

# parent handbook

for the School-Age Program  
2021-2022



est. **1979**



## **Our Vision:**

**The Child Educational Center is a caring educational community where:**

- we value children, and help them to thrive and reach their full potential as individuals and as contributing members of society;
- through participation, the members of our community enrich themselves and the community as a whole;
- we commit to sharing our ideals in early care and education throughout the world through outreach.

## **Our Mission:**

The CEC's mission is to ignite joy, curiosity, and compassion through innovative children's programs for all.

## **Our Values:**

- \* **Integrity:** To maintain integrity of the individual and the institution
- \* **Innovation:** To achieve innovation in our programs
- \* **Diversity:** To embrace diversity of people and ideas
- \* **Excellence:** To demonstrate excellence in our care and programs
- \* **Openness:** To be open about ourselves and our processes
- \* **Nurturing:** To nurture our children, families and staff
- \* **Service:** To provide service to the broader community
- \* **Respect:** To have respect for all

Dear Families,

Please accept our warmest welcome to the Child Educational Center (CEC). We thank you for joining us and look forward to getting to know you as members of the CEC community. We hope you and your family have a rewarding experience with us.

In the pages of this handbook, you will learn about the most important features of the CEC. We ask that you read it carefully and completely. You will find additional information on our website, [www.ceconline.org](http://www.ceconline.org).

In joining the CEC, you become part of a community of staff, parents, children, and extended family and friends, working together to provide an innovative and loving educational environment. In 1979, the CEC arose from a vision of providing the highest quality early care and education services. Then, as now, our overarching goal is to fulfill the promise of childhood.

We pledge to support the children in our care, helping them to fully realize the promise that resides in each of them. Our aim is to work together to discover each child's unique spirit and to respond to him or her in a way that best aids their efforts toward development and growth. We find meeting those objectives enormously gratifying.

As you join with us in this profound process of care and education of your child, we encourage you to consider us your partner. Feel free to come to us with any questions or concerns. We greatly look forward to sharing this journey together. Once again, welcome to the CEC!



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## **The CEC philosophy**

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Below you will find a brief description of the philosophy underlying our approach to the care and education of children. The rich and comprehensive nature of this research-based philosophy provides a solid foundation for our curriculum and teaching practices. Supplementary details on many of these topics are available separately.

Childhood is a precious time of discovery, development and growth. Children today face increasing pressures to grow up too fast, depriving them of fundamental early childhood experiences that help them to become successful adults. The CEC is committed to preserving the experience of childhood. In the safe harbor of our indoor and outdoor spaces, children are free to laugh, climb, run, talk, dig, explore and interact. Through extended and complex play, they come to acquire knowledge and form their own unique identity, and to understand life and their place in it.

Our program is founded on the philosophy that a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth develops from a positive sense of self. We treat children with love and respect, and encourage them to grow, create, and learn at their own unique pace.

The program's atmosphere is relaxed and child-centered. Teachers plan curricula and routines based on the children's interests and abilities and give them the support they need to feel comfortable testing and refining new skills.

### **The Role of Play in Education**

Numerous child development researchers hold that play is one of the primary channels through which young children develop and learn about the world. Through play, children learn how things work and how they can interact with them. Play allows children to explore ideas, practice new skills, solve problems, interact with others, learn to communicate, work with emotions, explore ideas, and develop creativity.

A common misconception is that play has less value than work or teacher-directed academic learning. But it is through play that children construct and test ideas, and refine critical-thinking skills. In the early childhood years, an excessive focus on tests, workbooks and other achievement-oriented activities may reduce play's productive results. It can also undermine the foundation necessary for later academic achievement.

A primary goal of our program is to encourage constructive play by engaging children in their activities. Teachers facilitate constructive play by offering activities appropriate for a child's developmental level, and keep them engaged by asking questions that stimulate thinking and encourage exploration. CEC teachers have a thorough understanding of the relationship between play and learning.

## **Emergent Curriculum: Learning How to Learn**

Play is central to our method of curriculum development – an approach known as emergent curriculum. This term was first coined by educator Elizabeth Jones at Pacific Oaks College in 1970. Since then the approach has been explored in detail in numerous books and publications.

Emergent curriculum recognizes that the potential for curriculum is infinite. Everything holds a basis for knowledge, from the physical environment, to the interests of the children and teachers, and also to their values. Curriculum is not something to be “covered”, but rather something to be explored.

A key component of emergent curriculum is teacher observation. Children’s play reflects their interests and curiosities. When teachers observe how children play and pay attention to their interactions, it becomes possible to plan activities and experiences that have meaning for them. In turn, children become more fully engaged with what they are doing. In effect, children learn how to learn.

Teachers plan curriculum utilizing their professional knowledge and experience, child development norms, and the interests and abilities they observe in the children. Curriculum emerges from both predictable and unexpected events occurring in the group, neighborhood, community and natural world. When teachers and children are unencumbered by prescribed lesson plans and rigid schedules, they become free to take advantage of the wealth of learning opportunities inherent in daily life.

Teachers encourage children to deeply explore experiences that interest them. Oftentimes, subjects learned at school serve as a jumping-off point for School-Age Program activities that cement and deepen that knowledge. For instance, one year several kindergarten students excitedly described their school’s butterfly project and how they were learning firsthand about how a caterpillar transforms itself into a pupa and then on to a butterfly. Inspired by the children’s enthusiasm, teachers organized related activities including watercolor paintings of butterflies, bug hunting around the yard and research into the types and qualities of butterflies.

This approach contrasts with pre-designed curricula in which adults decide what’s important and impose that activity on children, often in a way that limits its broader meaning. With emergent curriculum, the driving force for learning is the natural curiosity and enthusiasm that emerges from the children themselves.

## **Spontaneous and Planned Curriculum**

While spontaneity figures highly in the development of curriculum, planning is also required. Teachers become skilled at quick decision-making, incorporating what they observe into short- and long-term planning. As they develop curriculum, they are also addressing awareness and learning in six key areas:

1. **physical**, including gross and fine motor skills



2. **social**, including awareness, respect, the ability to share and cooperate
3. **cognitive**, including comprehension, problem solving, intuition, and skill acquisition
4. **emotional**, including identifying feelings and developing self-esteem
5. **communication**, both verbal and nonverbal
6. **the spirit** of each child, which transcends the emotional experience and pertains to wonder, awe, inspiration, and joy

### **Learning Outside: the Outdoor Classroom**

An essential part of our program is the integration of outdoor play. The CEC is a pioneer in the practice and promotion of the Outdoor Classroom, an approach to learning in which teachers support and encourage outdoor play in order to enhance children's development. Indoor and outdoor activities are integrated, with each group comprising an indoor and outdoor play area, and children moving freely between the two. This indoor-outdoor flow provides an exceptional learning and growing environment that also adapts well to each child's unique learning style.

Playing outside helps to overcome a range of obstacles facing today's children, which includes a diminished focus on physical activity and the natural world. Outdoor play also supports cognitive growth by allowing children greater freedom of physical movement, a critical component for stimulating brain development.

During outdoor play, each child can pursue activities suited to his or her unique approach to learning. Children are extremely good at creating learning experiences for themselves. Playing outside becomes an even more effective vehicle for learning when teachers support it by responding to questions, providing materials and information, and offering encouragement and guidance.

### **Learning to Value Diversity**

We believe that an optimal learning environment is one that values differences in people individually and culturally, and that provides curriculum in a non-sexist, non-racist, and non-stereotyping way. We maintain a steadfast commitment to reflecting diversity in our curriculum materials, activities and actions, an approach known in early education practice as *anti-biased* curriculum.

We also strive to create a diverse community in our program. We welcome children of non-traditional families, such as children of same sex partners and children with grandparents as teachers. We also welcome children with special needs. It is our view that a diverse community provides a rich and rewarding experience for our children, families and staff.

## **The Power of People in Early Education**

### **Teacher Qualifications**

The single most significant factor in the development and well-being of children is access to responsive, skilled, and loving adults. CEC staff members are experienced and caring early childhood educators who have solid knowledge in child development theory and practice. The CEC meets the teaching qualification standards of the National Association of the Education of Young Children and exceeds the requirements of our licensing agency, the Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division.

Not only does our staff have academic knowledge, they also hold institutional knowledge. The average tenure of our teachers is six years, with almost a quarter of them working with us for ten years or more. Our Directors have even stronger staying power, with tenure ranging from 10 to over 30 years. This long tenure reflects their dedication to their leadership role, and greatly enhances the program's success.

An essential factor contributing to staff quality and teacher retention is our use of a team approach. Teaching teams function much like a family, with different members playing different roles yet all roles being an essential part of the whole. While Lead Teachers and Master Lead Teachers provide a leadership role in decision-making, we welcome and expect the observations and ideas of all teachers.

### **Our Quality Standards**

Since 1989, the CEC's Infant-Toddler, and Preschool Programs have been accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. (NAEYC).

#### **NAEYC accreditation**

For more than 30 years, NAEYC has offered voluntary accreditation in order to strengthen the development and implementation of best practices in early care programs for children, families, and staff.

The CEC has been continuously accredited by NAEYC since 1991 (when NAEYC began their accreditation process) and is committed to creating and maintaining high quality in our philosophy and practices.

Accreditation means that the CEC is in voluntary compliance with the Academy's list of criteria for high-quality early childhood programs. These criteria include sufficient numbers of adults with training in childhood development, age-appropriate activities and expectations, ongoing child assessments, regular staff communication, communication with parents, and other elements the Academy deems essential in order to deliver quality care.

## **Our School-Age Program**

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The School-Age Program's before-and after-school care offers an exciting array of creative and stimulating play-based activities for children aged five to twelve. It helps children to develop in the areas of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth, while creating opportunities to learn cooperation, conflict resolution, and build relationships. Children play outdoors, interact with friends, explore creative arts, practice reading and storytelling, play games, work puzzles, and engage in science experiments. In many ways, our program strives to recreate the feeling of neighborhood many parents may remember from their own childhood.

Children generally need to relax after their busy day at school, and the CEC emphasizes spending time outdoors and playing. Our program is a place for children to have fun in an open and relaxed setting. We provide a safe physical environment, while encouraging children to explore and take risks, and learn to play within boundaries that are respectful to themselves, to others, and to the environment.

While outdoor play is crucial, we also provide the time and resources for children to complete homework assignments. At the start of the year, we help parents to create a homework agreement with their children, specifying what parents want them to accomplish. We then do our best to support each child in fulfilling this agreement.

### **Program Goals**

While the overarching philosophy of the CEC's School-Age Program is consistent with our infant, toddler, and preschool program, a significant difference exists. Once a child enters elementary school, the primary focus becomes the school day. The School-Age Program becomes a partner, supporting children and their families to make the most of the school experience.

As a partner, the School-Age Program builds on knowledge learned at school, including in areas of art, music, science, language and communication, reading, writing, math, and physical development. It also offers support in areas that may be overlooked in the busy pace of the school day, in particular social and emotional development. Through dramatic play and guided learning, a child can build skills in conflict resolution, gain confidence in forming friendships, and acquire a strengthened sense of personal and social responsibility.

In particular, children learn to:

- Strengthen social skills that help foster friendships
- Successfully sustain play with peers

- Explore the activities available to them and integrate their own ideas and interests into activities
- Be self-starting in their play, self-selecting activities and interactions with other children and adults
- Grow in their ability to problem solve and use positive/effective conflict resolution skills
- Communicate individual needs so teachers may provide assistance
- Make teachers aware of any matters of concern regarding their school day
- Demonstrate ability to transition from their school day into the more relaxed atmosphere of after-school care

### **Club Time**

Clubs provide an opportunity for children to participate in a teacher-directed small group activity. A different club meets each afternoon. Some examples include cooking, science, sports, sculpture, watercolors, sewing, paper mache, and games from around the world. Participation is optional and open to all ages. Clubs allow teachers to share their special talents and interests with children. Children take a role in determining club activities that are of interest to them. Additionally, older children have opportunities to provide leadership for the club activities of younger children.

### **Homework Support**

We support families who choose to have their child do their homework while in our program. At the beginning of the year, we distribute a homework agreement to all families. This agreement, which is between the family and the child, sets out what the child is expected to do while at the CEC. We do our best to implement that agreement.

Each day, about an hour is set aside to work on school assignments. (Children are also welcome to work on assignments at any time.) Depending on the age of the child, they may need more or less time. Teachers help to facilitate a quiet atmosphere, provide materials and suggestions, and to answer questions. If you feel your child would benefit from one-on-one tutoring, we can help provide referrals. A tutor is also welcome to work with your child while at the CEC.

We purposefully schedule homework time later in the day when children have had a chance to reconnect with friends, have a snack, and burn off steam playing outside. While we recognize that some children may miss homework

time if they get picked up early, our aim is to maximize outdoor play during daylight hours. We recognize that children's healthy growth and development rely on plenty of fresh air and physical activity. There is a great deal of research available reviewing homework policies in a variety of settings, as well as the need for exercise and time for play. We are dedicated to finding a healthy balance of addressing homework needs and supporting all other areas of children's development.

If you find homework is creating undue stress on your family, or if you are unhappy with the type or amount of homework assigned, we encourage you to review your school's homework guidelines, meet with your child's elementary school teacher, talk to the lead teachers or site director, and contact the CEC program directors. We are happy to talk with you about your child's individual needs and work together with you to help implement a personalized strategy that supports your child. If you have any questions about the CEC's homework policy, please contact a program or site director.

### **Community Outreach and Volunteering**

An important aspect of the School-Age program involves community outreach. In addition to both planned and spontaneous community service projects for all children, older children can also play a special role as a mentor of younger children. For many years, the older children have volunteered on Fridays at the CEC's Infant, Toddler and Preschool program. Older children look forward to this opportunity, and the younger children can't wait to see the big kids. Throughout the program, teachers assist children to develop long term projects to benefit their community, such as a gardening and beautification, participating in fund-raising projects, or involvement in community events.

### **The "Zone"**

Children entering grades 4 through 6 are welcome to participate in regular activities of the "Zone," a program geared to the interests and advanced abilities of this age group. The Zone is an opportunity for kids to connect with their peers, learn responsibility through volunteer and mentoring programs (see above), and enjoy social outlets like sports and a pizza party.

### **Holiday Program**

On most school closure days, the CEC offers a separate full-day holiday program. We recognize that these are vacation days and our goal is create a fun, relaxing break away from the regular school-day schedule. Past events have included visiting the Rose Bowl floats, a puppet making workshop and performance, ice skating, cooking and science programs, and story tellers. Teachers will send out notices in advance regarding holiday care, including a list of activities. For further information see the section on Holiday and In-service Care.

## **Summer Exploration Camps**

The CEC's Summer Program series offers a range of stimulating activities for children entering first through seventh grade:

Summer Exploration Camp includes themed weeks, where children explore their interests and expand their knowledge through specialized field trips and hands-on activities. Past themed programs have included Stars and Space, Culinary Adventures, Music and Movement, and Dinosaur Academy. Details on themes, locations, and hours are available at [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org).

The CEC also partners with Descanso Gardens to offer multiple weeks of an enriching and experiential nature camp.

We also offer summer before-and after-school care for children enrolled in the La Canada School District Summer School and after-summer school programming for children enrolled in the Pasadena Educational Foundation.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parents have the opportunity to participate in room activities and fundraising events which support the CEC. Individual sites may also hold social events such as family and art festivals, potlucks, pizza nights, bagel mornings, and more. Parents are also invited to attend the CEC-wide events, such as the annual Benefit & Auction, as well as State of the Organization, and other community events.

## **Transportation**

We provide transportation from several area schools to our Oak Grove site. Transportation is based on expressed parent interest, the feasibility of designing van routes, as well as limiting children's van rides to under 45 minutes. Though we ask parents to identify any transportation needs as part of the registration process, we may not be able to accommodate all requests. We follow all state laws pertaining to age/weight requirements for car/booster seat use.

## **Admissions and enrollment information**

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### **Admissions Policy**

Enrollment is open to children in transitional kindergarten and kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, without discrimination in regard to sex, race, color, national and ethnic origin, disability, or creed.

### **Enrolling a Child with Special Needs**

The CEC enrolls children with a range of developmental delays, disabilities, and medical conditions. We consider each child individually and offer enrollment when we are confident we can meet the child's needs. Factors we consider include suitability with our program philosophy, group size, teacher-child ratio, staff expertise, appropriateness of our curricular approach, and the number of other children with special needs within the group.

The CEC works closely with a number of Regional Centers that facilitate services for children with special needs, a service offered under the auspices of the State Department of Social Services. Local Centers are familiar with the CEC and can advise families on whether our program is aligned with the developmental needs of their child. The CEC also maintains strong ties with the Special Education departments of local school districts.

Some children with special needs require therapeutic companions for one-on-one support. While the CEC cannot provide these companions, our directors and many of our teachers have extensive experience collaborating with parents and professionally trained companions to support social and behavioral goals. We value participating as a member of the parent-companion team.

At a family's request, our staff can provide input for their child's 504 plan (referring to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) and/or their Individualized Education Program (IEP). If you would like more information on our Program's inclusion of children with special needs, please contact the Program Director.

### **Application/Enrollment Process**

Families interested in enrolling their child at the CEC should do the following:

- Visit the CEC website, [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org), read the Parent Handbook, and any attached materials thoroughly and carefully. Please call us with any questions.
- Complete our online registration/enrollment process at [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org), which also includes the submission of all required enrollment forms.

- If interested, make an appointment to meet with a director and visit the program with your child.
- Families must reapply annually for the following year. Typically, an email message is sent out to currently enrolled families in early spring, who receive priority enrollment if their application is received by the stated deadline (which is normally a month from the date of the email).
- New families can apply for enrollment anytime throughout the year; mid-month start dates can be accommodated as space permits.

### **Change of Schedule**

Schedule change requests are processed through our office, not through our website, registration portal, or at school sites. As of October 1, schedule changes will go into effect the first applicable day of the following month. **After October 1, a \$10.00 fee will be assessed for each schedule change.**

Schedule changes are considered as enrollment capacity permits. If your desired schedule is not currently available, we will notify you when it is. All schedule changes and corresponding tuition adjustments submitted by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month will be reflected on the next month's tuition bill.

### **Waitlist**

At many of our locations, a waitlist develops early on in the registration process. If presented with the waitlist option, we recommend adding your child to the waitlist, because there are a number of factors which can change before school begins. A number of adjustments occurs for families throughout the spring and summer, and most families end up being offered a full or partial place in their desired schedule.

### **Withdrawal from the Program**

It is important for your child to be given the opportunity to say good-bye and have closure when he or she leaves the program. Please let your child and staff know in advance of your child's last day so that the transition can be a positive experience for your child, his or her friends, and teachers. **To qualify for a tuition refund, at least one month's advance notice of withdrawal must be given in writing via email to our office and not at school sites.**



## **Tuition information**

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On these next four pages, you will find the following information:

- Schedule options and tuition rates
- Additional details regarding tuition
- Tuition assistance
- Annual fee
- Holiday and in-service care
- Temporary Withdrawals

### **Schedule Options and Tuition Rates**

Please visit our website at [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org) for our current schedule options and rates.

### **How Does CEC Tuition Compare to Other Programs?**

Tuition costs for child care vary widely. While CEC rates fall at the upper level of average costs for private childcare in this area, our Program provides extremely good value. Research shows the single most significant factor in the development and well-being of children is access to responsive and skilled adults. Some schools boast of new buildings and shiny new equipment. While environment is important, physical structures and elements cannot take the place of a nurturing, knowledgeable adult. People's time, however, is expensive. The CEC spends more than 60% of its total budget on salaries to pay well-qualified teaching staff.

When you see lower priced childcare programs, ask yourself why. Often, low prices point to poor teacher-child ratios or the use of untrained or low-paid staff. By contrast, our teacher-child ratios exceed state requirements and our well-trained teachers are paid a competitive rate. Paying teachers well is one of the most effective ways of avoiding excessive turnover, a common problem among child care programs, and one that is extremely disruptive to children. As a nonprofit organization, we are committed to providing the highest quality programs at the most affordable price. This is an ongoing goal of our Board of Trustees. For more information on how we allocate your tuition dollars, please see the information on CEC revenue and expenses in our annual report and in related materials on our website.

### **Additional Details Regarding Tuition**

- Tuition is charged for all weekdays each month whether or not your child is in attendance. It may be helpful to think of tuition as you might rent on an apartment. It holds a place for your child in the center. Just as a landlord is unable to fill your apartment while you

go on vacation, we are unable to enroll your child's space for a brief vacation period or school field trip while our operating expenses remain constant.

- Exchanging or "banking" unused hours/days cannot be accommodated due to the complexities of ratios and staffing.
- Tuition adjustments for schedule changes will be reflected on the next monthly bill.
- Payments can be made in a variety of ways. Please visit our payment portal on our website at [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org).
- For credit and debit card payments, a 2.5% processing fee is added.
- An automatic payment option is available through the Caltech Credit Union.
- Tuition is due by the first of each month. A late fee of \$30 is assessed if tuition is not received within ten days of the first of the month.
- Balances not paid off within 40 days of the initial charge may result in termination of your child's enrollment.
- Late pick-up fees are charged to the following month's bill.
- We charge a \$25 processing fee for returned checks.
- Tuition rates increase at the beginning of each program year to cover operational expenses. These rates are determined each year by the Board of Trustees, as part of the budget process.

### **Tuition Assistance**

The CEC maintains a tuition assistance program to help families unable to afford the full amount of tuition. Each year, about 20 families receive assistance covering from 10% to 90% of tuition costs, based on need and available funds. Funding comes from United Way donors who designate the CEC to receive their gift, from CEC fundraising efforts, and from the CEC's budget. We are seeking ways to develop our tuition assistance program further in order to help more low- and middle-income families. Additional information, including the application, can be found on the CEC website. JPL and Caltech employees can seek tuition assistance through their institution's Child Care Assistance Program.

## **Additional Fees**

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### **Enrollment Fee**

The following non-refundable registration fee is added to your initial enrollment and each year in September to cover administrative costs, including supplemental accident insurance, earthquake/disaster preparedness, and other health-related expenses: \$150.00.

Accident insurance covers all children attending the CEC and acts as secondary coverage to a family's existing insurance for injuries that may occur while your child is in our care. For instance, it may reimburse out-of-pocket expenses such as seeing an out-of-network specialist.

### **Late Fees**

The CEC reserves the right to impose a late fee on those who arrive for pick up after 6:00 pm. The fee is \$20.00 for each 1 to 15 minute period after 6:00 pm. Fees for late pick-up are billed on the following month's tuition statement. Repeated lateness may jeopardize your child's enrollment.

### **Holiday and In-Service Care Fees**

At many of our sites, the CEC offers a separate program for care during most school closure days, with care available typically from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Families interested in taking advantage of this additional care need to reserve care in advance because space can be limited. You can either sign up on site or by contacting the office. Families pay an hourly rate of \$15.00 per hour for each hour their child is in our care beyond their regular schedule. Although we currently do not bill in advance of these days, a non-refundable cancellation fee will be charged if you signed up for the day, but your child does not attend. If utilizing in-service care only, a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$25 and the health and safety fee (amount depends upon the site) is added to your first billing statement.

For example:

- If your child usually attends 11:30 - 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, you are entitled to use 6.5 hours on a full-care day at no extra charge.
- If your child usually attends 1:50 - 6:00 pm, Tuesday/Thursday, you are entitled to 4 hours on a full-care day that falls on a Tuesday and/or a Thursday at no extra charge. Care needed on other days would be charged the \$15.00 per hour rate.

Please note: We cannot accommodate trading days or using accumulated hours for full-care days. Families are billed after the full-care day has occurred to insure accuracy

of attendance and billing; however, a cancellation fee will be applied to your statement if your child does not attend on the day you reserved.

In addition, there are a number of early release days at many of the area schools. If your child normally attends on the day of the early dismissal, we will be expecting them at the earlier time. If your child does not normally attend and you need care on the early dismissal day, it may be available, but is entirely based on available space. Billing for additional time on early release days will be at \$15.00 an hour.

### **Temporary Withdrawals**

Some families request a temporary withdrawal during certain times of year. We would be happy to consider this if a) the child will be withdrawn for one month or more, and b) no waitlist exists at your child's site. Temporary withdrawals cannot be accommodated if there is waitlist as the next family is eagerly awaiting the vacancy.

## **Operational information**

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### **School-Age Program Sites**

The School-Age Program currently functions at six sites:

1. Oak Grove site (Whale room) near JPL, La Cañada
2. La Cañada Elementary, La Cañada
3. Paradise Canyon Elementary, La Cañada
4. Palm Crest Elementary, La Cañada
5. Westridge School, Pasadena
6. St. Bede School, La Cañada

### **Hours of Operation**

The CEC main office is open 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The Oak Grove and Caltech sites are open from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm (and 7:00 am to 6:00 pm on full-care dates.) The La Cañada District Elementary Schools are open 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

### **Holiday Closures**

The Oak Grove and Caltech sites are typically closed on holidays observed by JPL and Caltech. The La Canada elementary school sites close on holidays observed by the La Canada school district, but remain open for full-care on most in-service days, conference days, and school breaks. Additionally, the CEC closes for the week between Christmas and New Year's.

### **Additional School Closures**

In addition to holiday closures, the School-Age Program closes for a number of days before the start of the school year to prepare for the new program year, and for one or two days in early June to prepare for Summer Exploration Camps. Additionally, the program closes for one or two days during the year for professional development. Exact dates for closures can be found on the CEC's website.

### **Loading and Parking**

Each site maintains a separate plan for loading and parking. Please check with staff at each site.

### **Signing-in and Signing-out Is the Parent's Responsibility**

Signing your child in and out each day is a state-licensing requirement. Parents must escort their child to the CEC classrooms and pick them up there each day. When you pick up your child, you must personally sign them out. This also gives the staff an

opportunity to share information about your child's day, build a relationship with you regarding your child's development, and ensure your child's safe departure from the program.

Please note: If you would like to give this responsibility to another adult, you must notify the program in writing. We will not release your child to someone we do not know without prior notification and a photo ID.

### **Signing In/Out Exceptions**

There are certain instances in which School-Age Program staff can sign your child in or out:

1. During peak traffic times at La Cañada Elementary School sites: If you so choose, you may transfer the responsibility of signing in your child to a CEC teacher during the peak morning hours of 7:45 to 8:15 am and 8:45 am to 9:15 am, and the peak afternoon hours of 2:50 to 3:15 pm. To do so, you must either complete a form (available at your child's site) or submit a letter of authorization, which is signed and dated by you, authorizing CEC personnel to sign your child out on your behalf.
2. When care is transferred from School-Age Program staff to teachers (before-school care) or from teachers to School-Age Program staff (after-school care).
3. When children are brought to the Oak Grove or Caltech sites by a school bus or CEC van.

### **Late Pick Up**

We appreciate your help in picking up your child before the school closes at 6:00 pm. When a parent is late, one or more teachers in addition to the program director must remain with the child. If you are going to be late, please contact the site directly or if your child is at our Oak Grove site, call our administrative office, (818) 354-3418 or (818) 354-3419 if after 6:00 pm.

### **Reporting Absences**

Your child's safety is our highest priority. For this reason, it is vital that you call the Site Director or Lead Teacher if your child will be absent. If you are unable to reach someone or leave a voicemail at the site, please call the CEC main office at (818) 354-3418.

Sometimes a child is able to attend during the school's normal hours, but is unable to attend the School-Age Program. Please notify us in all instances when we should not expect to receive your child at the normally scheduled time, such as your child leaving school early, going to a friend's house, or participating in an extra-curricular activity. We also talk to children on an ongoing basis about the importance of coming directly to the CEC after leaving their classroom.

Reporting absences is especially important if your child rides the van from school to the Oak Grove or Caltech sites. Van drivers are not permitted to leave a school until all children are accounted for or until they receive authorization from the School-Age Program Director. Please notify us by 10:00 am if your child will not be riding the van.

### **Extra Hours**

If your child is enrolled on a part-time schedule, you may request extra hours (at \$15.00 per) on an occasional basis, subject to availability. To do this, please contact the Site Director. Fees for extra hours are billed on the following month's tuition statement if they are entered before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. Please note that extra hours used more than on an occasional basis may require a schedule change.

### **Visiting**

The program encourages parents to visit during the day as this makes children feel very special and facilitates communication between the program and home. Parents are also invited to join scheduled field trips and other outside activities. Parents are free to come and go from the program at their own discretion.

Parents who are visiting the La Cañada Elementary School sites will need to check in through the elementary school office before entering the campus, as this is school policy.

### **Birthdays**

We recognize and celebrate birthdays in a variety of ways. Please talk to your child's Site Director or call the CEC office for more information.

### **Toys from Home**

Children are welcome to bring comfort items to the program. Kindergartners especially often need these items, especially at the beginning of the year. Please be sure to write your child's name in them.

The CEC requests that children leave electronic toys and cell phones at home. We feel these objects emphasize solitary play, preventing children from fully developing skills in the areas of social/emotional development, peer relations, cognitive and critical thinking, and fine/gross motor skills. If your child brings electronic games or cell phones to the program, we will ask them to leave these objects in their cubbies or the teacher cabinet until they go home.

Likewise, the CEC asks parents' help in ensuring children do not bring violent-themed toys to the program. We encourage children to explore power in a variety of areas, including dramatic play, art, writing and literature, and rough and tumble play.

Please feel free to talk with your child's Site Director, Lead Teacher, or a School-Age Program Director if you have further questions about the toys your child may bring or our methods for effective and peaceful problem solving.

## **Technology Use**

The CEC recognizes that children may need access to devices to complete their homework. All sites are equipped with WIFI to help facilitate homework, both indoors and out. Each site has unique technology needs and strategies in place, but at the LCSUD sites, children can borrow a CEC Chromebook if they need one. We ask that parents and children fill out a Technology Use Agreement so that guidelines are clear. We work closely with children and families to support their academic needs while at the same time, limiting screen time and providing plenty of opportunity for social and outdoor experiences. Occasional educational game time is allowed, but for the most part, screen time is very limited and for school-work purposes only.

## **Communicating with Families**

Open communication is the foundation of a harmonious childcare community. Please communicate your needs and concerns as they arise. You can speak to your child's teachers, Site Director or any of the directors listed on the contact page of this handbook. They are responsible for the operation of the program and have the training and experience to answer your questions, discuss your child's development, and work with you to resolve any problems you encounter.

Communication with staff takes place spontaneously during drop-offs and pick-ups or during phone conversations and parent conferences. A newsletter describing both specific site activities and CEC-wide initiatives is emailed monthly, with a current calendar available on our website. You will find information specific to your child's room at your child's site.

If you have a specific concern, it is often best to schedule a conference with your Site Director. You may request a Program Director to be present or request a conference alone with a Program Director. We are here to meet your needs. Please don't hesitate to make use of our services.

## **Celebrating Our Community**

A broad circle of people including children, parents, grandparents, relatives, and friends create the special community that is the CEC. Each year, we hold a series of events to celebrate the spirit of community. These are opportunities to meet other like-minded people, to share ideas, and to have fun. We invite you to participate in as many of them as possible.

## **Parent Services**

A number of services are available to help parents make the transition to the CEC and to provide guidance in child rearing issues:

- Referrals to pediatricians, family therapists and special needs counselors
- Lending library of books and articles



- Individual parent meetings
- The Parent Resources section of our website

If there is something else we can help you with, please let us know.

## **Health and Nutrition**

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### **When your child should stay home**

By State of California mandate, we must exclude any child from the program who displays symptoms of illness. Symptoms that are cause for exclusion include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, contagious rashes and ill or unusual behavior. We ask parents to exercise good judgment in keeping children at home when they are ill, and to seek medical attention as appropriate. Children may return to the program once they have been symptom free without the aid of medication for at least 24 hours and exhibit the strength and well-being to thrive in a group environment. Children who are absent from school for illness may not attend the CEC. For more information, please refer to the CEC's Guidelines for Exclusion and Return of Sick Children, which is provided with enrollment materials and is also available on our website. ***Please see our COVID-19 handbook addendum on our website for specific protocol and guidelines.***

### **Administering Medicine**

We prefer that parents administer medication to their children. However, if a child requires medicine to be administered while at the CEC, we will do so following specific guidelines: Parents must complete a Medications Consent Form. Prescriptions must be in their original packaging, and labeled with your child's name, age, and dosing instructions. Over-the-counter medications can be given according to the dose, schedule, and instructions on the package. Otherwise, we need a doctor's note with dosing instructions. Please note that medications are kept in a locked box in the room and may not be placed in cubbies or lunch boxes.

Under certain conditions, we can accommodate children with anaphylaxis (severe, potentially life-threatening allergies), asthma (chronic lung disease that impairs breathing), seizure disorders (febrile seizures), and sleep/breathing disorders (sleep apnea). Community Care Licensing requires an "Incidental Medical Service (IMS)" plan to be agreed upon and completed by parent, physician, and the appropriate Program Director. Please contact a Program Director for additional information and to request an IMS plan.

The Center reserves the right to decline or terminate enrollment of a child with any of the above conditions if we believe the condition/treatment needs are beyond the scope of our staff's training or ability to perform in the context of a group setting. In addition, enrollment may be suspended or terminated if communication with the parent does not support full understanding of treatment needs, or if parents fail to provide medication/supplies, instructions, and any required documentation.

For forms relating to the administration of medication, including inhalers, please consult our website.

## **Head lice**

The CEC maintains a nit-free policy to avoid potential spread of head lice. If a child is found to have head lice, we will ask that a parent pick up the child immediately. Upon return, we check children to make sure they are free of lice and nits. The CEC has a number of resources available to help with parents' concerns regarding head lice. Please make sure to notify us if your child has contracted head lice.

## **Nourishing Young Minds and Bodies**

A healthy diet supports optimal mental, emotional, and physical functioning. We encourage parents to prepare healthy meals containing as little sugar, additives, caffeine or excessive salt as possible. Guidelines for food safety and preparation are provided with enrollment materials.

## **Snacks**

Each site posts a weekly snack menu. Examples of typical snack menu items include: fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain and low fat breads and crackers, yogurt, pasta, eggs, cheeses, etc. Teachers exercise great creativity to prepare and present these foods in ways that are both attractive and inviting. Children often help teachers prepare snacks. At this time, children need to bring a morning snack from home to have mid-morning. CEC snack is served mid-afternoon.

## **Lunches**

The choices that you and your child(ren) make regarding lunch time food may be based on a combination of what you feel is healthy and what your child will eat. While in our care, your child always has the opportunity to choose leftover lunch foods from their container to snack on, in addition to the daily snacks we serve. **Please do not send gum, candy or sodas.** If you are in need of suggestions for your child's lunch, please see a teacher.

Please note: For kindergartners utilizing the La Canada Unified school cafeterias, our teachers are available to assist children in making choices of lunch foods. If your child has food restrictions, please inform the Site Director.

## **No Peanuts or Peanut Butter**

In order to try to protect the needs of children with a life-threatening allergy to peanuts, the CEC prohibits the presence of peanuts and peanut butter at the Oak Grove site. The CEC does not knowingly purchase or serve any food or snacks with peanuts or peanut butter at this location. (Regretfully, we cannot absolutely guarantee a completely peanut-free environment.) We request the cooperation of all parents in following this policy. Specifically, we ask that parents not send peanuts or peanut butter in their child's breakfast or lunch. Sunflower butter is an acceptable alternative.

Please notify a director if your child has any food allergy, including an allergy to peanuts.

### **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness**

The CEC is well prepared for emergencies. Staff members receive extensive instruction on what to do in various emergency situations. Fire and earthquake response drills are conducted on a regular basis to test and refine emergency procedures.

During monthly fire drills, staff members and children evacuate to predetermined areas when the fire drill bell sounds. After each drill, we review its success and consider any procedures needing improvement.

We also have extensive emergency plans in case of moderate and major earthquakes. We conduct "duck and cover" drills monthly. Directors circulate through the yards and rooms, alerting staff. For younger children, we use the expression "Rabbits in the hole," when we want children to duck and cover indoors or outdoors. We say "Rabbits all together" when we want the children together in the center of the yard or the room. Once children come together, staff members wait for instruction to evacuate by designated routes to the baseball field behind the CEC. Each staff member is assigned to a response team with specific duties. Each group has its own supply of food, water and activities.

Periodically, we conduct extended earthquake drills during which children spend most of the morning playing on the baseball field adjacent to the CEC yards. We also participate in school-wide drills. In addition to drills, we have tested our procedures during real earthquakes. We have been pleased with the comprehensiveness of our plans and continue to review and update them as necessary. The CEC also takes steps to assure safety in the indoor spaces, such as anchoring heavy objects like refrigerators and fans.

Additionally, some of the School-Age sites participate in on-campus emergency contact systems, such as Catapult at LCUSD. Working closely with school personnel, we are included in school drills and emergency notifications.

**In the event of a moderate to large earthquake, we delay the acceptance of children for at least one hour. During this time, directors gather information and assess when or if to receive children. If deemed necessary, directors may elect to close the program for the remainder of the day, or longer should the facility sustain damage.** If you are en route to the CEC or still at home when an earthquake occurs, please keep this in mind. If an earthquake occurs during program hours, we encourage parents who can get to the CEC to do so as quickly as possible to pick up their child. Staff members will stay with children as long as necessary, but will be eager to look after their own families and homes. The CEC encourages parents to maintain their own supplies of clothing, food and water in case of emergency. The CEC has established relationships with the high school adjacent to us, and benefits from

community disaster response resources converging there. This includes the Red Cross, as well as the fire and police departments.

### **Individual Illness and Emergencies**

Directors, lead teachers, and other interested staff members are trained in CPR and first aid and are required to keep their certification current. When a child falls ill or is injured, parents are notified as soon as it possible to do so. In the event of severe illness or injury, the CEC will first contact emergency services, then contact a parent. In addition, all sites have access to an AED (automated electronic defibrillator) that can be used on an adult or child in the event of a cardiac emergency.

## **Financial status**

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The CEC is a private, nonprofit educational organization operating under 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. We receive some financial and in-kind support from Caltech and JPL (for the Infant-Toddler and Preschool programs only) but are legally separate from them and responsible for our own financial obligations. More than 90% of our revenue comes from tuition, with the remaining 10% coming from consulting services, fundraising, and other income. Each Spring, the Board of Trustees determines the budget, with parents notified of the CEC's anticipated income, expenses, and tuition rates for the upcoming year. This information is also discussed each September at the Annual Members meeting. All parents are invited and encouraged to attend.

### **Fundraising**

As a private, non-profit school, our main source of funding aside from tuition is fundraising. We have several different fundraising events throughout the year, offering families a variety of ways to help support the school. Fundraising is crucial to the financial health of our organization, and we cannot sustain its high quality of care through tuition alone. A strong fundraising program ensures we can provide all elements of our unique, high-quality care and education programs. All families are required to participate in fundraising throughout the year.

We have several different fundraising events throughout the year, offering families a variety of ways to help support the CEC. Proceeds from our annual fundraising generate critical funds needed for staffing to ensure excellent teacher/child ratios, progressive curriculum offerings for all children, ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, classroom materials, and much more.

***Here are some ways you can support the CEC:***

#### **CEC - Annual Fund**

The Annual Fund is our most significant fundraising initiative of the year. A well-supported Annual Fund fuels every aspect of CEC's operations to provide the highest quality care and education for your child.

#### **Annual Event & Online Auction benefit**

All parents are invited to join the Annual Event or Online Auction Committees. Parents receive parent participation hours for their involvement on the Committees.

#### **Giving through the United Way**

If you participate in your employer's United Way campaign, you can choose to designate the CEC for your contribution by writing "Child Educational Center" on your donation form.

When Caltech employees donate through the United Way, Caltech generously matches the contribution. United Way campaigns at JPL and Caltech are typically held in the late fall.

### **Matching Gift Program**

Employee matching gift programs are corporate giving programs in which the company matches donations made by employees to eligible nonprofit organizations. It's an easy way to double your contribution to us!

### **Planned Giving**

If you would like to extend your support of the CEC to make a lasting impact, there are several ways to donate. If you would like to learn more, please contact the advancement department.

*\*Donations are deductible to the full extent provided by IRS guidelines. The Child Educational Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (tax ID #95-3403258).*

If you have any questions or would like to get involved, please contact Lauren LeBer, Director of Advancement at [lauren@ceconline.org](mailto:lauren@ceconline.org)

## **Governance and leadership**

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The CEC is a nonprofit organization governed by its members. Legal membership in the organization is automatically conferred to CEC staff, parents, and members of the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees is comprised of approximately 20 members, representing a broad community of Directors, teachers, parents, and other individuals sharing the philosophy and goals of the CEC. The Board is legally responsible for the governance of the organization and helps to carry out the organization's vision and mission. Members are unpaid and serve a three-year term. Each year, the Governance Committee interviews candidates to fill any vacant positions and then makes their recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Our Annual Members' meeting takes place each September, during which CEC members vote to confirm new board members and to approve any amendments to the organization's bylaws. As members of the organization, parents have a role of oversight to ensure that the Board of Trustees upholds the vision, mission, and values of the CEC. Indeed, the decisions at the Annual Members' meeting are only legally binding if a minimum quorum of 20% of overall membership is represented. For this reason, families are requested to either attend the meeting or submit their votes by proxy.)

Parents are encouraged to consider board service or to serve on one of the Board committees. Over the years, the CEC has benefited greatly from the knowledge and experience of its board. Board members have included professionals in the areas of human resources, law, fundraising, nonprofits, communications, and financial planning. Their dedication has greatly enhanced business and financial operations of the CEC, strengthening its strategic planning and advising on administrative structures that represent nonprofit best practices. Board members work closely with CEC Directors to build, refine, and strengthen the organization.



## **CEC Leadership**

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- **Tashon McKeithan, Ed.D** is the Executive Director. Tashon provides organizational leadership and strategic planning, as well as broad oversight of all CEC's programs and services.
- **Lisa Cain-Chang** is the Director of Children's Programs, as well as the Infant-Toddler Program. Lisa provides leadership in program philosophy, practices, curriculum, and professional development. She oversees day-to-day operations of the children's programs, as well as coordinates the maintenance and development of the Center's facilities.

Our Program Directors supervise the teaching staff and provide leadership in the ongoing design, expansion, and implementation of program philosophy:

- **Ellen Veselack** is the Director of the Preschool Program in La Canada.
- **Erinn Levin** is the Director of the Preschool Program in Pasadena (on Caltech campus) location.
- **Allegra Inganni** is the Director of the School-Age Program.
  
- **Helen Ruppel** is the Director of Admissions and Administration. She oversees enrollment for the Infant-Toddler and Preschool Programs as well as the CEC's administrative services.
- **Lauren Le Ber** is the Director of Advancement. She directs the CEC's fundraising and communication efforts.
- **Seta Matossian** is the Controller. She oversees all financial aspects of the CEC, including the organization's annual budget and payroll, and is responsible for the sound management of the financial activities of the CEC in accordance with the established program philosophy.
- **Joanne Meraz** is the Director of Human Resources.

## **Contact information**

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Our administrative offices are located at our Oak Grove site, 140 Foothill Blvd, La Canada 91011.

### **YOU CAN REACH US:**

by phone (818) 354-3418

by FAX (818) 393-4243

by e-mail at [cec@ceconline.org](mailto:cec@ceconline.org)

### **Or by email:**

Tashon McKeithan, Executive Director ([tashon.mckeithan@ceconline.org](mailto:tashon.mckeithan@ceconline.org))

Lisa Cain-Chang, Children's Program Director ([lisa.cain@ceconline.org](mailto:lisa.cain@ceconline.org))

Ellen Veselack, Director of Preschool Program, La Canada ([ellen@ceconline.org](mailto:ellen@ceconline.org))

Erinn Levin, Director of Preschool Program, Pasadena ([erinn.levin@ceconline.org](mailto:erinn.levin@ceconline.org))

Allegra Inganni, Director of School Age Program ([allegra@ceconline.org](mailto:allegra@ceconline.org))

Lauren Le Ber, Director of Advancement ([lauren@ceconline.org](mailto:lauren@ceconline.org))

Helen Ruppel, Director of Admissions and Administration ([helen@ceconline.org](mailto:helen@ceconline.org))

Joanne Meraz, Director of Human Resources ([joanne@ceconline.org](mailto:joanne@ceconline.org))

### **OUR SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM IS LOCATED AT SIX SITES:**

Oak Grove site (near JPL): 140 Foothill Boulevard, La Canada (818) 354-3418

Westridge School: 324 Madeline Dr., Pasadena (626) 485-0193

St. Bede School: 4525 Crown Ave., La Canada (818) 949-4378

### **La Canada Elementary Schools:**

Paradise Canyon: 471 Knight Way (818) 952-3751

La Canada: 4540 Encinas Drive (818) 790-5473

Palm Crest: 5025 Palm Drive (818) 790-2347

Separate handbooks detailing the Infant, Toddler and Preschool Programs are available online at [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org). More information about the Child Educational Center can be found on our website at [ceconline.org](http://ceconline.org).

## **Notice of nondiscriminatory policy**

The Child Educational Center (CEC) admits children of any race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to children in the program. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, tuition assistance programs, and other CEC-administered programs.