

PSU EARLY CHILDHOOD
PRESCHOOL LAB
"LITTLE GORILLAS PRESCHOOL"
FAMILY HANDBOOK



Department of Teaching & Leadership/Family & Consumer Sciences
College of Education
Pittsburg State University

Fall 2024-Spring 2025



Little Gorillas Preschool 2024-2025 Calendar

Enrollment Forms Due
Open House Visits
First Day of Fall Semester

August						
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

Spring Tuition Due
First Day of Spring Semester

JANUARY 2025						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

Labor Day—No Preschool

SEPTEMBER 2024						
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FEBRUARY 2025						
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Spring Break—No Preschool

OCTOBER 2024						
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MARCH 2025						
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NAEYC Conference—No Preschool
Thanksgiving Break—No School

NOVEMBER 2024						
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APRIL 2025						
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Last Day of Fall Semester

DECEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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29	30	31				

MAY 2025						
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Last Day of Spring Semester



Quick Facts about the Little Gorillas Preschool

Tax ID Number: 22-3981479

Preschool Director

Dr. Amber Tankersley

- B.S.E. Elementary Education, Early Childhood, Missouri Southern State University
- M.S.E. Elementary Education, Missouri State University
- Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville

Office Location: 108 FCS

Office Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-4460

E-Mail: atankersley@pittstate.edu

Supervising Lead Preschool Teacher

Ms. Sarah Winters

- B.S. Family & Consumer Sciences, Early Childhood Development, Pittsburg State University

Office Location: 109 FCS (Preschool Observation Room)

Preschool Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-4461

E-Mail: swinters@pittstate.edu

Family & Consumer Sciences Administrative Staff

Interim Chair--TBA

Office Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-6105

E-Mail:

Niki Barnes, Administrative Associate, Family & Consumer Sciences

Office Location: 101 FCS

Office Phone/Voicemail: 620-235-4457

E-Mail: nbarnes@pittstate.edu

Student Staff

The preschool classroom is also staffed with PSU students who are enrolled in a practicum experience for one of our early childhood programs or in their preschool student teaching experience. All students are under the supervision of the preschool director and supervising lead teacher.

Introduction

We welcome you and your child to the Little Gorillas Preschool program at Pittsburg State University! We are housed on the south side of the Family and Consumer Sciences building on the campus of PSU. We have been in operation since 1964. We are committed to providing high-quality care and education for your child in a warm and supportive environment to help foster your child's growth and development.

This booklet provides information about the educational program at the preschool and the policies that govern it. We hope that you will find this information helpful.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk them over openly with your child's teacher or with the director. We look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with you and your children.

Our History

The preschool laboratory program at Pittsburg State University began in the fall of 1964, in the basement of the old Chandler Hall, with a group of five boys and five girls between the ages of three to five years old. The program was open from 9:00 am to 11:30 am for two days a week.

The lab was discontinued for a short period sometime after 1968 and then was reinstated in the fall of 1971. At that time there were six boys and six girls enrolled.

The enrollment was increased in 1998 to sixteen and the program was licensed to be able to accept up to 24 children. The schedule also expanded from two to four days a week (Tuesday - Friday) to serve the increase in students needing to take courses associated with the labs. The program has continued to the present day and has served many children from the Pittsburg community.

In the spring of 2001, the Family and Consumer Sciences Department including the preschool program was relocated to other facilities on campus. The preschool was moved to a temporary location in a farmhouse on the east end of campus while the old building was torn down and a new building was constructed.

During the fall of 2003, the Family & Consumer Sciences Department and the preschool lab moved into our new facility on the site of the old Chandler Hall. We continue to be licensed for 24 children per session but we now have two sessions with an enrollment of no more than 18 children per session. Both preschool sessions meet Monday through Thursday with families electing to send their child for either 3 or 4-days.

Our Mission

The mission of the PSU Early Childhood Preschool Lab is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children of the Pittsburg community including PSU students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Children are treated with warmth and respect at all times. The staff works within a developmentally appropriate curriculum to develop socially responsible children.

Our Philosophy

The philosophy of the Early Childhood Preschool Lab is grounded in the principles of best practices for programs serving young children. We believe in meeting children's individual and group needs. We support children as they reach their potential as learners, as well as to help them enjoy their childhood. We believe that the family is the most important component of a child's life. We ask families to be partners with us as we work with their children.

Purpose of a Lab School

Early childhood laboratory schools are a common fixture at many university campuses across the nation. These programs have leadership roles in four major areas:

1. Developing, demonstrating, and defending the rationale for developmentally appropriate practices
2. Preparing leaders...through their undergraduate education and work experience in an early childhood classroom
3. Conducting research in child development, early childhood education, and related fields
4. Providing community service through teacher training and public advocacy

College students enrolled in lab courses will be scheduled as both observers and teaching assistants working with the children. Students in the preschool lab are at different points in their academic programs but all of the students who assist in the lab are in the process of learning about the growth and development of children and how to plan and implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum in a classroom setting. They are under the direction of the supervising preschool teacher or the preschool director at all times. These students are majoring in Family and Consumer Sciences – Child Development, Early Childhood Unified, Elementary Education, Nursing, Psychology, Sociology, and other related fields.

Licensing & Accreditation

The Little Gorillas Preschool is licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). A licensing agent from Child Care Licensing and Registration inspects the preschool each year. A copy of *Kansas Laws and Regulations for Licensing Preschools and Child Care Centers* is available from the director or on the KDHE website for your review at www.kdheks.gov.

In 2012, the preschool program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org.

To become accredited the preschool has completed the requirements and submitted to NAEYC validation and promises to remain committed to promoting the best practices regarding the following areas:

- Relationships
- Curriculum
- Teaching
- Assessment of Child Progress
- Health
- Teachers
- Family & Community Relationships
- Physical Environment
- Leadership and Management

The preschool is up for re-accreditation every five years; the preschool's accreditation status is valid through April 1, 2027. Accreditation materials are available for review; please see the preschool director for more information.

Enrollment Process

1. The Little Gorillas Preschool is open to all families regardless of race, creed, disability, ethnic, or cultural background. Children, ages 3 to kindergarten eligibility, who are on the waiting list are eligible for enrollment. Children are enrolled per the program, training, and research needs of the university.
2. Applications for the waiting list may be obtained from the FCS webpage, the FCS Department (FCS 101), the program director, or the preschool office.
3. Applications for the waiting list may be submitted at any time after the child's second birthday. The child's name is placed on the waiting list for upcoming openings. Families may be asked to update their application occasionally if the application was submitted more than a year prior to the potential date of enrollment.
4. Enrollment for each year begins in February. Families whose children are currently enrolled have priority to guarantee their child's placement for the following preschool year.
5. Families on the waiting list are notified of openings after current families have re-enrolled.
6. Generally, all families accepted into the program are notified no later than April.
7. The program enrolls children for the full year (two semesters - fall and spring). Payment is due for the entire semester before the first day of class as specified in the preschool contract. Tuition payments are non-refundable.
8. A \$50 holding fee is required to confirm acceptance of a spot in the program. This deposit is non-refundable and will be applied to the child's spring semester fee payment.
9. Once children are enrolled in the program they are welcome to continue as long as they are in the 3 – 5 age range at the start of the fall semester and will not turn six before the end of the preschool year.
10. An enrollment packet containing all the necessary forms is sent to families after the office has received their completed contract and tuition payment. All forms must be completed and returned before the child's first day of attendance.
 - ✓ Medical Record/Child Health Assessment
 - ✓ Preschool Emergency Information
 - ✓ Authorization for Emergency Medical Care
 - ✓ All About Me
 - ✓ Photo Release
 - ✓ Permission for Off-Premises Trips
11. Questions regarding enrollment procedures should be directed to the preschool director.

Hours/Days of Operation

The preschool will be in operation Monday through Thursday morning from 8:15 to 11:00 am and Monday through Thursday afternoon from 12:00 to 2:45 pm during the weeks that university classes are in session except for the first week of classes and during finals week. During the first week of PSU classes, the new student teachers and practicum students are preparing the preschool environment for your children.

The laboratory will not operate during scheduled university holidays (Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Labor Day, the week of Thanksgiving) during breaks (between the fall and spring semesters, spring break, and summer break), or final exam week. The preschool is scheduled to be closed for several days each fall (typically in November) to allow staff to attend the NAEYC Annual Conference and Expo. The preschool calendar for the academic year is located at the front of this handbook. Dates may vary due to unforeseen circumstances. Reminders of special dates will also be included in newsletters.

Fees & Financial Policy

When children are enrolled in the program it is expected that they will complete the entire academic year. If circumstances do not permit this, families are expected to notify the program director before the start of the next semester so that efforts can be made to reassign that spot. The program does not take children for only a portion of a semester. After families pay for the full semester and then choose for their child not to attend for a portion, there is no reduction or reimbursement of fees. Formal withdrawal requires written notification to the program director.

A \$50.00 holding fee is required at the time the child is accepted for enrollment for the year. This reserves the child's place in the program for the year and is applied toward the spring semester's tuition payment. The holding fee is non-refundable.

Preschool tuition fees are used to support the programs of the preschool lab. Each family is required to sign a tuition contract indicating their understanding of the two-semester commitment, the number of days enrolled, and that they intend to fulfill their financial obligations to the program. Preschool tuition for the 2024– 2025 school year is **\$550.00 for three days a week** and **\$600.00 for four days a week** per semester payable by the due dates specified in the preschool contract. There is a sibling discount of \$50.00 per semester for siblings who are concurrently enrolled. Partial payments are not accepted. Please make your checks payable to Pittsburg State University.

Late payment of your child's tuition will incur a \$15 fee. If a child's late tuition is not paid by the timeline outlined by the director then the family will forfeit their child's preschool spot.

Parking/Drop Off/Pick Up

When driving/parking on campus please follow the posted traffic and parking signs. Two temporary parking spaces are available for families dropping off and picking up children, these are located south of the playground. If the temporary spaces are full, we encourage families to pull in at the entrance of the alley to the west of our playground to drop off or pick up children. If there are no parking slots available, please circle the block (through the parking lot) until there is a spot available. These spots are for temporary parking only, violators may be ticketed. We encourage families with parking permits (faculty/staff/students) to park for the day and walk their children to the preschool. Please do not leave your vehicle running or leave unattended children in your vehicle when arriving at or leaving the preschool.

Arrival

It is expected that children will arrive on time for each session. The lead teacher and students in the preschool arrive early to prepare the preschool for the day's activities; however, children who arrive early will not be supervised or allowed to enter the classroom until the session's start time. The playground is available for use before each session provided there is parent/guardian supervision. Children who arrive late often find it difficult to become involved in activities.

Upon arrival, a member of the preschool staff will meet you and your child either at the playground gate, the curb, or your car. The lead teacher, a student teacher, parent, or other designated adult must escort each child to the playground. We will begin each day outside on the playground (weather permitting). The preschool has numerous umbrellas to retrieve and escort children through the playground on rainy days.

Separation

Some children jump into coming to the preschool with both feet; others are hesitant to have their families leave them. We encourage families to develop a routine when dropping off their children such as developing a special kiss or wave. When it is time to leave, always say goodbye and leave decisively. Please do not try to sneak away. Children who cry when their families leave almost always settle down quickly and begin enjoying their day. Families are encouraged to call the preschool or use the observation booth to check on how their child is doing if they are concerned. Our teachers will also call families to let them know when their child has settled and is involved in the day's activities. We have found that separation can be equally upsetting to families. If you have concerns, speak with the lead preschool teacher or the preschool director. Separation is often easier when children arrive on a consistent schedule.

Departure

The preschool staff will release a child to only the enrolling parent or to other adults authorized in writing on the *Enrollment Form*. Children will be released only to adults. For your child's safety, the teacher on duty will ask for identification from those that we are unfamiliar with who wish to pick up children. Families may either come to the playground gate and their child will be released to go home or preschool staff will bring children to their waiting cars.

If your child must leave before the end of the preschool session, please come to the preschool office and we will alert your child that you are there and help gather his or her belongings.

Late Pick-Up Fee

It is expected that children will be picked up within 10 minutes of the end of their child's session. Families that are more than 10 minutes late will be notified that their child has not been picked up, please be sure to communicate pick-up instructions to others who may be picking up your child. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be applied for families who arrive late to pick up their children. This policy is in effect even if the family notifies the preschool they expect to be late in picking up their child.

Preschool Access

All staff and visitors will enter and exit through the office/observation room (FCS 109) in order for us to monitor who is coming and going. The preschool entrance from the building, FCS 110, is locked when preschool is in session.

Our Staff

The preschool employs one full-time lead teacher and a director. Our lead teacher must hold at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood or a closely related field. Our director must hold at least a master's degree in early childhood or a closely related field. The lead teacher and director also must complete many hours of workshops and continuing education in the field of early childhood. Licensing regulations require staff members must obtain a minimum of 16 hours of annual in-service training.

The center is also staffed with students majoring or minoring in child development. Some students in the preschool are students enrolled in *FCS 591 Supervised Teaching in the Preschool Lab*. Student teachers are in attendance every day of the week for their assigned session. Each student teacher is assigned a portion of the semester where they are in charge of basic preschool operations and planning learning experiences for your children.

We also have students who are enrolled in preschool practicum labs. These students spend between 30-45 hours each semester in the preschool working with the teachers and children. Practicum students attend one session per week. The students enrolled in *Developmental*

Planning create learning activities and actively participate with your children. The *Interacting with Children* lab students practice observation, documentation, and interaction techniques.

With the number of staff and students, we are able to easily maintain appropriate adult-to-child ratios. We are required to maintain ratios of 1:12; however, we are fortunate to often have more adults than required providing more attention for the children.

Curriculum

The teachers and their assistants in the preschool realize that young children learn by doing, therefore, the curriculum is a constructive curriculum where children interact with their own thinking and experiences through learning centers and activities. The teachers prepare a stimulating environment that is conducive to learning.

Our curriculum is based on the developmental theory of Jean Piaget, which identifies the characteristics of the young child's thinking, emerging abilities, and developmental limitations. Our curriculum emphasizes active learning, in which the child chooses an activity or task, carries it out, and then reflects on what he or she has done. It promotes the development of a child's thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.

The preschool program also follows guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices. In our planning, we design experiences that are: age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally/socially appropriate for each child.

Goals/Developmental Domains

Our curriculum focuses on your child's development in the following domains:

- **Creative:** A child's creative development centers on discovering and appreciating the world of art around them through the visual arts, dramatic arts, music, literary arts, and usable arts/crafts.
- **Social-Emotional:** The social-emotional domain focuses on a child's self-awareness, emotional intelligence, social skill development, socialization, social responsibility, and social studies. The social-emotional domain allows children to discover more about themselves, their friends, and others in the world around them.
- **Cognitive:** The cognitive domain is the realm that includes children's understanding and processing of knowledge. Children gain physical/scientific knowledge about the world around them, they develop mathematical knowledge, they learn how to represent thoughts and ideas, they learn about cultural and social conventions, as well as, learn about their own thinking.
- **Language:** The language domain encompasses children's growing expertise in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- **Physical:** The physical domain includes children's development of fine and gross motor skills, health and safety knowledge, and nutrition.

The Importance of Play

Our program is based on the philosophy that children learn from the world around them—through play. Children need many opportunities and experiences with real objects and events before they are ready to understand the meaning of symbols such as letters and numbers. Learning takes place as young children touch, manipulate, and experiment with things and interact with people. The teacher’s role is to create an environment that supports the ideas and experiences of children and invites them to observe, be active, make choices, and experiment. Children spontaneously engage in activities such as block building, painting, or dramatic play, adding pieces of information to what they already know and thereby generating new understandings. Children learn simple concepts and then build on these concepts to grasp more complex ideas. The teachers observe the children’s interactions with others and the environment and make changes and modifications to suit each child’s needs for exploration and learning. For example, if children have mastered putting together simple puzzles then more complex puzzles with more pieces and shapes would be introduced to provide a challenge.

Our Daily Activities

Each day’s activities are planned by the lead preschool teacher, student teachers, and/or practicum students. While the preschool follows the same general schedule each day/session, we are flexible to accommodate the interests of the children, weather, and special events. The following descriptions of activities are not necessarily listed in the order of occurrence during the preschool day.

Arrival: Teachers will greet families at the playground gate or in the alley to retrieve children before each session. During this time, children come onto the playground and stack their backpacks near the playground door.

Outside Activity Time: As the weather permits, children begin their day on the playground. There are many learning opportunities on the playground (planned and unplanned) as well as ample time for free exploration and movement. The climbing equipment and slides, the tire swing, and the sandbox are always available. Loose equipment and toys such as tricycles, balls, hoops, blocks, bubbles, and scooters are made available based on the children’s interests and the plans for the day.

Transition: During this time, children bring backpacks in from the playground and put their belongings in their cubbies. We encourage them to use the bathroom at this time as they wash their hands before snack.

Snack: Snack is served family-style with teachers sitting with the children, engaging, and facilitating conversations. Snack time is a prime opportunity to practice math concepts, social conventions, self-help skills, and language skills—this is accomplished as we take turns passing items, identifying the number of snack items to choose, saying please and thank you, and participating in conversations. **Please notify us of any food allergies or restrictions for your child.**

There is another **transition from snack to our group meeting**--as snack time begins to wind down; an adult at each table begins to dismiss children to clean up their snack which helps strengthen independence and self-help skills.

Group Meeting: Many things happen at this time. It is the one time each day where whole group instruction takes place. It is a time when the children gather as a group with the teacher and other adults. Group meetings include activities such as singing songs, creative movement, reading books, as well as special events, take place. The format of our group meeting varies each day.

Sign-In: During this time the children get to practice identifying their names as they “sign in” with the assistance of a teacher. “Sign in” is a way to foster emergent literacy in preschool-age children. Our “sign-in” routine varies from semester to semester and sometimes week to week as our student teachers experiment with different ways to accomplish this task.

Small group activities: This is an opportunity for our teachers to work with small groups of children and provide more direct teaching and evaluation of children’s knowledge and skills. Activities are planned by the lead preschool teacher, student teachers, and practicum students, therefore, the activities vary daily. Activities target a variety of developmental domains. Lesson plans for individual group activities are kept on file in the preschool. Each plan details the activity, its objectives, and the expected outcomes.

Center Time: During this time, the children choose to participate in activities within the learning centers available in the classroom. The teachers plan for a variety of activities/materials that target all areas of development such as physical experiences, literacy, mathematics, science, visual and musical arts, and social interaction in their play. The teachers will also determine how many children should be involved in a center or activity at a time for each child to receive maximum benefit from the experience.

Ending Group Meeting: The children gather as a group again with the teachers. This meeting signals the end of the session and is used to review the day’s events and to bring closure to the day for the children.

Dismissal: Children are dismissed to their cubbies to get jackets, backpacks, etc. Then they go outside to line up near the playground gate to wait for their families.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will be provided daily unless it is raining, the temperature or wind chill falls below 32 degrees, or during periods of extreme heat. All children in attendance will be expected to go outside. If your child is too sick to go outside, they should be kept at home until they can participate in all preschool activities including outdoor play. The preschool does not have adequate staff to supervise children indoors when all others are outdoors. Most health professionals recommend a daily dose of fresh air for growing children, and if children are dressed appropriately, weather conditions should not pose an illness risk to them. The preschool staff will use sound judgment in deciding whether to go outside.

Rainy days: Teachers plan additional indoor activities on rainy days. When it is only damp or misting the children may go outside depending on the temperature, for at least a short time. Families should plan on their children going out every day regardless of the weather, and dress accordingly.

Snowy days: If the wind chill factor is below 32 degrees the children will remain indoors. However, on most snowy days children may go outside. Please send appropriate clothing, coats, gloves/mittens, and hats.

Hot days: On days when the temperature and/or heat index rises, we will limit time outdoors. When possible, we incorporate water play on warmer days to help cool the children on the playground. We also make sure drinking water is readily available when it is hot outside.

Field Trips

Occasionally the preschool will take a field trip to learn from experiences outside of what can be brought to the children in the preschool setting. We are fortunate to have a wide variety of resources located on campus; therefore, the classes will not take field trips that are not within walking distance of the preschool. A permission slip for excursions is included in the enrollment packet. Families will be informed when field trips are planned. Trips are only planned when there will be adequate supervision for the trip to run smoothly. Children will be accompanied by the lead preschool teacher, student teachers, and practicum students. Families may be invited to join the group for these experiences. When the classroom leaves on a field trip, notices are placed on all preschool doors to inform families of our whereabouts while we are gone. Preschool staff will also leave a mobile contact number. Emergency information for each child and a first aid kit is required to be taken with the group on their field trip.

Holiday Celebrations

Our program believes that holidays are an important aspect of cultural and family growth and learning. However, for very young children the anticipation, build-up, and experiences of the events when integrated into all aspects of children's lives can be overwhelming. For this reason, we have chosen to not celebrate holidays as a part of the instructional experiences within the preschool. Through doing this we can focus more on teaching and providing a consistent, rich environment for your child. With our philosophy in mind, we ask that families refrain from sending treat bags and other goodies at holiday times.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are a special time that we enjoy sharing with your child. Treats may be sent for your child's birthday; however, we request that all treats be pre-packaged or prepared in a commercial facility. We cannot serve homemade goodies. Please give advance notice to your child's teacher if you intend to bring treats. The teacher will inform you of the number of children who will be in attendance on the day you plan to bring treats and of any food allergies or special dietary restrictions. The snack planned for the day will also be served unless the birthday treat meets our snack guidelines.

Please keep in mind that although we are happy to share in the excitement of your child's birthday by sharing a special snack and singing to your child, this is not the appropriate setting for a full-blown party. In fairness to all, we want all children to have a similar birthday experience in the classroom, so we ask that celebrations during preschool sessions be kept simple. If you intend to invite children from the center to an outside birthday party, the preschool teacher can send home invitations with each child. We ask that if you are distributing invitations at the preschool you invite all the children from your child's classroom. Otherwise, contact families individually and do not bring invitations to preschool.

Personal Belongings

Each child will be assigned a cubby in the classroom. Children may use the cubby to store jackets, backpacks, etc. Please check your child's backpack for announcements, messages, and your child's work.

Since our teachers prepare many activities for your children to engage in while at preschool, we request that toys remain at home to avoid conflict, loss, or damage. Weapons, real or pretend, are never permitted at preschool. Please check with your child's teacher if your child has something unique to share with the class such as a book or other activity that may be enjoyed by the entire group. All personal items should be clearly and permanently labeled to minimize loss or confusion over belongings.

Clothing

Please dress your child in clothing appropriate for active play. While at preschool, the children will be involved in messy art projects, water/sand play, and outdoor play. At the beginning of the preschool year, we request that you send an oversized t-shirt for your child to use as a paint smock. We recommend that children not wear sandals or other open shoes. Sandals also fail to offer adequate toe protection from trikes and other outdoor equipment.

We request that each child have a complete set (underwear, shirt, pants, and socks) or two of season-appropriate clothing in his or her backpack at all times. Some families prefer to send a set of extra clothes in a ziplock baggie marked with their child's name to be kept in the preschool for the semester. Families will be notified if we do not have a change of clothing for their child. Please label your children's belongings with their initials or name.

Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather—a coat, warm pants, boots, hats, and gloves/mittens are necessary during the winter months; shorts are appropriate when the weather is hot.

Health Policy

Each child must have on file (before their entrance), the completed medical form signed by their physician stating that he/she is free of communicable disease and has been immunized, or is in the process of receiving the required immunization. No new health form is necessary if your child is continuing from the previous year, but immunizations need to be up to date.

Children's immunizations must be current in accordance with recommendations from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. If we discover your child is missing any immunizations, you will be notified to provide proof of the missing immunization or proof that your child is scheduled for the immunization. It is possible that your child could be excluded from preschool until their immunizations are up to date. Children who may be under-immunized may be excluded if there is an occurrence of a vaccine-preventable disease or illness in the preschool.

The staff of the preschool informally monitors the health of the children each day. For the protection of each child's health, children who show signs of illness or infection will not be accepted for preschool. Any health concerns will be discussed directly with the family. Every family must cooperate fully with our health policy. Our policies are designed to protect the well-being of all children and to guard, as much as possible, against avoidable absences for health-related reasons.

Please let us know if your child has been sick and you have questions about whether he/she should attend preschool. Check your child each morning before he/she comes to the lab. Keeping your sick child home protects well children and staff. We depend heavily on you to keep your child at home if he or she shows signs of illness. Families will be notified if their child

has been exposed to a communicable disease or illness. Please call the preschool if your child will be absent due to an illness. Refer to the following chart for more guidance when determining if your child is well enough to attend preschool:

Symptom	Keep child home until:
Fever	fever registers below 100.4° without medication for at least 24 hours.
Runny nose	thick yellow or green discharge clears up.
Earache	a physician examines the child and recommends the child return to school.
Rash	a physician determines the cause and recommends that the child return to school.
Sore throat	a physician determines the cause and that no strep infection exists and the throat is healed.
Cough	coughing subsides
Pale or flushed skin	color returns to normal
Red or watery eyes	eyes return to normal or until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment for pink eye has begun.
Yellow discharge from the area around the eye(s) (Pinkeye)	a physician treats the child and recommends that the child is ready to return to school with no health risk to other children. Typically, the child may return 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun.
Lice	the child has been treated, examined, and found lice/nit-free for two days.
Upset stomach or diarrhea (within 24 hours or less of departure for school)	no further problem exists and the child is eating normally without experiencing an upset stomach or diarrhea.
Draining sore	until draining stops and/or a physician determines the child may return to school with the sore covered.
COVID-19 (positive test or exposure)	please refer to the current Kansas Department of Health & Environment isolation and quarantine guidance

Preschool staff will notify families if their child:

- Has a fever (100° or above)
- Has diarrhea
- Vomits
- Shows signs of chickenpox, impetigo, or other rashes
- Shows signs of “pink eye”
- Shows signs of head lice or nits

Proper care at the beginning of an illness can often shorten its duration and severity. If a child shows signs of illness or infection while at preschool, the family will be notified immediately. The child will be provided a quiet place to rest until he or she can be picked up. Families will be asked to arrange to have their child picked up within 30 minutes of notification. Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours and able to fully participate in all activities before returning to preschool.

Health Policy Disclaimer: The preschool will follow recommendations regarding children's health and program procedures from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) during times of public health emergencies. These policies and procedures may differ from what is outlined in this handbook. Families will be notified of any changes as they are made.

Hand Washing

Frequent hand washing is the single best way of preventing disease and illness. Please join us, if you're not already, in helping your child develop the habit of frequently washing his or her hands. Children should learn to use soap and warm water and to vigorously rub their hands together for at least 20 seconds while washing. Hands should be washed before eating, after toileting, after playing outside, as well as throughout the day as needed. Hand sanitizers are readily available and are good in a pinch but hand washing with soap and water is the preferred method.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of the Little Gorillas preschool to refrain from administering medication to the children enrolled in its preschool program except for a child who has a condition that may necessitate emergency administration; such as an inhaler or Epi-pen on orders of a physician. When a child has such a prescription it would only be administered by the lead preschool teacher or the preschool director who have both had training specific to the administration of medication. A permission form, available from the lead teacher or director, would be filled out by the parent/guardian and the medication in its original container would be provided with the following information: child's name, name of the medication, dosage, dosage intervals, the name of the physician, and the date the prescription was filled. The label shall be considered the order from the physician. Medications are kept in a locked box within a child-proof upper cabinet in the kitchen area of the preschool. A record shall be kept in the child's file as to who gave the medication, and of the date and time, it was given.

Sunscreen

It is the policy of the Little Gorillas Preschool **NOT** to apply sunscreen to children. If sunscreen is needed, the parent and/or guardian are to apply it to their child before being brought to school. There is always some shade available under the picnic canopy and play structures of our outdoor playground.

Special Diets

If your child has special feeding needs, food allergies, or restrictions, please discuss these with the program director and/or lead preschool teacher at the time of enrollment.

If your child has a food allergy or requires a substitution, we need a statement for our files. If you have religious convictions against any particular food items, we ask for a written statement specifying the fact to include in your child's file. The preschool will either eliminate restricted food items from that child's snack or will provide a suitable substitution.

If requested by a family, preschool staff will provide information about the type of quantity of food consumed by their child each day.

Accidents

If a child is injured while at preschool, the staff will take the following steps:

- Administer necessary first aid. There is always at least one person trained in first aid and CPR on duty at all times.
- When a child receives a bump or scrape, the lead teacher will notify the family with a phone call or at pick-up. An incident form will also be completed. This form describes the nature of the injury and what first aid was administered. Families will receive a copy of this form and one will be kept in your child's preschool enrollment file.
- In the event a family cannot be reached, the director will secure proper medical attention as indicated by the family on the child's *Enrollment Form*.
- If the staff decides this is an emergency, campus security and/or 911 will be contacted to provide emergency assistance. If necessary, the emergency medical service will transport your child to a medical facility as designated on your *Enrollment Form*. A parent or alternate listed will be contacted as soon as possible. An attempt to contact your child's primary healthcare provider may also be made.

Child Passenger Safety

Even though the preschool does not provide transportation for children, we encourage families to be aware of and follow current child passenger safety laws and recommendations.

- Kansas law requires all children to be properly restrained in a motor vehicle.
- Children under the age of 4 are required to be in a federally approved child safety seat.
- All children ages 4-8 are required to ride in a booster seat unless the child weighs more than 80 pounds or is taller than 4 feet 9 inches.

Please keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat. For the safety of your child, please comply with this law. The law specifies that, as the parent/guardian, you are responsible for providing a child safety seat to anyone who transports your child. We expect families to use the safe practice of placing children in a car seat in the back seat of your car and buckle them in before you leave. Remember, it's the law.

Child Abuse & Neglect

Children need a safe, nurturing environment that assists them to grow, learn, and feel loved by their caretakers. In order to grow and learn, children's minimum needs for good nutrition, shelter, medical care, bathing, clean clothes, intellectual stimulation, appropriate discipline, love, a feeling of importance, and a safe, non-violent home setting must be met. When these needs are not met, a child cannot grow and learn as easily. If you are temporarily unable or unwilling to meet your child's minimal needs, as described above; our staff is mandated to report it to the county child protection agency. It then becomes the role of the child protection unit to work with your family to ensure your child's needs are being met.

Should you have difficulty in providing for your own child's emotional or physical needs, or safety, you are encouraged to ask for help. Our staff can help you find a community resource that can help.

All staff members of the Little Gorillas Preschool are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Anything suspicious in nature will be reported. The Child Abuse Hotline number is 1-800-922-5330. All staff members and college students members undergo a background check as outlined by our licensing requirements.

Emergency Plans

The preschool has plans in place in the event of a fire, tornado, and other emergencies. The preschool staff will help in preparing the children for such disasters through monthly fire and tornado drills (April-September).

If we need to evacuate the children and staff to another building, we have planned to relocate to the Weede Physical Education Building (1701 Homer) which is approximately one half mile from the preschool. Families will be notified if an emergency arises; the sign-in book and children's emergency contact information will be taken to our relocation area so that we may contact families.

The following are the procedures to be followed for each type of emergency:

Fire

In the event of a fire, the alarm will ring and staff will quickly escort the children through either the playground door or interior exit to the hallway and then proceed outside to the east wall of Whitesitt Hall. Campus security and the fire department will be notified. The preschool director or lead teacher will take the sign-in book upon evacuation which also contains the children's emergency contact information. A headcount will be done to determine that everyone is accounted for. If the need to move further from the building arises, the staff and children will move to the lounge area on the second floor (west end) of the Overman Student Center. Families will be contacted as soon as the children and staff are settled in a safe place.

Tornado

The preschool staff monitors the weather more closely when there is a threat of severe weather. Information regarding the weather conditions comes from campus announcements, local news, and weather warning systems. Should a tornado warning be issued for our county, the children and staff will relocate to the director's office (FCS 108) which has been designated an "Area of Storm Refuge". The director or lead teacher will bring the sign-in book and children's emergency contact information upon evacuation. A headcount will be done to determine that everyone is accounted for. Families will be notified when it is safe to do so. When the warning expires we will return to the preschool.

Winter Weather Closing

In case of severe winter weather (heavy snow or ice), the preschool lab will be closed only if Pittsburg State University or USD 250 Pittsburg Public Schools are closed. If due to winter weather, PSU decides to delay the start time of university activities, the preschool will remain closed for that day. Notification of closed classes for PSU will be posted on the PSU web page and announced on local television and radio stations. Families may also be notified by email in the event of a closing that is not announced through other media outlets. The preschool voicemail message will also reflect any closing of the preschool. Families will be notified if the campus closes early and will remain open until all children can safely be picked up.

Health-Related Closing

In the event of a public health emergency, the Little Gorillas Preschool will follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), local health department officials, and our licensing agency, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). The preschool will also close if Pittsburg State University is closed due to a public health emergency. Information regarding the closing of the preschool will be shared with families as soon as possible.

Utility Failures

In the event of a power outage, adults are to remain calm and notify the physical plant that there has been a loss of power. If the weather is nice, the children and adults will evacuate to the playground if the preschool classroom is too dark or too warm to use. If necessary, we can relocate to a neighboring building that has power. The children's emergency contact information will be taken if we leave the building or playground. If the physical plant believes that power can be restored fairly quickly we will keep the children as close to their normal preschool schedule while being flexible in the location it may occur. If the physical plant determines the power will be out for an extended period and the preschool classroom would not be conducive to remaining open then families will be notified to pick up their children and the preschool will close. Families should arrange to pick up their children as soon as possible.

If the preschool experiences a loss of water, the physical plant will be notified. The preschool must meet minimum requirements regarding temperatures, hot water, flushing of toilets, running water, etc...in order to operate. After the problem is evaluated, the director or physical plant will decide whether or not the preschool should close. If necessary, preschool staff will take the children to the bathrooms in a neighboring building for short-term use until all children are picked up and the preschool is closed. Families will be notified to pick up their children.

Lockdown

In the event the preschool needs to protect children and staff from an intruder, a lockdown may be initiated. Children will remain quiet and seated in the preschool storage room or director's office (if possible). As quickly as possible, the lead staff will determine the best course of action based on what would be the safest option for the current situation. All exit doors will be locked if possible. The director or lead teacher will notify campus police and/or dial 911 when it is safe to do so. If the situation warrants, staff, and children will evacuate the building and relocate to the Weede Physical Education Building. If evacuated, the sign-in book and children's emergency information will be brought along and families contacted as soon as it is safe to do so. The lockdown procedures are reviewed each year.

Missing Child

If a preschool child is missing from the preschool, the entire staff will be notified to be on alert. Immediate attempts will be made to locate the missing child. The other children will never be unattended when trying to locate a missing child. If unable to locate the missing child within ten minutes, the University Police, the Pittsburg Police, and the child's parent/guardian will be notified.

Social Development & Guidance Practices

Part of the role of an early childhood program is to help young children develop appropriate social behaviors. It is the philosophy of the preschool to provide meaningful opportunities to foster and enhance social relationships while developing self-esteem, confidence, curiosity, and creativity. We believe these behaviors are developed through positive social relationships.

Social relationships consist of the following:

- Mutual trust and respect are formed when consistent boundaries are set by warm and caring adults.
- Resolving conflict with peers by using words, adults will model and help children find the words when needed.
- Looking at situations not only from one's own perspective but from that of others.
- Being able to negotiate and apply rules with peers and adults.

The staff feels that children learn by doing and allows them the opportunity to work out their problems. The staff will use positive methods of guidance, which encourages self-control, self-direction, and self-esteem. We believe that when children are actively involved in developmentally appropriate learning activities, misbehavior is least likely to occur.

Guidance techniques that are both age and developmentally appropriate include redirection, physical soothing, modeling appropriate behavior, encouragement of reflection, and talking over feelings and possible solutions. Children are encouraged to calm down before resuming activities or talking things out.

Respect for children is shown at all times. All actions that are humiliating or frightening to a child are strictly prohibited. Corporal punishment is not considered appropriate and therefore, not used at the preschool.

When we determine that we have an ongoing behavioral problem with a child, we will arrange a conference with the child's parents or guardians to discuss our concerns. We believe attempts to modify a child's behavior are more successful when families and teachers work together toward a common goal. During this conference, the family and staff will determine a course of action to help the child better function in the program. Outside assistance may be sought from other professionals as the situation warrants.

On rare occasions, after a child is enrolled in the center his or her behavior might become disruptive or harmful to others or his or herself. In such situations, the preschool reserves the right to dismiss a child from the center or require the families to seek additional professional help in order for the child to continue in the program. Our program will provide recommendations of resources that may be helpful to the family in placing their child in another program that may be more suitable to the child's needs.

Family Involvement

You are welcome in the preschool at any time. We encourage families to come to observe or participate with the children. We especially enjoy having families share a skill, interest, or hobby. We will talk with you, through the coming year, concerning these experiences.

Families are encouraged to participate in family events scheduled throughout the year. Each fall we host an "Open House" and invite all families to visit the preschool and meet the student teachers before the semester begins. Educational meetings and social events may be planned to provide speakers on topics of interest to families. We also enjoy visiting with and sharing information with our families daily.

Newsletters

The preschool newsletter will be sent via email weekly. Newsletters are prepared by the lead preschool teacher and student teachers. Newsletters will contain classroom news regarding current activities, notes about upcoming events, and brief information about child development, and home-learning activities. If you do not have email access or prefer a paper copy of the newsletter you will be able to receive your newsletter in the preferred format—you will be asked your preferences at enrollment.

Communication

The preschool staff will communicate with families through phone calls, written notes, emails, and through Remind. Families are encouraged to sign up to receive/send messages via the Remind system. Please inform us if your phone number, address, or email address changes.

Book Orders

Each month families will receive a packet of Scholastic Book Club flyers. The book club flyers offer families the opportunity to order high-quality books and other educational materials for their children at a reasonable cost. Ordering instructions will be included with each packet. Ordering books is purely optional. The preschool does receive "points" for each order that can be used to order books and materials for use in the preschool classroom.

Observation & Research

Families are welcome to visit the preschool at any time to observe their child in the classroom or through the observation window in the preschool office. When visiting the observation booth, families are asked to observe quietly so children in the classroom are not disturbed. Please enter the building through the west entrance and observe in the preschool observation booth. Observing allows you to note age and individual differences related to behavior patterns and to watch your child as he or she interacts in a social environment. Keep in mind when observing you are only seeing a “glimpse” of a situation, so feel free to talk with your child’s teacher or the director if you have any questions or concerns about an observation. Observers are asked to respect the confidentiality of what they see while observing. Avoid carrying tales about children or their families to others inside or outside the classroom. Special permission must be given by the supervising teacher for any photographs or videotaping done of the children while in the preschool.

The preschool operates as an educational laboratory for other academic programs at PSU. Child development majors, as well as other students from other departments, use the preschool for observation throughout the year. When a student needs to work one-on-one with one of our children we will not let them do so without explicit permission from the families. Families are not obligated to allow their children to participate in any educational or research projects. Families will receive a permission slip requesting permission before any student works directly with one of our children. All research activities are supervised by PSU faculty and preschool staff. All research activities will be conducted within the Little Gorillas Preschool.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information about children and their families will be maintained. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the parent/guardian, director, lead teachers, and licensing agents. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone, by any means, without the expressed written consent of the parent/guardian.

Child Assessment

At the Little Gorillas Preschool, we collect information on your child's growth and development through daily observations throughout the preschool year. We have a *Progress Report* of basic skills typical for preschoolers that we use as a checklist to note your child's progression. As our college students are learning about assessing growth and development, our practicum students and student teachers also participate in gathering information about your child's growth and development. A *Conference Documentation Presentation*, consisting of photos and captions, is created for each child highlighting their strengths in the different learning domains. This presentation also provides recommendations of activities that families can do at home to strengthen growth and development in the different domains.

Our purpose for assessing children's growth and development is to help us make plans for your child based on his or her strengths and needs. The documentation of children's growth and development helps us make changes in our curriculum and programming to better meet the needs of all children and families.

If we observe development that is not typical, we visit with families about the observations. Suggestions and resources are then discussed with the families.

Conferences

Formal conferences will be scheduled at the end of each fall and spring semester to discuss your child's progress and any concerns of the family or teacher. The *Progress Report* and *Conference Documentation Presentation* are shared with families at their conferences each semester.

Student teachers may also participate in the conference with the families of the children they are assigned to assess as part of their student teaching experience.

We try to avoid talking to families about their children in front of the children, except in general ways. Please be sure to ask a teacher to step out of the classroom for a moment if you need to talk about your child. Or, we encourage you to schedule a conference with your child's teacher or director anytime during the semester when you have a question or concern about your child or the program.

Families have access to their child's development records obtained by any outside agencies (if applicable) as well as general observations made by the teachers. These observations are typically shared at formal conference time.

Transition to Kindergarten

Preschool is often looked at as a transitional time before children begin kindergarten. The goal of our preschool program is to prepare your child for kindergarten by providing opportunities to build skills often seen as “requirements” for kindergarten entrance—beginning number concepts, colors, shapes, alphabet, problem-solving skills, communication, social skills, etc.

Each spring the local school districts begin kindergarten enrollment. While we often have information from local schools it is a good idea to contact your local school for specific information regarding kindergarten entrance and enrollment. Most schools plan “roundup” events where children and families can visit the school, fill out enrollment paperwork, and participate in screening tests.

Children who are 5 years old on or before August 31 of the school year and are residents of Kansas are eligible to attend kindergarten in public schools in Kansas.

Screening

We do not provide preschool or kindergarten screening, as it is available through your local school district, typically your local Parents as Teachers organization will also provide these services. We recommend children be screened by their school district as they are the ones who would provide any needed services. Preschool screening is a brief check of developmental milestones. It can be a good way to identify areas in which a child may need additional assistance. The areas of development that are assessed include speech and language, hand and body coordination, and general readiness for school.

We suggest that families visit with their child’s pediatrician about referrals for other screening such as for vision and hearing.

Change in Family Information

If there is a change in your address, home or work telephone number, emergency contacts, or family status, please notify us so that we can make a change in your child’s file. We must have correct information on file in the event of an emergency.

It is especially helpful to know of new family situations such as separations, divorce, remarriage, a new baby, family illness, etc.; as such changes may affect your child’s mood or behavior. We can often help your child deal effectively with a new family condition if we are informed in advance. If your child has special health problems, unusual stresses, or obsessive fears, please let us know.

Family Questionnaire

At the end of each spring semester, families are asked to complete a *Family Questionnaire*. The information gained from this survey helps us make changes in the classroom or program as a whole. We appreciate the input we receive from our families.

Family Concerns & Conflicts

As an early childhood program, we are a community of children, families, and staff all interacting and sharing our lives. In a community, people work closely together, and hopefully, interactions are positive, helpful, kind, and understanding. Yet it is to be expected that from time to time, people will experience some conflict, concerns, or difficulties.

We recognize that parenting is one of the most difficult, intense, and rewarding experiences in your life. Please share your thoughts, hopes, and dreams for your child. You want what is best for your child, and we know it is your job to advocate and protect your child.

We, the staff, may make mistakes, create misunderstandings, and occasionally miscommunications may occur. As a staff, it is our goal to offer your family the best child care services possible. To meet our goal, we need your input, suggestions, your questions, and concerns.

When you have a concern, please remember:

- Teachers want families to feel very satisfied with the early care and education their child is receiving.
- Talk to the teachers directly whenever possible. The teachers would prefer that you talk to them directly, but they do understand if you would prefer to talk to the director.
- Realize that if you have a concern with a teacher, the director will need to investigate and talk with the teacher directly about your concern and straightforwardly deal with the issue so the teacher can improve her performance and/or correct any mistakes.
- Be assured that teachers do not hold a “grudge” against your child or “take it out” on your child after you have expressed concern. We would not hire anyone who would react in such an inappropriate manner. Actually, after expressing a concern, your child’s teacher will be more conscientious about your issues and try to improve.
- Don’t allow serious concerns to build up. As concerns occur, share them with teachers. It is disturbing to find out later that a family had some concerns and never expressed them.

- Sometimes we cannot make the changes you request due to other restrictions, but we always want to hear your suggestions. We promise to consider them seriously and respond to you in a professional and timely manner.

If the staff of the Little Gorillas Preschool is not satisfying your concerns, please speak with the Chairperson/Director of the Family and Consumer Sciences Department to voice your concerns.

Family Resources

- The Kansas Department of Health & Environment is the state agency that oversees our operation as a licensed preschool center. You can access more information about KDHE at www.kdheks.gov. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment consists of three divisions: Environment, Health Care Finance, and Public Health. The Division of Environment has the following six bureaus that work toward Kansans living in safe and sustainable environments: Air, Environmental Field Services, Environmental Remediation, Health and Environmental Laboratories, Waste Management, and Water. The Division of Health Care Finance includes Electronic Health Records, Health Information Technology and Health Information Exchange, KanCare, Medicaid Program Integrity, Office of Inspector General, Projections and Informatics, and the State Employee Health Plan. The Division of Public Health has the following six bureaus that work to protect and improve the health of all Kansans: Community Health Systems, Disease Control and Prevention, Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics, Family Health, Health Promotion, and Oral Health. There are two support bureaus – Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics and the Kansas Health and Environmental Laboratory – which provide information resource management and laboratory assistance to the other divisions and the general public. The Office of Vital Statistics, within the Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics, is responsible for registering births, deaths, marriages, and divorces and issuing those certificates.
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with a particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8. We follow NAEYC guidelines for our practices in the preschool. They are the organization behind our accreditation endeavors. You can find out more about NAEYC at www.naeyc.org.
- Parents as Teachers is an early learning program designed to provide practical and timely information to all families including single parents, first-time parents, and expectant parents. The program is available to anyone who has a child under the age of three and lives within a participating school district. You can find out more about the local Parents as Teachers program by visiting <https://www.greenbush.org/center-of-community-supports/early-learning-services/parents-as-teachers/>.

- The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC), federally funded under Title V of No Child Left Behind, is the official Parent Information Technical Assistance Center for the state of Kansas. KPIRC promotes meaningful parent involvement at all levels of education and provides information and resources to help parents, educators, and other organizations promote the educational success of every Kansas child. www.kpirc.org
- Child Care Aware is a resource and referral program that may provide many resources to families and providers. Child Care Resource and Referral agencies support families by referring them to childcare programs that meet their needs as well as offering families valuable information on topics for children of all ages. Child Care Aware of Kansas can be reached by calling 855-750-3343 or visiting <https://ks.childcareaware.org/>.
- Pittsburg Community Schools (USD 250) serves the city of Pittsburg, Kansas and the immediate rural areas surrounding our community. They are the largest district in Southeast Kansas. More than 500 employees work daily to provide a first-class teaching and learning experience to more than 3,300 students spanning grades Pre-K through 12. Students are served in four elementary schools -- George Nettels, Lakeside, Meadowlark, and Westside -- Pittsburg Community Middle School, Pittsburg High School, and an alternative education setting called PASS Academy. For more information please contact the Bevan Education Center at 620-235-3100 or visit <https://www.usd250.org/>.