing assessments of the needs of each child in their classroom allows staff to continue to meet the individual needs and interests of every child in the program.

Schedules

The daily schedule is divided into general time segments based on the specific hours of the Before and After Program in each school. Most activities run concurrently and are available to the children for the duration of the program to ensure that each child has the opportunity to participate in the activities of their choice at the time of their choice. This flexible schedule also allows for activities to be conducted with smaller groups, when preferred.

Before School Daily Schedule

- Welcome! Sign-in and come join us!
- Zone Exploration
- Enrichment Theme Activities
- Outside/Gym - organized activities/wellness and fitness/free choices
- Transition to Whole Group Meeting and dismissal...Have a great day!

After School Daily Schedule

- Welcome! Sign-in and Group Meeting
- Afternoon Snack
- Zone Exploration
- Academic Enrichment Clubs/Homework Club
- Outside/Gym - organized activities/wellness and fitness/free choices
- Enrichment Theme Activities
- Zone Exploration

VI. Family Engagement

A. Communication Policy

A child's success in Play Centers, Inc. is greatly enhanced when the staff and parents are partners in that process. A critical and ongoing component of child success and parent satisfaction is effective, two-way communication. Open and confidential communication regarding each child's progress, concerns, and program planning occurs at Play Centers in a variety of ways.

- Enrollment in the program and the resulting introduction to the program staff builds an important first connection. Opportunities for daily communication with each parent occur at program drop-off and pick-up times and give the staff the opportunity to share information with parents.
- There may be times during the year where a parent or staff member would like a conference to discuss questions and/or concerns that they may have regarding child

progress, behavior, program planning, etc. In some cases the child may be present for part of the conference. If the child receives special services, the special services provider may be included as well.

- A Parent Resource Table is located near the program entrance and holds special program information, community resources, a Parent Communication Log, parent letters, reminders, informational flyers, and more.
- Our Monthly Newsletter is made available electronically to all families and school personnel. You may also request a hard copy.
- The Play Centers, Inc. website provides information regarding programs, policies, and procedures, events, and more.
- Individual Play Centers, Inc. email blasts and text alerts as well as our Facebook page offer opportunities for immediate communications to our families.
- Parent Surveys are made available semi-annually. Feedback from families is strongly encouraged and appreciated. Survey results are evaluated by Play Centers' Administrative Team and Program Directors, and then any necessary changes to the program are implemented.

B. Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality applies to all documents and information collected and maintained at the center and/or main office for your child. Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn will not disclose information concerning an individual child or the child's parents or guardians to a person other than a staff member or a government official acting in the course of their duties, unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) named on the contract grant written permission for disclosure, except as required by law.

C. Grievance Policy

Play Centers, Inc./Play and Learn makes every attempt to offer the highest quality of care to families. If you have any questions or concerns about an event, situation, or staff member, you are encouraged to first speak with the lead teacher in your child's room. If this contact is not satisfactory, please reach out to your Center Director. If there is still no satisfactory resolution, you are encouraged to contact the Play Centers, Inc. Administrative Office at 410-296-4880, ext. 100. The Office Manager will connect you with the Administrative Team member that can best help with your specific concerns. Finally, you may also contact the Maryland State Department of Education – Office of Child Care Licensing Office for the Maryland Region in which your child's center is located. Their contact information is located in the Guide to Regulated Childcare document that you received at enrollment.

D. Parent Resources

Special information related to the program, community resources (Ex. Local library; local doctors/dentists/clinic; local parks; etc.), early intervention resources, child development, parenting information, and more are located on the Parent Resource Table.

E. Family Engagement Opportunities

Parent/guardian participation in our program is always welcome. Parent involvement is beneficial to the child by fostering both a sense of belonging and a sense of community. Parent involvement is beneficial to the program by creating a partnership that is fundamental to high-quality early childhood education.

Family Engagement opportunities may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Play Centers sponsors periodic events such as Muffins/Donuts and Fruit with Families, holiday and end-of-the-year programs, and other opportunities for families to enjoy group program activities.
- Parents and other family members are encouraged to spend time in the center playing a game, reading a story, or working on various activities in the various learning centers.
- Parents and family members are invited to share information about their culture and special celebrations.
- We invite parents and family members to share information with the children about their careers, special hobbies/talents, or a variety of other interesting, age-appropriate topics.

Parents and guardians are made aware of these opportunities through the Monthly Newsletter & Calendar, emailed and posted Flyers, communication with the Center Director and Teachers, and more.

VIII. Quotes on the Importance of Play

“Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.” – Mr. Rogers

“Almost all creativity involves purposeful play.” –
Abraham Maslow

“Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn.” – O. Fred Donaldson

“I tried to teach my child from books, He gave me only puzzled looks. I tried to teach my child from words. They passed him by, oft unheard. Despairingly, I turned aside. “How shall I teach this child?”, I cried. Into my hands he placed the key. “Come”, he said, “and play with me.” – Author Unknown