Welcome to

Picket Fence

Early Care & Education Center



Family Handbook

A Place to Grow; A Place to Learn

Elmwood Park 1
36 Conti Parkway
Elmwood Park, IL 60707
708-452-4544
708-453-7994 fax
Picketfence36@sbcglobal.net

Elmwood Park 2
7801 W. Grand Ave
Elmwood Park, IL 60707
708-452-7666
708-593-4544 fax
Admin@picketfencelearningcenter.com

River Grove
2624 N. Oak Street
River Grove, IL 60171
708-401-4544
708-593-4544 fax
Picketfencerg@gmail.com

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with Criticism, he learns to Condemn

If a child lives with Hostility, he learns to Fight

If a child lives with Ridicule, he learns to be Shy

If a child lives with Shame, he learns to feel Guilty

If a child lives with Tolerance, he learns to be Patient

If a child lives with Praise, he learns to Appreciate

If a child lives with Fairness, he learns Justice

If a child lives with Security, he learns to have Faith

If a child lives with Approval, he learns to like Himself

If a child lives with ACCEPTANCE AND FRIENDSHIP, he learns to find love in the world!!

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History of Picket Fence

Picket Fence Daycare and Learning Center is located at 36 Conti Parkway in Elmwood Park, founded in October 1993. We are licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services and are under the rules and regulations of the Cook County Health Department and Illinois Fire Marshall.

Picket Fence opened in October 1993 with one classroom; there were two on staff, one Director/Teacher and one Assistant Teacher. Seven children were enrolled, and we were serving ages two through six. By the time summer of 1994 came, there were thirty-five children enrolled and three classrooms were open. Shortly after that, all four classrooms were open with ten staff members and a long waiting list.

The center relocated in August of 2004 from 22 Conti parkway to 36 Conti Parkway. In March of 2005, we were recognized for our quality care and became accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children
(NAEYC).

As our waiting list continued to grow at the Elmwood Park location, we decided that it would be best to expand our business to meet the needs of the community. An opportunity was presented to us by the school formerly known as Bethlehem Lutheran School. Although we are not a faith-based program, we decided that the location and building would be the best place for us to expand. On July 20th, 2012, we had our Open House and ribbon cutting ceremony. Our doors were open for business on July 30th, 2012, starting with one classroom and three staff members, two Directors/Teachers and a teacher assistant.

In October of 2024, Picket Fence expanded to its 3rd location! 7801 Grand Ave, formally known as A-Karrasel. Enrollment starts as early as 6 weeks old here and is our only location currently accepting children under the age of two! We acquired the program we have seven staff and 19 children enrolled. After a few short months we were at full capacity of 63 children with 16 staff.

Philosophy

As parents and teachers, we are interested in good beginnings for young children. The right start in early years is an invaluable aid to the continuous unfolding of a child's potential. Our curriculum is activity based, and we believe children learn through play. We would like to offer your child a stimulating, secure and warm home away from home. Children are special and we believe in praising them for their accomplishments. Each child will be able to progress at his/her own pace, so that he/she can experiment, discover and learn. We will try to develop their independence and confidence. We provide a learning environment with many experiences that children will investigate, represent and share.

Our loving and supportive staff respects each child's individual capabilities and nurtures their self-esteem and creativity. Through encouraging self-expression, play and initiating choices of materials and equipment, we promote each child's emotional, social, cognitive, language and physical development.

Our staff also sees family as partners in each child's development and encourages ongoing communication and input.



Our Center's Mission

Our mission is dedicated to the premise that learning is best facilitated in an environment which is challenging, hands-on, and of course FUN!

We offer a varied curriculum to develop the child as a confident and well-rounded person. Play is also an important tool in the practice skills; it furthers cognitive development as thinking abilities are stretched; it involves language, encouraging new uses; it involves physical activities; it helps children work through emotions; its inventive nature makes it creative; it is often a socializing event; beyond all that, however, it provides a way for children to assimilate and integrate their life experiences. Our program gives the child ample opportunities in play. Children in our program will also have experiences in arts and crafts, manipulative blocks, language arts, sensory experiences through our sensory table, storytelling, dramatic play, science, music, cooking, nature, reading readiness, numbers, and exercise and group games.

Picket Fence fosters creativity within children, so does it foster and encourage staff to be creative as well. Staff is the most important aspect for a good program, and we encourage parents and families to be sure to thank the members of our team frequently. Early Childhood educators do not get the recognition they deserve. It is the early years of a child's development that is the most important.

Our Commitment to Quality

Picket Fence is the only child care provider in Elmwood Park to have earned accreditation+ from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our Elmwood Park 1 and River Grove locations are NAEYC-accredited, and our Elmwood Park 2 location is currently working toward accreditation. We also hold the ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality. These recognitions reflect our commitment to high standards in early childhood education and the ongoing work of our teachers and leadership to strengthen our programs.

NAEYC Accreditation, awarded by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, has historically been earned by only a small percentage of early childhood programs nationwide. Earning accreditation involves evaluating our program, documenting how we meet research-based standards, and undergoing external review. These standards cover teaching, curriculum, relationships, health and safety, staff qualifications, and family partnerships. Maintaining accreditation requires continued compliance, ongoing quality improvement, periodic renewal, and accountability through site visits and other quality assurance reviews.

ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality is Illinois' highest Circle of Quality designation. Programs earn Gold through approved assessments or recognized accreditation, supported by documentation of classroom quality, staff qualifications, training, and program administration. To maintain Gold, programs submit annual reports, maintain required qualifications and licensing standing, and demonstrate progress on continuous quality improvement plans.

For our families, these achievements represent an ongoing commitment from our teachers and leadership to provide nurturing care and meaningful learning experiences.

General Policies | Enrollment Procedures

After you have toured the center and have decided to enroll your child, please read this handbook in its entirety. Please return the application forms and the following PRIOR to the starting day:

A. Registration fee of $65.00.

B. One week's tuition is required as a deposit to be used to pay for your child's last week of attendance. We will also have the option to apply the deposit toward delinquent tuition fees.

C. First week's tuition.

D. Purchase of "kidnapper" (sleeping bag).

E. A complete change of clothes to be kept in cubby.

F. Application forms completed including immunizations/physical, copy of child's birth certificate and a signed handbook receipt.

G. Both A & B are non-refundable.

Birth certificate and proof of identity

Illinois child care licensing standards require us to obtain proof of identity and age for all children enrolling for the first time. A certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age must be provided within 30 days of enrollment. If a certified birth certificate is unavailable, a passport, visa, or other government-issued document may be provided along with an affidavit or notarized letter explaining why the certified copy cannot be obtained. We will make a copy of the certified birth certificate and return the original by the end of the next business day. If proof of identity and age is not provided within 30 days, licensing standards require us to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement and provide written notice to the parent or guardian. An additional 10 days will then be provided to comply.

Admission

Elmwood Park 2 serves children ages 6 weeks through 12 years. Elmwood Park 1 and River Grove serve children ages 2 through 12 years. Admission requires completed application and medical forms and payment of the appropriate fees.

We are committed to equal opportunity for all people in our program regardless of race, color, gender, creed, religion age, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, and arrest or conviction record.

Dismissal

We reserve the right to dismiss a child from this center for the reason of non-cooperation of parents with our policies, delinquency in payment of tuition or if the child, who, after reasonable trial, could not benefit from our program.

Two weeks' written notice is required for parents who choose to withdraw their child from our program. If two weeks' notice is not given, you will forfeit your deposit. DEPOSITS ARE NOT REFUNDABLE.

We are not responsible for items left at the center after 30 days.

Separation

Children and families entering the center should have a chance to visit the center before starting to see what it is like. Separation can be made easier if the parents are honest with their child and let them know they are leaving (no sneaking out please) and that they will be back at a specific time (for example, "I'll be back right after snack or story time.) Building a trustful relationship is very important for young children.

Relationships

Building quality relationships among the parents, families, teachers and children is the foundation for the success of our program and healthy growth and development of the children. Picket Fence strives to work in partnership with families to provide a positive and supportive learning environment for all who enter here. We will support you in making the primary decisions about services your child needs and encourage you in advocating those needs.

We hope you will become actively involved in our program by contributing time, materials, suggestions, or feedback to help evaluate our program. We encourage your interest in participating in and supporting community improvement and advocacy projects.

We value your time, input and opinions. Twice a year, we will ask for your feedback about our program through confidential surveys.

Hours of Operation

Elmwood Park 1 and River Grove	6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Elmwood Park 2	6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The school year is from the middle of August to the end of May.
We follow the same schedule as District #401.
The summer session is held from the end of May to the middle of August.

Daily Attendance Limit

Children may attend Picket Fence for a maximum of 10 hours in any 24-hour period. Parents and guardians must arrange drop-off and pickup times to remain within this limit and the location's operating hours. If your family needs more than 10 hours of care, please contact the director. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved in advance.

Arrivals and Departures/Late pick up

Parents may bring their children any time after 6:30 a.m. Please be sure to sign in your child through the Brightwheel app. It is best to have your child arrive by 9:00 a.m.; this is when our program begins. To offer a program that is most beneficial to all students, we would like children to arrive by 10:00 a.m. However, please remember 9:00 am is MOST beneficial. If you are going to arrive at school after 10:00 a.m., please notify the office before 10:00 a.m.

We close promptly at 6:00 pm according to the school's wall clock in the office. Promptness in picking up your child by 6:00 pm is necessary. A charge of $2.00 per minute after 6:00 pm will be charged, payable when your child is picked up. If you are late, please phone the center and talk to the person in charge. Repeated tardiness will result in the removal from the center. Tardiness at 6:00 pm cannot be tolerated. Tardiness worries young children. In times of unusual weather, some delays will be tolerated.

Smoking

Picket Fence is a smoke free environment. No smoking is permitted in the presence of children.

Security

For your child's security, when dropping him/her off, please check them in. When picking up your child, please check them out. If you are not able to pick up your child, please call to tell us who will be coming. They need to be an authorized person that is listed on the authorization form, including the driver's license number on the application form. All staff have been instructed to card anyone that they do not recognize.

You may enter the building by ringing the doorbell at the front door and a staff member will come and open the door.

Absences

The center must be informed each time a child is absent. THERE ARE NO TUITION DEDUCTIONS MADE FOR TIME MISSED DUE TO ILLNESS. When choosing days for part time scheduling, no changes may be made to make up for illness, vacations, or any other reason. Discuss scheduling with the Director before signing up for your child.

Accidents and life safety

The Elmwood Park & River Grove Fire Department and Gottlieb Hospital have been notified about the existence of the center. If your child needs emergency treatment, the Elmwood Park/River Grove ambulance and Loyola Hospital will be used (Loyola-701 W. North Avenue in Melrose Park). Parents will be notified in such an instance. If the parents are not available, the people on your application form for emergencies will be notified. Minor injuries will be treated with first aid by the staff.

All fire regulations required by the State are abided by. An evacuation plan in case of fire has been placed in every room, and tornado/severe weather instructions have been placed in every classroom. Fire drills and storm drills are held on a timely basis to meet current codes.

Building issues requiring evacuation- If an evacuation is necessary, children at Elmwood Park 1 and Elmwood Park 2 will be taken to the Elmwood Park Parks and Recreation Building at 2 Conti Parkway. Children at the River Grove location will be taken to the VFW Hall at 8664 Grand Avenue, River Grove.

Reunification of families- Children will be released only to individuals the parents/guardians have designated as approved to take the child from the center; Photo identification will be required before rereleasing a child to them. We will keep parents/guardians informed when children are evacuated from the child care center through Brightwheel. Whether in the large group area, or in the child’s classroom or at an off-site location, staff will continue to care for all the children still in their care. Staff will make sure that the child’s needs are being met and they are being entertained. This can be very traumatic for the children and they will need more to do than sit and wait for their parents.

For severe weather (tornados): Children and staff will gather in the basement or designated interior rooms without windows, depending on the location, and take protective positions as practiced during drills until an all-clear is given.

Threats – 911 will be called immediately for any immediate threats. Threats in the area will prompt a hard lock down.

Dress code/clothing

Let your child be comfortable and feel free to get dirty. Dress your child in clothes that are easy to take on and off for bathroom purposes. Most children want to be independent at school, even though at home they may demand help.

Please send at least one complete change of clothing and be sure to label them with their name clearly marked. These will be kept in their individual lockers. If there is not a change of clothes available, a parent will be contacted to pick up your child or to bring a change of clothes. Be sure children are dressed for all types of weather. Children will spend time outside every day including during the winter months. Children will be kept in on rainy days, and extremely cold or hot days.

Toys/Treasures from home

Toys are NOT allowed to be brought to school. They can very easily get lost or misplaced. Teachers cannot take time away from the other children to look for a lost item.

Naps

Children at Elmwood Park 1 and River Grove nap from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Children at Elmwood Park 2 nap from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. During this time, children are encouraged to sleep or rest while soft music plays. Staff may gently rub children's backs or heads to help them relax. Children are not forced to sleep; however, they are expected to rest quietly without disrupting children who are napping.

Mealtime/Snacks

Children eat lunch family style in their own classrooms. Teachers will join the children for lunch. Second helpings of food will be provided. Children will be encouraged to clean their places after meals. Children with food allergies will be treated individually. Written consent must be made for a special diet. Substitute foods, such as soy nut butter, shall be available if this should prove necessary. After lunch, there will be a short time before nap to relax with a story. A mid-afternoon snack will be provided daily for the children.

Handwashing

To reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases, all children and adults are required to properly wash their hands upon entering the building. Proper hand-washing procedure is as follows: Using liquid soap and running water, rub your hands vigorously for at least twenty seconds (length of the ABC song), including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails; rinse well; dry hands with a paper towel and use the paper towel to turn off the water. Hand sanitizer may not be used in place of handwashing.

Toileting

For children in diapers, please bring in a supply of disposable diapers to be stored in the bathroom. When the supply gets low, you will be notified. If your child is unable to wear disposable diapers, please provide a document from your health provider stating the medical reason. If cloth diapers are necessary, a waterproof cover such as a diaper wrap or a pull-on pant is required. Clothing soiled by urine or feces will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home (rinsing is not allowed by staff).

Birthday treats/holidays

A child’s birthday is important to their self-image. Being a year older is a milestone in a young child’s world. We have a party with his/her peers during snack. We will make or give the birthday boy/girl a crown and will sing the birthday song. The crown and song are a center tradition. Treats are to be store bought and purchased within 24 hours of usage (Illinois Child Care Act 1969.) Some suggestions for birthday treats include ice cream, frozen yogurt, or 100% fruit popsicles. Please remember that birthday treats must be peanut-free and no home baked goods, such as cupcakes, cookies, and cake, are not allowed. Because of religious tradition or cultural backgrounds, families celebrate holidays in their own way. We strive to represent all families (cultures, traditions and beliefs) throughout our program. We encourage children and parents to talk about family traditions of holiday celebrations.

Diversity

We welcome children and families without regard to family structure, socioeconomic status, race, religion, cultural backgrounds, gender, ability or language. The multi-cultural backgrounds of our families have added to our well-rounded educational programs. Individual differences among our children are recognized, encouraged and respected.

Inclusion

We are committed to equal opportunity for all people in our program regardless of the child’s developmental situation.

Changes in home situation/parent involvement

A major thesis for the Picket Fence Learning Center's philosophy is that the more we cooperate and communicate with each other, the greater will be the benefits that your child will derive from the center. Frequently, a child's behavior will change, and the teachers, unaware of what is happening at home, will be mystified as to the cause. The teacher will be hampered in her/his methods of dealing with this unusual behavior, if he/she has no idea as to the cause. We do not want to pry into your personal life; that is NOT our intention. But often, your child's emotional well-being is at stake. For this reason, we urge you to speak to us about any change or unusual event in your family life. We should always be told if you are going away on a trip and leaving your child with grandparents or a sitter. The illness of a parent or a close relative is often important to a child, particularly when one or both parents are away visiting the sick person in the hospital. We should always be notified immediately of a death in the family, since the very first reactions of a child to such an event are often crucial. The feelings of a very young child during such a trying period are often overlooked. "Talking it out" can prevent the development of unhealthy reactions. So please, do not hesitate to communicate with us. At important times in the life of your family, speak with your child's teacher or the Director. Remember that we are sharing (if only for a year or two) in the development of your child. The early years are most important!

Parent involvement regarding home observations should also be shared regularly as this will assist us in completing our formal assessments. Two-way communication is of utmost importance. Please share your child's skills, interests, and behavior at home. We are glad to offer flexible times for conferences to meet your needs.

Communication

We encourage families to keep the lines of communication open. We hold parent-teacher conferences once a year and more often if needed. Other ways to communicate are through phone calls, personal notes, bulletin boards, dry erase boards, daily news flashes and monthly newsletters. The newsletters will help keep you informed about activities at the center.

Guidance

Simple, understandable rules are used with children. The purpose of guidance is to help children develop self-control and to learn to assume responsibility for his or her own actions. Positive statements are used to redirect any negative behavior. Removal from a group may be an occasional means of helping a child regain control. He/She will not be subject to a "time out"; he/she will be redirected to a different area. We feel that "time out" shames children and does not assist in promoting positive self-esteem.

In accordance with state law, no child will be subjected under any circumstances to corporal punishment in any manner upon the body, or to verbal abuse.

Grievance Procedure

At times, differences in communication styles, guidance methods or child rearing philosophies may occur. Our goal is to understand your wishes and find a way to work together to provide a comfortable learning atmosphere and reach the best possible outcomes for your child. If your position on a particular issue differs with what you see or hear in the classroom, it is recommended that you discuss your concerns directly with your child's teacher. You can then work together with the teachers and Director to reach a solution. If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the center Executive Director, Toni Chakchay at 708-609-0339. If you are not satisfied with this outcome, the governing board, Joe Chakchay can be reached at 708-609-0343 or DCFS.

You are also able to reach the teacher or administration through our Brightwheel app, as well as email us at:

Elmwood Park 1	Picketfence36@sbcglobal.net
Elmwood Park 2	Admin@PicketFenceLearningCenter.com
River Grove	PicketfenceRG@gmail.com

Please also feel free to set up a phone conference or an in-person conference.

If there is a language barrier between teacher and parent, the program will make sure parents' concerns are addressed.

Curriculum

Our program focuses on the development of the whole child (physical, social/emotional, cognitive and language) as well as each child's culture and individual learning styles. Into our curriculum we integrate key areas of content including literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, technology, creative expression, health and safety, and the arts. We value play and implement the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. These curriculum models are research and theory based. They encourage providing "hand-on" and open-ended learning activities designed to meet the individual interests, developmental needs and emerging skills of children. On a daily basis, the teachers are expected to seek out children's ideas and discern how they understand things by observing, talking with, and listening to them. The Illinois Early Learning Standards are also used as a guide for developing and meeting curricular goals that are developmentally appropriate and meaningful.

Child Screening and Assessment

It is important that we ensure each child has typical development during these important years. Screening and assessments are a way for us to accomplish this goal. These provide teachers with information that helps evaluate a child's development and helps us better understand his/her skills, knowledge, and behaviors. All Picket Fence teaching staff are trained in these screening and assessment processes. Teachers begin assessing children on their first day of enrollment. A child's first screening will occur within two months after enrollment and an annual screening will be done within two months of the academic school year. Children who are two years of age will be screened using the Ages and Stages screening tool and children three years and up will be screened using the ESI-3 screening tool. Families will also receive a formal assessment report in November, February and May of every year. All information will be kept confidential.

Screening refers to the first step in a two-step process of identification of disabilities such as vision or hearing impairments, physical disabilities, speech and language impairments, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability and specific learning disabilities and delays. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire to record your observations from home. The second step is further evaluation if required.

Children with disabilities or other special learning needs will be evaluated by District #401/District #85.5 or your home school. A case study will be completed within sixty days and we will attend a meeting to discuss their findings. An individualized education plan will be created with the team at the district. Additional support given if required by Picket Fence.

Formal assessments are completed three times per year (November, February and May) using Teaching Strategies GOLD. This is an online, research-based assessment system that is designed to track development across 38 core objectives. Teachers can document daily observations (notes, photos, videos) to inform instruction and align with the early learning standards. This system includes the following objectives, social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and mathematics skills.

Open House

We encourage families to attend our Meet-N-Greet that is held in August or September of every year. This gives you the opportunity to meet your child's teachers, peers and their parents. It also gives you the opportunity to see what your child's day is like while at Picket Fence.

Parent Education

As part of the development and education of young children, we offer parent education resources here at Picket Fence. We can also arrange for consultants to come to the center for special presentations. We see family as partners in each child's development and encourage ongoing communication and input as well as support and nurture each family's child rearing practices.

Health Policies

Control of communicable illness among the children is a prime concern. Policies and guidelines related to outbreaks of communicable illness at Picket Fence have been developed with the help of the health department and the local pediatricians. In order to protect the entire group of children, as well as your own child, we ask that parents assist us by keeping sick children home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours:

1. A fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) orally or 99 degrees Fahrenheit (37.2 degrees Celsius) under the arm.

2. Signs of a newly developing cold or severe coughing.

3. Diarrhea, vomiting or an upset stomach.

4. Unusual or unexplained loss of appetite, fatigue, irritability or headache.

5. Any discharge of drainage from eyes, noses, ears or open sores.

6. Two or more watery stools, especially if your child acts or looks ill.

7. Vomiting two or more times within the past 24 hours.

8. Sore throat, especially with fever or swollen glands in neck.

9. Unexplained rash, especially with fever or itching.

If your child becomes ill at the center, we will notify you for IMMEDIATE PICK UP. Your child will be kept in the office on his/her cot awaiting your immediate pick up. If we cannot reach you, the emergency person authorized to pick up your child on the application form will be contacted to pick up your child. Your child may return to school 24 hours after a fever, diarrhea or vomiting has stopped or he/she has been on antibiotics for a 24-hour period. They need to be “fever free” WITHOUT medication (Tylenol, Motrin, etc.) to return to school.

Any child not well enough to participate in the school activities, INCLUDING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, should remain home until they recover. Should your child contact any contagious disease, such as chicken pox, mumps, measles, Rosella, scarlet fever, whooping cough, Strep throat, COVID, etc.… please report it to us immediately so we can notify other parents that their children may have been exposed.

Outdoor play

To protect the children against cold, heat, sun injuries, and insect-borne disease, please dress your children in layers for warmth in the cold weather. When in the heat, please dress your children in protective clothing and apply sun block or sunscreen that has UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher. If the staff needs to apply the sunscreen, please be sure to complete the consent form and return it to your child's teacher or administrator.

If the Cook County Department of Public Health recommends use of insect repellents due to a high risk of insect-borne disease, please use repellents containing DEET only insect repellent.

Medication

We prefer not to administer medication in our center, if your child needs antibiotics, ask your doctor to give you a prescription that is given twice a day. You can give it to them once in the morning before bringing them to the center, and once again in the evening after you pick up your child. If medication needs to be administered in our center, it must be in the original container, not past the expiration date and properly labeled (child's name, doctor's name, medication name, and dosage), and a consent form completed and signed. We will not administer any over the counter medication.

Change of name or address

It is the parent's responsibility to notify the center, in writing, of the following changes:

- Name and address.
- Home or work phone number.
- Emergency names or phone numbers.
- Authorized pick-up names or phone numbers.

Fundraising

We welcome your involvement in our fundraising events. The proceeds from these events go directly to benefit your children with new materials, equipment, teaching aids, etc. Your participation will greatly enhance the success of the functions. Ideas and suggestions are also appreciated.

Parent Committee/Advisory board

We encourage parent involvement in our program. Any parent is welcome to join our parent committee, which meets as often as necessary. At these meetings you will have the chance to make the decisions regarding our program, policies and plan events. To sign up for this committee please see the Director.

Community/Students

Picket Fence allows high school and college students the opportunity to complete their field hour requirements at our program. All student volunteers are required to have fingerprints and a physical on file. They will also be supervised by a Picket Fence representative at all times.

Visitation

At Picket Fence, we have an open-door policy. You are welcome to visit anytime. You can join your child for lunch or join in during activity time, share a story, or just say hi. Most children understand visits, but some might have a hard time at the beginning letting go of mom or dad in the middle of the day. Just until they understand that you are visiting and not here to pick them up. Be sure to make it clear to your child that you will be visiting. Another option would be to come close to pick up time and spend some time then.

Field Trips

We will be going on field trips throughout the year. An additional charge will be incurred to cover the transportation (bus) and any admission fee. Permission slips are to be completed before any child can attend. In most cases, the center is closed during the time we are away. If the permission slip and fees are not returned by the “due date” requested, your child will not be allowed to attend. Please pay close attention to those dates. Chaperones are invited to attend; admission fee will be charged. There is NO smoking allowed during our field trips. (Indoor or Outdoor). First aid kits and a cell phone will be taken with in case of an emergency. Alternate transportation arrangements are handled by the bus company in the event of a stalled vehicle. All buses will have properly working seatbelts.

Confidentiality

This confidentiality policy has been adopted to assure confidentiality and protection of individual rights to privacy for children, families, and employees of Picket Fence Learning Center. The individual dignity of children, families, and employees shall be respected and always protected in accordance with law.

Information about children, families, or employees must not be divulged to anyone other than persons who are authorized to receive such information. This policy extends to both internal and external disclosure.

Picket Fence Learning Center follows the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethics. Protecting the privacy, interests and special relationships between co-workers, children and families is essential to maintaining professional and quality care.

Confidentiality of Children's and Families' Information

A. All children's records must be locked in a secure file.

B. Access to children's records is limited to appropriate employees.

C. Children's records must not be removed from the center.

D. Children's records must never be left out on desks, tables, etc. where other people may have access to them.

E. Children's or family's private information must never be discussed among employees except on the 'need to know' basis. Employees must be particularly aware of their surroundings when discussing this information. Special caution must be taken to be sure other children, families, or employees do not overhear information which is private.

F. Discussion of children's or families' information with volunteers, other families, friends, or community members is prohibited.

G. Information and documents which are considered confidential are medical records, educational records, special needs records, family records, financial records and any other private information about the children or their families.

H. All requests for release of information will be coordinated by director.

I. Information will only be released with the express written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian.

Eco-Healthy Environment

We are currently working with Eco Healthy Child Care (EHCC) to offer an Eco Healthy environment. HCC is an award-winning and science-based program of the Children's Environmental Health Network. It is the only national environmental health endorsement program for early care and education providers. EHCC partners with child care professionals to reduce environmental hazards such as pesticides, lead and unsafe plastics found in and around child care facilities.

“No-Idling” Policy

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, eliminating personal vehicle idling would be equivalent to taking 5 million vehicles off the road. The unnecessary idling of vehicles, particularly those with diesel engines, contributes significantly to dangerous air pollutants, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and fine particulate matter. Vehicle exhaust contains many known carcinogens, asthmagens, endocrine disruptors and neurotoxins. These toxins affect everyone, especially children, pregnant women, the elderly or those with compromised health. As a result, we ask that you adhere to a “No-Idling” policy during drop off and pick up of your child(ren) by turning off your vehicle except if vehicles need to idle in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures. Please help support young children’s health and developing bodies by adhering to this policy to reduce exposure to potentially harmful exhaust.

Integrated Pest Management

All licensed childcare centers are required by Illinois law (93-0381) to use Integrated Pest Management to control pests. Centers must notify parents if pesticides are to be used inside the facility (bait pesticides do not require notification). One staff member is assigned as the center’s IPM coordinator and regularly maintains the center’s IPM plan. All staff members who observe a pest must report it to the IPM coordinator. The coordinator will complete the IPM Plan and communicate actions to be taken with the Director and staff.

Picket Fence follows the Safer Pest Control Project guidelines supported by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Financial Policy

Tuition is due each Friday in advance of next week's attendance. When the center is closed for a holiday, REGULAR TUITION is still charged. If your child is absent for a whole week (5 days WITHIN that one week), half of the regular tuition fee is required for each week up to TWO weeks per calendar year.

If tuition is not paid on Friday by 6:00 pm, a late fee of $10.00 PER DAY will be added. In addition, all checks returned by the bank will incur a $10.00 late fee as well as the bank fees. If there are two returned checks, the tuition will be payable by cash only. If tuition becomes two weeks delinquent, your child will not be able to attend school, and your space may be lost. In the event that a balance is not paid at time of dismissal and after several attempts to collect, the account will be sent to an outside agency in which additional fees will be charged, including attorney fees.

The tuition schedule is as follows:

Elmwood Park 1 (36 Conti Pkwy) and River Grove (2624 Oak St.)

Age	Schedule	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days
2-year-olds	Full time	$250.00	$238.00	$225.00	$214.00
	Part time	$206.00	$200.00	$195.00	$173.00
3 years and older	Full time	$230.00	$219.00	$207.00	$195.00
	Part time	$191.00	$186.00	$181.00	$159.00

Elmwood Park 2 (7801 W. Grand Ave.)

Age	Schedule	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days
Infants	Full time		$340.00 per week		
Toddlers	Full time	$305.00	$295.00	$285.00	$275.00
	Part time	$215.00	$210.00	$205.00	$200.00
2-year-olds	Full time	$245.00	$235.00	$225.00	$215.00
	Part time	$200.00	$195.00	$190.00	$185.00
3 years and older	Full time	$225.00	$215.00	$205.00	$195.00
	Part time	$185.00	$180.00	$175.00	$170.00

* Part time = 5 hours or less a day. Infant part-time care is not offered.

* Tuition is based on your child's assigned classroom, which considers age and developmental readiness, including walking and toilet training.

River Grove before and after school care

Before School: $40.00 After School: $70.00 Before & After: $100.00

If River Grove Elementary has a half day, an additional $10.00 applies. If River Grove Elementary has no school, an additional $15.00 applies.

Department of Human Service families are required to make their copayments in full on the first of every month or weekly payments are acceptable with permission from the office. If not paid on the first a $10.00 fee **per day** will be charged. If payment becomes two weeks delinquent, your child will not be able to attend school and your space may be lost.

Management Team | Board of Directors

Toni Chakchay	President/Owner
Joseph Chakchay	Vice President/Owner
Christopher Chakchay	Business Administrator
Lauren Finneke	Director (36 Conti, Elmwood Park)
Nicole Gibbons	Director (2624 Oak, River Grove)
Jessica Barksdale	Director (7801 W Grand Ave, Elmwood Park)

Professional Staff

The staff at Picket Fence Daycare and Learning Center meets the requirements of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and under goes a thorough background check through Springfield, include fingerprinting. A physical examination, including a tuberculosis test is required. Most important, all staff love and understand children and teach them while having fun.

Staff meetings are held regularly for the purpose of enriching, improving and evaluating the program.

Teachers encourage the learning process by providing work/play areas consisting of many different materials and learning opportunities. Materials are used which provide concrete experiences and are adaptable to the different levels of individual children.

The staff is one of the most important parts of any program. Research and experience clearly show that children’s earliest years are crucial learning years.

Taken from Illinois News (a publication of the Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children) is this comment: “Early Childhood programs are an essential part of the education of young children, and a crucial service for families and communities, yet we still pay early childhood teachers less than hairstylists and garbage collectors”, said Kathy Thornburg, Ph.D, President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Remember, if we want our children to succeed, we need to support the teachers, administrators and programs that give them a great start.

Curriculum

Our curriculum areas include:

1. Block area (representational play)

2. Housekeeping area (dramatic play)

3. Manipulative/Discovery (math, thinking skills)

4. Library area (books, tapes, pre-literacy)

5. Sensory area/sand and water table (pre-math, science)

6. Art area (creative art experiences and techniques)

7. Music (creative and appreciation)

8. Science Area (discovery and exploration)

9. Large motor (coordination)

10.Group experiences (language, socialization)

11.Field trips (community education)

Curriculum is the design of experiences and activities developed to help children increase their competence. Developmentally appropriate curriculum provides for all areas of a child's development through an integrated approach. Children learn by active participation and first hand experiences.

Children's development and learning is assessed in the context of classroom activities. Teachers objectively observe children in play, collect facts about each child's interest and abilities, analyze and evaluate the collected information and then use what they have learned to plan the curriculum. This assessment is the key to planning for the individual needs of children and the group.

The Components of Our Environment | Art

Doing the activity (the process not the product) is what our program views as important, not the end result (product). Art education is a meaningful force in the total learning program and its goal is to motivate the children to pursue art activities and enjoy experiences that lead to general overall development. Children will be allowed to grow and learn at their own pace and in accordance with their own abilities and interests, this helping them develop sound and positive self-concepts. Art offers and emotional release for children, the opportunity for socialization and language development, and the opportunity to further develop fine motor skills, including eye-hand coordination. These opportunities lead to increased perceptual growth, and subsequently to greater cognition

Housekeeping

Dramatic play happens in the housekeeping area. This is a place for the spontaneous, imaginative role-playing children engage in during free play. Role-playing takes on a special meaning for each child. Children express their thoughts and feelings about family members and the people in there past experiences as they act out roles. Through role playing children confront their fears, learn to distinguish what is “real” and what is “fantasy” and develop an understanding of the world around them.

Books

Books are for reading, sharing, enjoying, and for communicating ideas, both at school and at home. We have classroom books, library books, books and tapes. The children also make their own books as well. We encourage children to look at books alone or with other children or adults. We read to children every day. All activities lead to important pre-literate skills.

Manipulative

Manipulative help children develop small motor skills, eye-hand coordination, pre-reading and prewriting skills. The children generally move in and out of these areas (science, math and small motor), as they become interested during the free exploration time. The child can use most of the materials alone.

Some of the materials are self-correcting in nature in that a child can see when he/she has made an error and can make the correction without adults telling him/her.

Games

Games help children further discover and learn about classification, seriating and visual discrimination. Games may be played by one child or may be enjoyed by a small group of children. Playing games is an excellent opportunity for children to develop social/coping skills. In our program the emphasis is on fun and learning, not “winning”, “better”, or “faster”.

Mathematics

Mathematics for young children is learning about concepts of size, classification, seriating, and patterning. Learning comes from manipulation of materials and exploration of the relationship between objects. Activities for the children will provide opportunities for verbalizing thought, clarifying ideas and exchanging viewpoints.

Music

Singing and dancing are creative arts. The goal of our music program is to bring the children sheer enjoyment through song and dance, and hopefully make their lives richer. Music gives children another medium through which they can express their thoughts and feelings.

Science

Science is a continuous wondering and discovering process with young children. Science is thinking and doing. Learning comes through direct participation – planting seeds, experimenting with water, and caring for animals. Science activities offer opportunities for children to question, investigate, experience the joy of discovery, and further develop the ability to solve problems.

Technology

The children in the three-, four-, and five-year-old rooms have access to tablets for educational software only.

Large Motor Activities

Running, climbing, jumping, gymnastics, and loud, exuberant voices are part of childhood! Activities in this area assist the child in becoming aware of the manner in which his/her whole body is coordinated. This awareness allows the body to move freely and release the child emotionally and intellectually to explore all areas of learning. We go outdoors daily for walks or to the playground (Ditka Park).

Blocks

Blocks are a medium which promote the development of many concepts and skills such as size, shape, ordering and classifying. These concepts and skills are basic to the disciplines of mathematics science, social studies and language arts. Blocks stimulate creativity, offer opportunities for social and emotional development, and give a child a “sense of mastery”, or accomplishment.

Food Study

Preparing food is enjoyable, exciting, and a source of never-ending knowledge for young children. It is an opportunity for them to sharpen observation skills through use of the senses. They taste and compare sweet, sour, bitter and salty. They smell the aromas of various fruits, vegetables and spices. They touch and feel consistency, soft, smooth, wet, dry, and sticky. They listen and hear snapping, beating, grating, pouring, and popping. The experience of preparing food introduces new vocabulary (measure, teaspoon, baking powder, etc…), naturally encourages socialization, and promotes a positive self-concept through a sense of accomplishment. I did it myself!

The annual calendar is printed in January of each year.

We are closed for the following days:

Monday, February 16, 2026	President’s Day
Thursday, May 7, 2026	National Teacher Appreciation
Friday, May 8, 2026	National Teacher Appreciation
Monday, May 25, 2026	Memorial Day
Friday, July 3, 2026	Independence Day
Friday, August 14, 2026	Staff Development Day
Monday, Sept 7, 2026	Labor Day
Thursday, November 26, 2026	Thanksgiving Day
Friday, November 27, 2026	Thanksgiving
Thursday, December 24, 2026	Christmas Eve
Friday, December 25, 2026	Christmas Day
Thursday, December 31, 2026	New Year’s Eve
Friday, January 1, 2027	New Year’s Day

This copy of our Family Policy Handbook is printed by Picket Fence Daycare and Learning Center in May 1997 and revised in October 2026. This booklet replaces all previous parent manuals. The Picket Fence Daycare and Learning Center reserve the right to revise this policy booklet as needed.

I/We have read the Picket Fence Daycare and Learning Center Parent Handbook and will adhere to the policies therein. I understand them and will comply with them.

Signature_____

Date_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Please sign and return to office before your child's first day of school. Thank you.

Comments: