



Handbook For Families, Staff, and WVU Students

Welcome to the WVU Early Learning Institute

On behalf of our team, we warmly welcome your family to the WVU Early Learning Institute. Thank you for choosing us for your child's early learning experience. We are committed to providing a nurturing and enriching environment for all children.

Founded in 1944, the Early Learning Institute is supported by the College of Applied Human Sciences and the School of Education. Now located in a state-of-the-art preschool classroom at Krepps Park, we continue our mission of fostering a respectful, inclusive, and engaging learning community.

Our goal is to partner with families, early childhood professionals, and pre-service teachers to support each child's development through play, individualized assessments, and age-appropriate curriculum.

This Handbook provides important information about our policies and procedures, aligned with WV DHHR Child Care Licensing (78CSR1), WVU policies, and WV State Department of Education regulations. A full copy of the DHHR Rule is available in our lobby and online. Please reach out with any questions—we look forward to a wonderful year together!

History of WVU Early Learning Institute

Established in 1944 under the Division of Home Economics, the WVU Early Learning Institute (formerly the WVU Child Development Laboratory School) was founded by Karina Thure Wood to provide observation and practicum experiences for future parents, preschool teachers, and nutrition students. Originally located on Willey Street, the school served children aged 2.5 to 4 years in a structured, hands-on learning environment.

Over the years, the Early Learning Institute moved several times—to Price Street (1950), Campus Drive (1963), Rawley Lane (1978), and finally to its current state-of-the-art facility near Krepps Park in 2009. Leadership has evolved with directors including Gladys Ayersman (1954–1967), Dr. Bobbie Gibson Warash (1980–2017), Melissa Workman (2018–2023), Dr. Ashley Martucci (2023–2024), and the current director, Allison Stump.

Today, the WVU Early Learning Institute operates under the College of Applied Human Sciences and the School of Education, continuing its mission of excellence in early childhood education.

Program Operations

The WVU Early Learning Institute is a part-day preschool program serving children ages three to five. The morning session (8:30–11:30 AM) is for three-year-olds and young fours, while the afternoon session (12:00–5:00 PM) operates as a Monongalia County Pre-K collaborative for four-year-olds. The program follows the WVU semester calendar. Operated under the WVU Board of Governors and advised by the College of Applied Human Sciences, the Early Learning Institute ensures child safety and risk reduction through WVU policies. It serves as both a model early childhood program and a laboratory for research and training.

Program Objectives:

- Implement best practices in early childhood education.
- Collaborate with other WVU departments on curriculum research and development.
- Provide field placements and supervised observation opportunities for WVU students.
- Train future preschool teachers in child development and family studies.
- Demonstrate a high-quality lab school model based on child development principles.
- Engage and support parents as active partners in their child's education.
- Foster a family engagement program to guide novice teachers.
- Serve as a Monongalia County Pre-K collaborative program.

By integrating research, education, and hands-on learning, the Early Learning Institute continues to evolve to meet the needs of children and families.

Staffing

The Director oversees all aspects of the WVU Early Learning Institute. Certified teachers, along with WVU students, implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Students from various disciplines complete placements within the school, assisting with supervision and project-based learning. Additionally, Work Study students serve as assistant teachers, often remaining with the program for multiple years as they advance in their studies.

Training

The Director and teachers participate in ongoing training to stay current with best practices in early childhood education. All hold early teaching certifications and engage in professional development through higher education courses, WV STARS-approved training, and Monongalia County Schools programs. New staff members complete both WVU and Early Learning Institute orientations, including a review of this handbook.

Schedule, Days, and Hours of Operation

The WVU Early Learning Institute follows the WVU academic calendar and observes all WVU holidays, as well as spring and winter breaks. These dates are published in the school newsletter.

- **AM Class:** Monday–Friday, 8:30–11:30 AM
 - Tuition: \$5,000 for 30 weeks (August–May) or \$2,500 per semester
 - Enrollment Fee: \$350 (applied to Fall tuition)
- **PM Class:** Monday–Friday, 12:00–5:00 PM
 - Tuition-Free (WV Pre-K collaborative with Monongalia County Schools)
 - Enrollment Fee: \$350 (required to secure enrollment)

Program Philosophy

The WVU Early Learning Institute is an inclusive learning environment that values early childhood as a critical period of development. Our program fosters social, intellectual, physical, and emotional growth through a supportive and engaging curriculum. Additionally, we serve as a placement site for various disciplines across West Virginia University, providing hands-on learning experiences for future educators and professionals.

Quality Standards

The WVU Early Learning Institute is evaluated using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)—3rd edition, ensuring a high standard of early childhood education. The center is classified as **Type 1**, meeting the rigorous requirements for quality early learning environments.

The Program

The WVU Early Learning Institute serves children ages 3 to 5. The AM class is for 3- and young 4-year-olds, running from 8:30–11:30 AM each weekday. The PM class, serving 4- and young 5-year-olds, operates from 12:00–5:00 PM. The program follows the fall and spring semesters of the WVU calendar. We are licensed for 20 children in both the AM and PM classes.

The PM class is a Monongalia County Pre-K collaborative program and is tuition-free for parents.

Our program's quality is reflected in the professional development of our staff, guided by NAEYC's developmentally appropriate practices. These practices emphasize building positive relationships, community-focused curriculum, high health and safety standards, and sensitivity to family diversity. Above all, we strive to foster an environment where children experience wonder, curiosity, joy, and limitless possibilities.

Our Curriculum

The WVU Early Learning Institute continuously evolves to stay aligned with the latest research in early childhood education and child development. We provide a community that celebrates the individuality of our children, families, and staff, fostering a safe, healthy, and nurturing learning environment where all are respected and valued.

Inspired by the philosophies of Creative Curriculum and Reggio Emilia, we recognize the "environment as teacher." We pay close attention to the beauty of our surroundings and cultivate curiosity, wonder, and discovery in both our indoor and outdoor learning spaces. Our environments are thoughtfully organized with possibilities and provocations that encourage exploration, imagination, questioning, and problem-solving.

The Early Learning Institute's curriculum promotes growth in social, physical, intellectual, creative, and emotional development. Through real-world learning experiences, children practice lifelong skills such as problem-solving, divergent thinking, and conflict resolution. These experiences are built upon STEAM challenges, dramatic play, relationship-building, and environmental discovery.

Our curriculum is based on The Creative Curriculum for Preschool but is enhanced with unique, research-backed projects that bring families together to celebrate their children's work. We prioritize active, hands-on learning over worksheets, encouraging young children to engage in purposeful play and experimentation.

Curriculum areas, including literacy, math, science, social studies, art, and technology, are aligned with WV Early Learning Standards and the WV Pre-K Standards. Additionally, we follow the WV Core Knowledge and Core Competencies guidelines for professional development.

The WVU Early Learning Institute is also evaluated through the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R), Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), WVU Environmental Health and Safety Checklist, WV Pre-K Health and Safety Screening, and inspections by various regulatory bodies such as the WV Department of Health and Human Services, Monongalia County Health Department, and Monongalia County Schools.

The Curriculum

The WVU Early Learning Institute follows developmentally appropriate practices as outlined by the NAEYC and employs the Creative Curriculum, an approved preschool curriculum in the state of West Virginia.

Our classrooms are designed with activity centers where children can move freely between different areas at their own pace. During free play and rotating center times, children choose which center to engage with and for how long. Pictorial contracts are used as a self-direction tool, with these contracts sent home for families to discuss their child's daily achievements. This connection between school and home enhances the child's academic self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The Early Learning Institute promotes a democratic learning environment where children are encouraged to think critically and make their own choices. Our curriculum is deeply rooted in literacy development, project work, and creative arts.

Documentation plays a vital role in our classrooms. Teachers record and display the children's words and ideas, creating a visible record of their learning. Half of the school day is child-directed, while the remaining time involves teacher-directed activities, known as rotating centers. These centers provide structured opportunities for learning across different curriculum areas, including spatial relationships, fine motor skills, reading, printing, gross motor skills, creative movement, art, social studies, economics, and more.

At circle time, the teacher reviews the day's rotating center options, allowing children to decide where they'd like to engage. This approach fosters closer contact with the teacher and peers, while stimulating new interests and encouraging an integrated, project-based approach to learning across multiple subjects.

Role of the Child

At the WVU Early Learning Institute, we believe that every child is born with immense potential and inherent resources. Children have an independent ability to build on their thoughts, ideas, and questions as they attempt to make meaning of their everyday experiences. Their intense curiosity drives their learning, and we aim to nurture this curiosity by encouraging them to "learn how to learn."

Our approach tailors instruction to each child's unique learning style, abilities, and developmental pace. Children actively observe their surroundings to reconstruct their understanding, and we support this process by offering opportunities to make choices, explore, problem-solve, face challenges, and exercise their imaginations. Open-ended materials are provided to stimulate creativity, allowing children to practice essential life skills through play.

The role of the child is seen as an active co-constructor of their own learning. This belief shapes our curriculum, programming, observation, and assessment practices. Rather than relying on traditional methods like desk-based instruction and worksheets, we provide a rich environment where children engage with a wide range of learning centers and activities, fostering active and independent learning.

Above all, we value the opportunity to continuously learn alongside the children, as they teach us through their exploration and creativity.

Literacy Development

Literacy development is woven throughout the entire curriculum and environment at the WVU Early Learning Institute. We believe literacy is a continuous process that begins long before children enter formal schooling. From the moment children are exposed to environmental print—such as signs, labels, and written words in their surroundings—they begin learning about written language. We strive to provide meaningful and functional print in a rich environment, ensuring that children have the opportunity to develop their literacy skills.

Teachers intentionally create experiences that expose children to language in various forms. Throughout their two years at Early Learning Institute, children engage with the alphabet and develop both reading and writing skills simultaneously. While some children may be more focused on reading, others may explore drawing or printing. Regardless of their focus, interest in one area encourages growth in the other.

The program offers a wide range of materials for children to write and draw with, including crayons, pencils, stencils, paper, scissors, and more.

A key component of our daily routine involves children charting information and taking responsibility for record-keeping. For example, they create play plans when they arrive at school, dictating their plans or drawing a line for each word. This simple act helps children understand that print is functional and aids in the development of their writing skills over time. These play plans, along with the documentation of their progress, also serve as a portfolio of their growth.

Ample opportunities for reading are also provided, with books in the classroom updated based on children's interests or ongoing topics. Predictable readers help children recognize familiar words, and the classroom atmosphere is intentionally designed to be rich in print.

All curriculum areas integrate literacy in various ways, and specific projects are created to support natural literacy growth.

Literacy Curriculum

The WVU Early Learning Institute incorporates the early childhood literacy goals outlined in the West Virginia Early Learning Standards, drawing on scientific research and best practices to create meaningful learning opportunities for young children. Our literacy program is designed to develop essential early literacy competencies, including:

- **Concepts about print**
- **Alphabet letter recognition**
- **Phonological awareness**
- **Understanding the purposes and uses of literacy**
- **Vocabulary development**

To foster these competencies, we utilize a variety of teacher-directed activities and informal learning experiences, including:

- **Language experience:** We print children's dictations, helping them understand the relationship between written and spoken words.
- **Scaffolding reading and writing:** Teachers support children beyond their independent literacy levels, as seen in activities like play plans.
- **Literature-based activities:** We use children's books to inspire projects and activities.
- **Phonological awareness:** Activities like nursery rhymes, alliteration, and syllable clapping enhance sound awareness.
- **Didactic reading:** Teachers read aloud to children, modeling fluent reading and comprehension strategies.
- **Writing and listening station:** Children engage in writing and listening activities using various materials.

The environment is rich in print, reinforcing literacy development in a functional and meaningful way. Teachers regularly print children's dictations, which are read back to them and often posted at their eye level, allowing children to see the connection between spoken and written words. This integration of literacy into everyday activities helps children understand the importance of literacy in their lives.

To further support literacy, the classroom is designed during child-directed free play to promote literacy skills. Weekly themed learning centers, such as a grocery store, camping area, or bakery, provide props and materials that encourage writing. Labels are placed on shelves and equipment, and a variety of writing materials—like lined and unlined paper, chalk, and markers—are available for free choice activities. Children are encouraged to scribble, pretend, and practice printing in an informal and supportive environment.

Children also have access to a rotating collection of books from the library, with new books introduced weekly. These books often relate to ongoing projects, promoting literacy in context. Teachers use reading strategies that support comprehension, making reading a more interactive experience.

In addition to books, children dictate stories and practice letter sounds. The classroom also includes literacy-focused games, such as floor puzzles, stencils, and writing stations, all of which promote literacy development.

Above all, teachers prioritize engaging children in informal conversations, listening to their ideas, and guiding them in their exploration of language. This holistic approach creates a literacy-rich environment where children's curiosity and development are nurtured.

Documentation & Assessment

At WVU Early Learning Institute, teachers document children's learning and development through a variety of methods, including observations, photographs, and work samples. These strategies provide a comprehensive picture of each child's growth in multiple domains—social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development.

Observation & Documentation

Teachers engage in ongoing, structured observations of children's naturally occurring behaviors in everyday settings. These observations capture real-life experiences and interactions, allowing educators to assess development in an authentic and meaningful way. Documentation includes:

- **Observation Notes** – Teachers record detailed notes on children's behaviors, interactions, and progress.
- **Photographic Evidence** – Photos of children engaged in learning activities help illustrate their developmental milestones.
- **Work Samples** – Art, writing, and project-based work serve as tangible evidence of each child's learning journey.

Assessment Tools

WVU Early Learning Institute uses the Early Learning Scale (ELS), an assessment tool approved by the West Virginia State Department of Education for Pre-K classrooms. The ELS provides a structured way to measure a child's progress across key developmental areas.

Additionally, children are actively involved in self-recording their progress, fostering independence and self-awareness. They engage in reflective practices, such as charting their own accomplishments, which helps develop a sense of ownership over their learning.

Family Engagement

The documentation and assessment process is a collaborative effort between teachers and families. Observations, work samples, and assessment findings are shared with parents to ensure transparency and to support children's learning at home. Through parent-teacher conferences, portfolios, and informal discussions, families are kept informed about their child's developmental progress, strengths, and areas for growth. By integrating intentional documentation, authentic assessment, and family collaboration, WVU Early Learning Institute ensures that each child's unique learning journey is valued and supported.

Holidays

We recognize holidays as a way to explore the diverse cultures and traditions of our community. Our focus is on learning and inclusivity, and we welcome families to share their customs throughout the year.

Special Occasions and Birthdays

We encourage simple and meaningful birthday celebrations. Treats must be store-bought, nut-free, and include an ingredient list. Only one treat will be served at snack time, with extras sent home. Families may also celebrate by donating a book or leading a classroom activity. Parents of children with allergies should provide their own treats on special days.

Toileting

Children must be toilet trained to attend the Early Learning Institute. We understand occasional accidents may occur, so each child must have a labeled extra set of clothing.

Family

Role of the Family

Families are at the heart of our school community. We value daily communication to build a strong connection between home and school. Families are encouraged to visit, share talents, and join field trips. If you need information or support, our teachers and Director are always available to help.

Communication

We keep families informed through multiple channels, including:

- **Newsletters**
- **Seesaw App**
- **Family Information Board**
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences** (available upon request)
- **Project Displays & Open Houses**
- **Daily Activity Contracts & Teacher Notes**

We value open communication and encourage families to stay engaged!

Transitions

We understand that transitions, whether starting at our school or moving on to a new program, are important moments for children and families. Before enrollment, families are invited to visit and see if our school is the right fit. We provide guidance on easing separation and creating meaningful “good-bye” rituals to help children feel secure.

Establishing a consistent daily routine supports smooth transitions, and our staff works closely with families to reinforce classroom routines.

Family Code of Conduct

At The Early Learning Institute, we strive to create a respectful and supportive environment for all children, families, and staff. We ask that all adults conduct themselves with courtesy and respect while on school property. Inappropriate language or behavior, whether directed at staff, children, or other families, is not permitted.

We also value the privacy of every child and family. For this reason, teachers cannot share information about any child other than your own. Thank you for helping us maintain a positive and respectful community for everyone.

Behavior Management

At The Early Learning Institute, we believe in positive and respectful guidance for all children. Corporal punishment is not permitted, and verbal discipline should never cause embarrassment or distress. Families are encouraged to discuss any behavioral concerns with their child's teacher or the Director to explore effective and supportive discipline strategies. Our goal is to foster a nurturing environment where children feel safe, respected, and understood.

Grievance Rights

We are committed to ensuring your satisfaction and value open communication with families. If a concern arises, it's best to address it directly with the person involved. Start by discussing the issue with your child's teacher and the Director. We maintain an open-door policy, encouraging families to visit at any time. Teachers will make every effort to be available for discussions about your child or classroom matters, ensuring we work together to resolve concerns promptly.

Termination of Enrollment-Discharge Policy

In rare cases, if a concern cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both the school and the family, it may become necessary to discontinue a child's enrollment. Before considering termination, the staff will make adjustments to teaching strategies and the learning environment, consult with the family, and seek guidance from specialists to help the child benefit from the program. If these efforts do not result in the child benefiting from the program or if the child's behavior affects the well-being of others, termination may be necessary. This decision will be made with the input of the Director, teachers, and approval of the Dean of Applied Human Services at WVU.

Staff

The Early Learning Institute team is selected based on their education, training, and prior experience in early learning. We follow the guidelines set by West Virginia University when hiring staff for our school.

All teachers complete a WV Cares background and fingerprinting check, First Aid/CPR/AED certification, Food Handler's training, and mandatory reporter training. Teachers also remain in compliance with WV STARS career pathway renewal and the WV Department of Education licensure renewal process, ensuring all licenses and credentials are up to date.

Professional Development

The WVU Early Learning Institute values and encourages ongoing professional development for all staff. Research shows that the quality of early childhood programs is closely linked to teachers' education and continuous learning. Our teachers engage in ongoing training to stay current with the latest research and best practices.

Teacher Code of Conduct

At WVU Early Learning Institute, teachers commit to upholding the values of early childhood education as outlined in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. Teachers will:

- Always ensure the well-being and safety of children
- Provide programs rooted in current research on child development and early childhood education
- Respect and support families in their role as nurturers of children
- Collaborate with colleagues to uphold high standards in early childhood care and education
- Advocate for children, families, and colleagues within the community and society
- Stay informed and adhere to professional standards and conduct
- Engage in self-reflection, acknowledging the impact of personal characteristics on children and families
- Be open to new ideas and continuously learn from others
- Strive to grow as a professional and contribute to the field of early childhood education

Confidentiality

At The Early Learning Institute, we prioritize the privacy of our families. Confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with staff on a "need-to-know" basis to ensure the best care and safety for your child. Only the child's teachers and the director have access to children's files.

Mandated Reporter Information / Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

In accordance with the Child Protective Services Act, all mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Teachers and administrators are not obligated to discuss their suspicions with families before reporting or investigate the cause of any concerning marks, behavior, or conditions. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect can result in criminal responsibility for mandated reporters. This responsibility is taken seriously, and we are committed to reporting any warranted concerns to the appropriate authorities to protect the welfare of all children.

Enrollment and Admission

Eligibility

Children must be three years old by July 1 of the enrollment year to be eligible for the morning session at The Early Learning Institute. Children must be four years old by July 1 of the enrollment year to be eligible for the afternoon session. The Early Learning Institute follows the public-school system's cut-off dates. Children visiting must either be enrolled in the program or accompanied by a parent.

Enrollment

Applications for enrollment can be completed online. After submission, applications are filed by desired enrollment year. Spots in each class are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Children attending the morning session are given priority for the afternoon session of the following year if they meet the State Pre-K requirements. Priority may also be given to siblings of current students, children with developmental delays, and those repeating a year. Final enrollment decisions are made by the Director and WVU administrators within the College of Applied Human Services.

Parents on the waitlist are contacted by email or phone early in the Spring semester before the upcoming enrollment year. If a spot becomes available, required forms are sent out and a non-refundable deposit is required. If a family is not interested, “not interested” is added to the waitlist form.

Parents have five workdays to confirm enrollment before it is offered to the next child on the list.

Waitlist

A waitlist is maintained for children who are eligible but not enrolled due to capacity limits or for children younger than the required enrollment age. To be placed on the waitlist, parents or guardians must complete the online application form. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Placing a child on the waitlist does not obligate the family or guarantee a spot. If a child on the waitlist for the three-year-old session does not secure a place during registration, their name will remain on the waitlist in case an opening becomes available. Parents must call the school to confirm their continued interest in a spot for the Pre-K four-year-old session.

Payment of Fees

A non-refundable deposit is required within 10 days of acceptance into the program. If the deposit is not received within this timeframe, the space will be offered to another child. The remaining tuition is due by the last day of the semester, unless alternative arrangements are made. Payments can be made electronically.

Visiting Opportunities

Registration for the fall semester begins the previous year. Parents notified of an available opening are encouraged to visit the Laboratory School before committing. This gives families a chance to meet the teachers in action, ask questions, and hear from the Director about the program's philosophy.

After placing a deposit, families are encouraged to visit again with their child. These visits help children and parents familiarize themselves with the daily routine and allow children to meet their teacher.

A personalized orientation visit is scheduled in August for new and returning families. This is a special time when families can meet the teacher, talk with the Director, and explore the school without other children present, allowing for individual attention.

Transportation

Parents are responsible for providing transportation for their child. Children must be picked up at the designated dismissal time. Late pick-ups will incur an additional charge, and repeated late pick-ups may result in dismissal from the program. Parents are also asked not to drop off their child before the designated start time.

Paperwork

Please note: Families are encouraged to share their child's developmental assessments with the school Director. Qualified individuals create IEP/IESPs to ensure your child's needs are being met. These tools allow us to work together to ensure that appropriate guidelines are put into practice.

Physician Forms and Emergency Care Forms:

A physical examination is required before starting school. The physician form and Emergency Care Form must be completed and submitted by the child's first day.

Medication:

The Laboratory School staff does not administer medication.

Attendance/Absence:

Attendance follows the Monongalia County Schools policy. Parents of children in the AM class may notify the school of absences. AM parents must pay full tuition regardless of missed days.

Divorce/Custody Agreements:

In the case of divorce or custody disputes, a copy of the custody agreement must be kept on file. Both parties in shared or joint custody must complete all paperwork together. The school must be notified if a parent has restricted visitation rights, and a copy of the court order must be provided to the Director. All such documentation remains confidential.

Arrival and Departure

Arrival

Upon arrival, children must be escorted by a parent or authorized adult to the classroom. Parents are required to sign in when dropping off and signing out when picking up their child. Children should wash their hands to reduce germs. This process helps transition children and families at drop-off.

Families must notify teachers both verbally and in writing of any special instructions, including early pick-up, alternate pick-up persons, health concerns, or other important matters related to their child's care.

Departure

Only authorized adults, as listed on the Parent Consent and Emergency Information Form, may pick up children. Parents must sign their child out, and they are responsible for supervising their child once on school premises.

If someone other than the regular pick-up person is arriving, parents must inform the head teacher and provide written notice (via note or Seesaw app) so it can be recorded in the child's file. Parents are responsible for notifying the teacher when leaving with their child, ensuring the head teacher is aware of every departure.

Parents are also asked to ensure that older siblings do not disrupt the classroom while entering the school.

Home and School Relationships

Parent Involvement

Parents play a vital role in their child's education, serving as their first and most influential teachers. The Early Learning Institute encourages parental involvement to create continuity in learning between home and school. Our open-door policy welcomes parents at any time.

Parents in the Classroom

Parents are valuable resources in the classroom and are welcome to volunteer. Many parents share their careers, talents, or special skills with the students, enhancing the learning experience.

Parent Meetings

A parent meeting is held in September, which serves as an introduction to the Early Learning Institute program, where the Director, teachers, and child development students discuss a typical school day, helping parents understand the curriculum and daily routines.

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are scheduled as needed and at the request of parents. These meetings provide an opportunity for the Director, teachers, and parents to discuss a child's progress, including any testing results. Parents are welcome to schedule a conference at any time during the semester or communicate with teachers and the Director regarding any concerns. Two-way communication is essential in fostering strong home-school relationships and supporting a child's development.

Procedures

Vacation Days

The Early Learning Institute follows the University semester schedule and is closed on all University holidays and when WVU students are not in session. Parents will receive a schedule with specific closure dates.

School Cancellations

School may be canceled due to utility failures or University closures. The snow policy is included in the first newsletter and posted on the school door. The Early Learning Institute remains open on Monongalia County school snow days. In the event of a Monongalia County 2-hour delay or weather-related cancellation, the AM class begins at 9:00 AM, while the PM class operates on its normal schedule. Parents will receive reminders about this policy through the Seesaw App.

Personal Items and Storage

Each child is assigned a labeled cubby for personal belongings. To prevent loss or damage, children should not bring personal toys or items to school. Please leave these items in your car or at home.

Required Items for Attendance

- A change of seasonal clothing must be provided. Families may be called to pick up their child if extra clothing is not available.
- Plastic bags, bags with drawstrings, or similar items are not permitted due to suffocation risks.

Items Not Permitted at School

The WVU Laboratory School carefully selects equipment and materials to optimize learning experiences. As such, personal toys from home are not allowed unless specifically requested or preapproved by the teacher.

Reasons for this policy include:

- Potential injury to other children
- The inability of teachers to monitor toys while supervising students

- The challenge of young children understanding possession, which may lead to conflicts
- Toys that promote aggressive behavior, such as toy guns, are not aligned with our program's philosophy

Nutrition and Meals

The Early Learning Institute provides snacks that meet USDA nutrition guidelines and are verified by the WV Department of Education Office of Child Nutrition.

Illness and Absences

Children must stay home if they have a fever or a contagious illness until cleared by a physician. If a child becomes ill at school, parents will be contacted. If parents cannot be reached, the school will call emergency contacts. Sick children will be isolated until they are picked up. During heightened illness concerns, children and staff may be required to wear face coverings to minimize the spread of airborne illnesses. Parents will be notified of such measures via the Seesaw App.

Field Trips

The Early Learning Institute organizes occasional local field trips. Each trip requires a signed parental permission form with DHHR-required information. Parents will receive prior notice. If a child is not participating, they should remain home that day. The typical adult-child supervision ratio on field trips is 1:2.

Appropriate Dress

Children engage in hands-on activities daily, including painting, water play, and outdoor exploration. Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes suitable for these activities.

Outdoor play is a daily part of our program. Children must have appropriate seasonal clothing, including coats, hats, mittens, boots, and snow pants (or an extra pair of pants). All clothing items should be labeled with the child's first and last name. A physician's note is required to exempt a child from outdoor play.

Clothing and Safety Guidelines

- Clothing with drawstrings is not permitted.
- Closed-toe shoes are required to prevent injuries.

By following these guidelines, we ensure a safe and enriching experience for all children at the Early Learning Institute.

Safety

Emergency Procedures

At The Early Learning Institute, the safety and well-being of your child are our highest priorities. We have carefully designed emergency plans to ensure a swift and effective response to all types of situations. These plans are reviewed annually and are on file with the local Emergency Management Agency and WVU Police.

To help children feel prepared without fear, we practice “**snowball drills**” (active shooter drills) twice each semester in a developmentally appropriate manner. Fire drills are conducted monthly, and documentation is available for review by the State Fire Marshal.

As part of your child’s enrollment, families are asked to acknowledge our emergency procedures. For more details, please refer to **The Early Learning Institute Parent Handbook**.

Emergency Plan – Evacuation and Sheltering

If a child is injured, we will contact parents immediately. If parents are unavailable, we will reach out to the emergency contacts listed on the Emergency Form. If necessary, the Director or teacher will call emergency services while an assistant teacher stays with the child to provide care and comfort.

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation, The WVU Laboratory School follows a structured plan filed with Monongalia County. If relocation is necessary, children will be taken to either:

- **Christian Missionary Church** (across from Krepps Park entrance)
- **WVU Coliseum** (depending on the situation)

Parents will be notified promptly if evacuation is required.

A Safe and Healthy Environment

- **Weapon-Free Policy:** Our Early Learning Institute is a safe, nurturing space where weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited.
- **Smoke-Free Campus:** To protect children from harmful exposure, smoking or tobacco use (including vaping) is not permitted on school grounds or near the playground.
- **Hot Beverage Safety:** To prevent accidental spills and burns, beverages over **110°F** (such as coffee or tea) are not allowed inside the classrooms.

Field Trips

We love providing enriching experiences beyond the classroom! Families will receive prior notice and must provide signed permission before their child participates in any field trips.

Photo and Video Policy

Capturing special moments is an important part of our program. Teachers document activities through photos, which may be used for classroom projects, learning journals, and—if permitted—publicity. Upon enrollment, families are asked to sign a **WVU consent form** regarding photography.

For privacy reasons, only staff members are authorized to take and use classroom photos. WVU students are not permitted to take photos of children or share images on social media. If you prefer that your child not be photographed, please let us know.

Inclement Weather Policy

The Early Learning Institute remains open except in severe weather conditions. Closure updates are provided in the **first newsletter of the school year** and sent via the **Seesaw App** as needed. For updates, families can check **local news, radio stations, or social media**.

Peanut-Free Environment

To ensure the safety of all children, especially those with severe peanut allergies, our school **does not allow** peanuts or peanut-containing products. Even trace exposure can trigger a life-threatening reaction. Please check all food items before sending them to school to help keep every child safe.

Staying Hydrated

Water is always available to children throughout the day, ensuring they stay refreshed and hydrated. We also recommend you send your child with a water bottle that they can use throughout the day.

Special Occasions & Birthday Treats

We love celebrating special moments! If you'd like to bring a treat for your child's birthday or another occasion, we kindly ask that all food items:

- Be **store-bought** from a commercial bakery
- Include a **clear ingredient list**

Some great alternatives to traditional cupcakes and cakes include:

- Fruit cups
- Ice cream
- Pudding cups
- Ice pops

Thank you for helping us create a **safe, supportive, and joyful** learning environment for all children!

Child Health and Behavior

The Early Learning Institute Health and Safety Policies

At The Early Learning Institute, your child's health and well-being are our top priorities. Preventing the spread of illness is a shared responsibility among families, teachers, and the school.

Immunizations

All children must have an up-to-date immunization record on file at the WVU Laboratory School by their first day of attendance.

Hand Washing

Hand washing plays a crucial role in preventing the spread of germs. Teachers regularly review proper hand-washing techniques with children and use these moments to teach about germs. Hand washing is required:

- Before and after eating, handling food, or feeding a child
- Before and after administering medication
- After playing in shared water
- After toileting or assisting a child with toileting
- After handling bodily fluids (mucus, blood, vomit)
- After cleaning or handling garbage
- After playing outdoors

Dental Emergencies

In the event of a dental emergency, parents will be contacted immediately. Teachers, trained in pediatric first aid, will follow appropriate procedures to ensure prompt care.

Allergy Accommodations

For children with allergies, a Special Care Plan or physician's note must be provided. Each case will be individually assessed, and reasonable accommodations will be made.

Accidents & Injuries

Minor injuries are a natural part of childhood play. Our teachers are trained in pediatric first aid to assess and treat minor injuries. An Injury Report Form will be completed and shared with families. For serious injuries requiring emergency care, 911 will be contacted, and a teacher will accompany the child until a parent/guardian arrives.

Illness Policy

Despite our best efforts, children may become ill. Families must provide up-to-date emergency contact information. If a child becomes sick, parents will be contacted promptly for pick-up and should consult their child's physician. Open communication between parents, doctors, and the school is vital to maintaining a healthy environment. Families must notify the school if their child has a contagious illness. If a child is excluded due to a communicable disease, a signed note from a licensed healthcare provider stating the child is no longer contagious is required before returning to school.

Exclusion from School

Please keep your child at home if they:

- Feel too unwell to participate in activities
- Have a fever and other symptoms until a health professional clears them
- Experience vomiting (twice or more in 24 hours)
- Have diarrhea that is uncontrolled or contains blood/mucus
- Show signs of a contagious disease (pink eye, head lice, strep throat, etc.) until treated

Guidance and Behavior Management

Our teachers foster children's social and emotional development with respect, empathy, and positive reinforcement. We use techniques such as:

- Setting clear, fair limits
- Using mistakes as learning opportunities
- Anticipating and redirecting potential problems
- Encouraging children to resolve conflicts and make thoughtful choices

Corporal punishment, humiliation, or withholding food and beverages are strictly prohibited. Teachers model respectful behavior and help children develop problem-solving skills.

Releasing Children's Forms

Forms will only be released to:

- The parent/guardian who completed the forms
- Monongalia County Board of Education (for Pre-K enrollment)
- WVU Legal Affairs and General Counsel

Any other requests for children's records must be submitted in writing to WVU Legal Affairs.

Emergency Plans

In compliance with WV Code §49-2B, The Early Learning Institute has an emergency plan on file with WVU and Monongalia County Emergency Management.

In case of evacuation, the relocation sites are:

1. Missionary Alliance Church
2. WVU Coliseum

We appreciate your partnership in creating a safe, supportive, and healthy environment for all children at The Early Learning Institute.

Administrative Structure

The Early Learning Institute operates under the oversight of the following entities:

- WVU Board of Governors
- West Virginia University
- College of Applied Human Sciences (serves in an advisory capacity)
- School of Education

WVU Governing Board Minutes

WVU Board of Governors meeting minutes are available online. To view them, Adobe Acrobat Reader is required. An accessible version can be downloaded separately.

Administrative Manual

The following administrative guidelines apply to all Early Learning Institute positions:

- The WVU Faculty and Staff Handbook governs all roles within the Early Learning Institute.
- Individual personnel files include background checks, compensation details (contracts), and performance evaluations.
- Teachers and Assistant Teachers adhere to the NAEYC Code of Ethics.
- Child records are confidential and securely maintained for a period of three years.

This structure ensures a supportive, transparent, and ethical environment for both staff and families at The Early Learning Institute.

Legislative Rules at a Glance

Supervision and Staffing

- **Supervision:** At all times, two paid staff members supervise a classroom of 20 children aged 3-5.
- **Background Checks:** All staff undergo background checks every five years.
- **Licensing:** The Early Learning Institute is licensed as a Type 1 childcare center (serving fewer than 31 children) but operates as a preschool and lab school for West Virginia University.
- **Staff Qualifications:** Teachers hold master's degrees in early childhood education, with certifications in early childhood teaching and Special Education.
- **Health Checks:** Staff complete annual health checks, including a TB questionnaire.

Accreditation and Standards

- **Certification:** The WVDHHR Certificate is visibly displayed.
- **Curriculum:** The Early Learning Institute follows the WV Core Knowledge and Competencies, the WV Early Learning Standards, and uses the WV Early Learning Scale for child assessment.
- **Accreditation:** The school aligns with the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).
- **Evaluation:** The Early Learning Institute scored 6.5 on the ECERS in 2016.

Facilities and Cleanliness

- **Classroom Design:** Areas are divided by walls at least 3 feet tall.
- **Sanitation:** The school is disinfected weekly, with verification schedules located in the resource room and maintained by the teacher.
- **Health Inspections:** The Monongalia County Health Department inspects the school twice a year.
- **Pest Control:** WVU Pest Management conducts monthly inspections, with records stored in the workroom.

- **Cleaning:** WVU Facilities staff clean and sanitize bathrooms, floors, and counters each evening.
- **MSDS Sheets:** Material Safety Data Sheets for all cleaning products are available in the file cabinet.

Child Safety and Health

- **Medication:** Staff do not administer daily medications.
- **Physical Activity:** Children engage in physical activity for at least 50% of their enrolled time, including daily outdoor play and movement activities.
- **Health Records:** Children's health records must be completed by September 30 each year. Immunization records and a signed physician's form are due on the first day of attendance.
- **Illness:** If a child shows signs of illness, they are moved to the office and the parent is notified. Temperature records are stored in the child's file.

Behavior Management

- **Guidance:** The Early Learning Institute follows the NAEYC behavior management plan. Time-out is not used; instead, children are given a "calming down" period if needed.
- **Prohibited Practices:** Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited.

Parent Communication and Involvement

- **Open Access:** Parents are welcome to visit the Early Learning Institute at any time during their child's day.
- **Drop-off and Pick-up:** Parents provide a written list of approved individuals for child pick-up.
- **Daily Reports:** A schedule of daily activities is posted on the bulletin board, and children take home a daily report of their activities.
- **Parent Handbook:** An updated parent handbook is distributed annually. Parents sign a form acknowledging they have read and discussed the policies with the director.

Governance and Administration

- **Governing Body:** The WVU Board of Governors oversees the Laboratory School, with direct advisory support from the College of Applied Human Sciences.
- **Advisory Board:** The advisory board includes one parent representative and meets monthly, with minutes recorded electronically.

- **Staff Meetings:** The director meets with staff after each department meeting to provide updates. Additionally, staff have two 30-minute meetings each week for discussions.
- **Licensing Capacity:** The school is licensed for 20 children in the AM class and 20 children in the PM class.

Staff Development

- **Professional Development:** All staff participate in WVSTARS-approved professional development and are registered with WVSTARS.
- **Orientation:** WVU conducts staff orientation at the beginning of the fall semester. The Early Learning Institute director provides an additional orientation on August 15 each year.
- **Training:** Staff maintain current certifications in Food Handling, First Aid, CPR, and AED.
- **Supervision of Students:** All WVU students interning at the Early Learning Institute are supervised by staff. Training plans are kept on file.

Record-Keeping and Compliance

- **Confidentiality:** All child and staff records are stored in the office for three years. Access is limited to the child's teacher and the director. Additional faculty records are kept in the Budget Manager's office.
- **FERPA:** The Early Learning Institute follows FERPA regulations. Child information is only released to the designated parent.
- **Administrative Manual:** Located in the Laboratory School Office, it includes:
 - Parent handbook (updated annually)
 - WVU Faculty Handbook
 - Child care licensing regulations
 - WV Core Knowledge and Competencies
 - NAEYC Code of Ethics
 - FERPA guidelines
 - Civil Rights policies
 - Signed staff orientation sheets

Safety and Reporting

- **Incident Reports:** WVU injury forms are completed for any injury requiring medical services.
- **BRIM:** Annual inspections are conducted each July/August.
- **Liability:** WVU maintains liability and workers' compensation coverage, with documentation on file at the Early Learning Institute.

Non-Discrimination Statement

West Virginia University is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture by promoting equality and intercultural outreach. The University does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, marital or family status, pregnancy, veteran status, military service, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, or gender expression.

For inquiries or reports regarding non-discrimination policies, contact the Office of Equity Assurance:

- **Title IX Coordinator:** James Goins Jr.
- **ADA Coordinator:** Jill Hess
- **Phone:** 304-293-5600

The Office of Equity Assurance is responsible for investigating discrimination and harassment reports, ensuring WVU's policy compliance, and providing training and support services.

Children on Campus at WVU

Overview

Our mission is to ensure the safety of children participating in West Virginia University (WVU) programs. We also support WVU community members who administer these programs by helping them comply with relevant laws and University policies.

To achieve this, we provide training, educational resources, and coordinate efforts across the University to establish clear guidelines and best practices. These efforts promote the safety of youth involved in WVU programs, activities, events, and research. Our services are rooted in nationally recognized best practices and federal and state laws, as well as West Virginia University's regulations.

Each year, thousands of children engage with WVU through a wide range of programs and events, both on and off campus. WVU's leadership is dedicated to ensuring that all youth who interact with the University are protected from harm. We welcome children and their families as valued members of the University community, with the expectation that their experiences will be safe, enriching, and inclusive.

Mission Statement

West Virginia University is committed to protecting children who participate in programs and activities on campus and at WVU-sponsored off-campus events. To uphold this commitment and in alignment with Board of Governors Rule 1.7, the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will:

- Stay informed about youth protection developments at the state and national levels;
- Serve as a resource for WVU units planning programs involving visiting children ("Host Units"), supporting a positive and safe learning environment for participants;
- Collaborate with Host Units to develop, implement, and regularly review guidelines for supervising and safeguarding visiting children; and

- Manage a volunteer vetting program to ensure adults with direct contact with visiting children complete required background checks and training.

Contact Us

For questions about Children on Campus programming, please reach out to us:

Office of Compliance and Prevention Education

886 Chestnut Ridge Road, Suite 309

Morgantown, WV 26506

Phone: (304) 293-5600

Email: compliance@mail.wvu.edu