

# USD #475 Early Childhood Program Parent Information Guide 2020-2021



**The Little Jay way—  
“Empowering our students with a  
firm foundation for tomorrow’s  
success!”**



**USD #475 Early Childhood Program Parent Information Guide  
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**NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Geary County USD #475 does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and/or activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

**For questions or complaints based on race, color, national origin, sex or age, please contact: Director of Human Resources. For questions or complaints based on disability, please contact: Director of Exceptional Student Services at 123 N. Eisenhower Drive, Junction City, KS 66441. Telephone: 785 717-4000.**

## **School Information**

### **Welcome to the USD #475 Early Childhood Program**

The USD #475 Early Childhood Program is happy to have you and your child in the program this year! We want to extend a warm welcome to each of you. We hope this year will be both beneficial and rewarding. This information guide has been compiled to inform you of the Early Childhood Program goals, guidelines and policies. Your participation in this year's preschool experience is essential. If you have any questions which are not addressed through the Parent Information Guide, please do not hesitate to contact Early Childhood Program staff.

The USD #475 Early Childhood Program is funded primarily through grants and other sources of state and federal educational funds, and focuses on providing high-quality preschool experiences for local children. Quality preschool experiences have been proven to increase children's school readiness and academic achievement in the early grades and beyond. The overall program goal is that all children will enter kindergarten ready to succeed!

### **USD #475 Early Childhood Program Philosophy**

The USD #475 Early Childhood Program is committed to providing a safe, nurturing environment where each child's individuality is valued, and where quality, developmentally appropriate learning experiences are facilitated by highly skilled staff, in partnership with families and the community. The Early Childhood Program will ensure the creation of individualized educational preschool programming for eligible children 3 through 5 years of age and their families. This will result in children gaining independence, self-confidence and respect for self and others, so they will be successful in school and life.

The USD #475 Early Childhood Program believes that young children are primed for learning and that quality learning experiences during these formative years can have a tremendous impact on a young child's success as a life long learner. Young children need to be provided with a wide range of social, intellectual and physical activities that are developmentally and culturally appropriate, engaging and challenging. Positive, nurturing relationships with teachers and families are essential for the successful development of all children, and the preschool classroom staff, administrators, and other support staff will strive to enhance each child's social and emotional health as well.

### **USD #475 Early Childhood Program Staff**

The Early Childhood Program is very proud to offer our students an excellent staff of highly-qualified educators. All of our teachers are certified teachers holding current Kansas Teaching Licensure. In addition, some of our classroom teachers also hold Special Education certification. These teachers are specially trained to educate students with an exceptionality. Classrooms that include children with special needs have trained paraprofessionals to support all the students' learning. The Early Childhood Program also has Teacher's Assistants that hold at least an Associate's Degree from a college or university. In addition to those staff members, the Early Childhood Program also has specialized staff to support unique student needs, such as Speech/Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Social Workers.

## **What I Can Expect as an Early Childhood Program Parent**

One of the goals for the USD #475 Early Childhood Program is to develop strong partnerships with families. Here is a list of things you can expect from our staff:

- To be treated with dignity and respect always.
- To feel welcomed in the center and classroom.
- To be informed regularly regarding your child's progress and participation in the Early Childhood Program and expect guidance from staff which will help your child's total development.
- To choose whether or not you actively participate in the program and parent activities without fear of impacting your child's participation in the Early Childhood Program.
- To be informed regarding community resources that may support your child and/or family.

## **My Role as an Early Childhood Program Parent**

When it comes to your child's education, you have the power to make an incredible difference! Here are several practical ways that you can help your child while they attend the USD #475 Early Childhood Program:

- Talk about your child's school day at home. Encourage your child to use their teachers' and classmates' names when describing what they've done.
- If your child rides the bus, make sure that you or a designated adult is there and visible when the bus arrives.
- Regular school attendance is very important for your child. Absences for reasons other than illness should be avoided. Always let the main ECC office know when your child will need to be absent from school. Failure to follow attendance guidelines can provide cause for your child's dismissal from the program.
- Show appreciation for the work your child brings home, and ask them questions about their creations. It will encourage them to do their best work.
- Keep informed regarding activities in the community. Read notes when they are sent home in your child's communication folder. Your sincere interest will be reflected in your child's interest in school.
- Assist with developmental monitoring activities through the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ's).
- Read to your child often so that they will learn to love books. If you don't have a book to share, make up stories with your children to encourage their creativity.
- Attend virtual meetings and volunteer to do at-home tasks when you can and become an active Early Childhood Program parent!
- Encourage independence in your child's daily activities at home and in the community.

## **Attendance**

### **School Day**

The Early Childhood Program school days follow two schedules: Half Day Sessions—AM session 8:00-11:00, PM session 12:30-3:30 and Extended Day Sessions—8:10-2:40 (Fort Riley Elementary extended day sessions are 7:50-2:20). Classroom schedules are determined by the location of the classroom and/or

the needs of the students. All classes are in session Monday-Friday with the exception of special holidays, professional development, and teacher workdays. We follow the USD 475 Early Childhood Program calendar. This can be found on the program's website on [usd475.org](http://usd475.org) or can be provided by your child's teacher.

### **Absences From the Program**

If your child is going to be late or absent, please call the Early Childhood Program office (785-717-6950) by 8:30 a.m. or as early as possible. If your child is absent and we haven't been notified, the office staff will call to check in. For extended absences from the program, please contact the Early Childhood Program Principal.

Participation in the Early Childhood Program is voluntary, and there is a high demand for the early education experience. We follow the USD 475 school district policies in regards to attendance. However, due to the unique nature of the Early Childhood Program's funding, our attendance policy is unique as well. **Continued issues with attendance and program participation can provide cause for your child to be removed from the program.** This includes absences for entire school sessions as well as arriving late or leaving early, missing portions of the school session on a regular basis. For children riding the bus, please follow the guidelines found in the Transportation Handbook for absences or changes in transportation needs.

### **Arrival and Dismissal Procedures**

We utilize a drop-off and pick-up line for families' convenience. Vehicles will enter the parking lot according to the building their child's classroom is in. Families whose children attend in the Heim building will utilize the north parking lot entrance and follow the arrows for traffic flow. Heim pick-up and drop-off spots will be marked in front of the Hauge building. Families whose children attend in the ECC building will utilize the south parking lot entrance and follow the arrows for traffic flow. ECC pick-up and drop-off spots will be marked on the side of the main building. A staff member will unload/load children from/into the first four cars in the line to allow for the line to continue moving. We ask parents that would like to have some time to visit with their child's teacher to please park in a parking spot or along the street and visit with the teacher at their class's line. This will help keep our drop-off/pick-up lane moving forward. It is the recommendation of the EC staff that parents make their good-bye's as quick as possible. This sends the message to your child that you feel confident they are safe and secure with their teachers. Staff is not allowed to buckle or unbuckle your child during pick-up and drop-off. Please be sure that your child is properly restrained before leaving the school parking lot. Extra children who accompany parents during pickup time, enrollments, etc. are the responsibility of their parents while in the school building. Please help us maintain a safe and optimal learning environment for the children.

If someone else is picking up your child, their name must be on the emergency list. They must follow the same procedures to check your child out so we know who has taken responsibility for them. The EC staff will check the ID of any individual that does not usually pick-up your child to ensure that they are listed as a contact person. To pick-up your child early, please notify the office so they can be brought to the front entryway. You will need to sign your child out of the building at the front office. You must arrive at least 15 minutes before regular dismissal time for your child to be brought to the office.

## **Classroom Site Assignment**

The Early Childhood Program offers classrooms at the Early Childhood Center, the Professional Learning Center, Washington Elementary School, Westwood Elementary School, Eisenhower Elementary School, Grandview Elementary School, Sheridan Elementary, Spring Valley Elementary, Ware Elementary, Fort Riley Elementary, and Morris Hill Elementary School. The classroom site that your child will be assigned to is dependent on many factors and is often a team decision. Please be aware that while we welcome requests for particular classroom locations, we may not be able to always honor those requests.

## **Transportation Guidelines**

Please be aware when you are dropping off or picking up your child that all schools have bus zones and you are not allowed to park in them even for a minute. The bus needs to be able to get in and out of these zones at designated times.

Transportation is provided to children who qualify for this service. The buses operate on a very full schedule, and they do not have the ability to wait for extended periods of time. Please make sure that your child is ready prior to the anticipated pick-up time, and that you are ready for them prior to their drop-off time. If your child does not come out of the door, the bus will drive away.

An adult or previously designated individual must meet the bus when the child arrives at home or the pick up point. Adults must have picture ID's to provide proof of their identity to ensure the safety of each child. If the bus driver does not find you at home or if the bus driver can't see you in the doorway when the bus arrives at your home or pick up point, the driver is instructed to take the child to their attendance site, and you will have to go there to pick-up your child. If staff are unable to contact parents by 4:00 PM, it is the district's practice to notify the police or MP's, who will take responsibility for the child.

**Change of address for bus transportation must be completed in the school office.** All address changes for the bus routes take at least two business days.

## **Student Management and Classroom Safety**

### **Positive Discipline/Guidance Procedures**

Under all circumstances positive discipline shall be used in the Early Childhood Program classrooms. The Early Childhood Program focuses on teaching and reinforcing three behavioral expectations for children in the program:

- **Take care of myself** (express emotions and needs, independence in daily activities, learning to calm self when distressed)
- **Take care of others** (use gentle touch, inside voices and caring behaviors)
- **Take care of my school** (care for things in the classroom/school, assist with clean-up)

Staff will help to encourage and promote the development of positive social skills through direct instruction, modeling, coaching and encouragement. On-going communications with parents are an essential component in the area of behavioral guidance and social skill promotion. If you ever have a discipline issue or question, please feel free to ask for input.

Methods to follow when guiding the behaviors of children in the program shall include:

1. Positive Reinforcement. Children should be caught being good and recognized for it.

2. Prevention. Staff should observe situations which are known to trigger misbehavior and try to diffuse these situations before they occur.
3. State requests in a positive way. Example: “Walk, please” instead of “Don’t run.”
4. Consider which actions may be age appropriate. Example: Expecting a three year-old to sit quietly in circle time without moving for fifteen minutes might be unrealistic. Read children’s body language and adjust activities accordingly.
5. Give Choices. Give appropriate choices, both of which are acceptable to you, whenever possible.
6. Redirect. Whenever possible, redirect the child in a way that is related to his motives or interests.
7. Safe Place. The Safe Place is a comfortable, quiet spot in the classroom designed to provide an opportunity for children to calm down and reflect if they become overwhelmed.

If a child continues to have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviors, staff will meet with parents to develop a plan appropriate to their individual needs.

### **Communication**

Communication between home and school is a very important part of your child’s education. Everyone gets busy and it is sometimes a challenge to keep in touch. There are many ways to communicate, sending notes in the backpack, phone calls, email, or setting up an appointment for a virtual meeting. Please check your child’s book bag daily for notes from school. Information from home to school can also be placed in your child’s backpack. As classroom teachers, we will try to keep you informed about what is going on at school and we ask the same of you. There may be times that an event at home could affect your child at school. It is helpful for us to know about these things so that we can help your child through difficult times.

### **Emergency Numbers/Contacts**

**Emergency contact numbers are essential.** It is a requirement of the Early Childhood Program to have a number(s) where you can be reached, should your child become ill or injured at school. We also need alternate emergency contacts who can be contacted in the event that you are unable to be contacted or need assistance picking-up or dropping-off your child. Emergency contacts can be a close friend or relative. **Please keep this information current in your child’s file in the school office and make sure that your child’s teacher is kept aware of any changes. Remember, your child cannot be released to anyone not listed in your child’s file as an emergency contact.**

### **Inclement Weather**

The safety of your child is most important. When your local school district dismisses or cancels classes due to bad weather, the Early Childhood Program will also dismiss or cancel classes. At times, due to very icy conditions of side streets, classes will be held but buses will not run or will be delayed. Local radio and TV stations will be notified when school is dismissed or cancelled. USD 475 offers text alerts to notify parents when these decisions have been made. Please go to [www.usd475.org](http://www.usd475.org) to sign up for text alerts.

Cold weather brings the need to dress children for outdoor recess. Please send your child in a warm coat and mittens or gloves. Let us know if you are in need of a coat or gloves, we will be glad to help. Indoor gross motor play is provided when the weather interferes with outdoor play.

### **Safety Drills**

The staff and children practice Fire, Severe Weather, Evacuation, and Intruder/Lock-down drills periodically. These drills will be conducted in a manner that minimizes instructional disruption. Emergency drill procedures are posted in each classroom.

### **Animals**

Due to the possibility of allergies, we ask that families refrain from bringing their pets/animals to school. This includes just walking them to the pick-up area. Not all children are comfortable around animals and can inadvertently upset a usually calm pet. To avoid possible allergic reactions or situations involving injuries, we will not allow animals on school property.

### **Administrative Guidelines for Emergency Safety Interventions**

The emergency safety interventions (ESI) law set forth standards for the use of restraint and seclusion to ensure that all Kansas students and staff have a safe learning environment. The standards found in the ESI statutes and regulations are required to be followed in all Kansas public school districts and accredited private schools. For more information go to this website to review the USD 475 ESI Parent information: [https://www.usd475.org/\\_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/Pages/Emergency%20Safety%20Information%20for%20parents.pdf&action=default](https://www.usd475.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/Pages/Emergency%20Safety%20Information%20for%20parents.pdf&action=default).

### **Curriculum, Exceptional Student Services, Assessments, and Special Days**

#### **Instructional Curriculum**

The USD #475 Early Childhood Program implements World of Wonders, a comprehensive instructional curriculum that has been proven by research to have a positive impact on language and other early literacy skills. The Assessment, Evaluation and Programming Systems (AEPS) curriculum is also used to support instruction for children needing special accommodations. The AEPS curriculum is an activity-based intervention that encourages the integration of instructional goals and objectives into the child's daily activities. Daily classroom schedules are similar but may vary slightly from room to room. Please check with your child's teacher to see the daily schedule that has been established for your child's classroom. Parents will receive monthly information regarding the instructional focus of the unit being delivered.

#### **Special Education Services**

This program serves children **ages 3-5** with developmental delays or disabilities. Students must meet eligibility criteria as set by federal Special Education regulations to receive related services according to their needs. Services may include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work and school psychological services. These services are available to children on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that are developed with families' input to meet students' individual needs. Services can be provided to homebound children due to severe disabilities or through individual therapy sessions in USD 475 Early Childhood classrooms or community preschools/daycare settings.

## **English Language Learners**

The Early Childhood program offers special support to our English Language Learners and Bilingual Learners. Specialized staff will assist students that have a second language influence or limited English proficiency through the use of research-based best practices such as visual supports within the classroom. These staff members can also support families through translating materials and acting as translators during family engagement activities.

## **Volunteer Procedures**

Volunteers are an important part of the Early Childhood Program. Efforts will also be made to recruit support from community members. The coordination of all volunteer efforts will be handled by your child's classroom teacher or the program's Family Service Worker. There are opportunities to volunteer in the classroom, in the building or by working on projects at home. Our Program has also partnered with the Foster Grandparent Program; a Foster Grandparent may be a part of your child's classroom team. We have a Site Council made up of parents, teacher, and community members that meet regularly to analyze the efficacy of program. Your participation in the Site Council is encouraged and appreciated!

## **Assessments**

All of the Early Childhood Program students' progress will be monitored throughout the year with the use of assessments. All students will be assessed by their teachers four times a year and given a progress report to update families on their growth. The USD 475 Early Childhood Program's progress reports are aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards. These standards were specifically written to prepare your child for Kindergarten. In addition to the progress reports, our four year old students will also be given the MyIGDI's norm-referenced literacy and mathematics assessments to monitor their development of foundational academic skills. The results of these assessments will be shared with families during their parent/teacher conferences.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences and Home Visits**

Teachers will conduct individual conferences with families. Conferences will generally include your child's lead teacher and possibly a support staff member. Days are set aside in the school calendar for the family conferences. Attempts will be made to accommodate family schedules. Parent participation is a priority.

The family conferences allow for staff, children and families to get to know one another and strengthen partnerships for learning. Families can learn more about the classroom activities and goals, and your child's progress. Staff can learn more about the interests and strengths of the children and families. Both staff and families can share observations related to the growth and development of the children in the program.

## **Special Days**

Special days in the lives of the children, such as birthdays, are celebrated in the classroom. Other special events may be celebrated as well. Your child's teacher will visit with you regarding these celebrations and ways that you can participate.

In an attempt to ensure that all of our families feel that their culture and customs are being recognized, we will ask Early Childhood parents to share information with us about their traditions. We will use this information to plan special days for our students.

## **School Guidelines**

### **Outdoor Play**

Children and staff spend some time outside each day if the weather permits. Children will be healthier if they are outside often. During bad weather, indoor physical activities are planned to help meet your child's physical needs. Please provide the right clothing such as jackets, coats, caps, mittens, gloves, warm shoes, etc., for your child. Please label your child's outer clothing to help prevent mix-ups. Some shoes (sandals, flip-flops) make it difficult for your child to be actively involved in large motor activities. We strongly encourage tennis shoes to be worn for this reason. (Please see the Safety section on page 7.) If your family needs assistance with your child's clothing needs, please contact your child's teacher or the Family Service Worker.

### **Meal Time in the USD #475 Early Childhood Program**

Meals in the Early Childhood Program are eaten within the classroom environment. Meals are served family style, and are an integral part of the classroom learning experience. For this reason, **all** children participate in the school meal program, unless there are unique dietary and/or religious needs documented in the student's file. Food allergies and dietary restrictions will also be documented in the Early Childhood Program's nurse's office. Families who are eligible for free or reduced meals can receive breakfast and/or lunch at no cost or for a minimal fee. Families who do not qualify for free meals will be charged a reduced or full fee for the meal served as part of the program. There are no other fees charged for the preschool educational program.

When children bring a meal from home, the following guidelines will be strictly enforced:

- No soda
- No candy
- No fast food
- No nut products (peanut butter, Nutella, etc.)
- No items that need refrigerated or heated
- Must follow other allergy restrictions based on classroom

If a meal is brought that does not follow these guidelines, the child will be given a school meal instead and the meal from home will not be eaten.

The Early Childhood Program complies with all applicable Federal, State, and local food safety and sanitation laws, including those related to the storage, preparation and service of food and the health of food handlers.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips may be taken during the year to enrich and extend the curriculum. Parents will be notified in advance of any proposed field trip and will be given the opportunity to excuse their child from participation. Early Childhood Program staff will ensure that adequate supervision is provided for any activity outside of the classroom.

## **Newsletters**

Families will receive monthly program newsletters that will update them on any important dates and information they will need for that month. In addition, your child will bring home reminders of the upcoming events and activities in their classrooms. If you need clarification or have questions about an upcoming event or activity, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher or the program principal.

## **What to Bring/What to Wear**

Families are asked to provide a standard size back pack or bag (that will hold a standard size file folder) and at least one change of seasonal clothes, including socks and underwear (additional clothing may be needed for children working on toileting skills). Parents of children in the full-day classrooms are also encouraged to provide something soft or comforting to help your child adjust to rest time (i.e.-small pillow, small throw blanket or small stuffed animal). Individual soft vinyl mats will be provided for each child. Some classrooms may have "wish lists" of items that families can voluntarily provide. Please see your child's teacher for these type of requests, if you are interested in providing items.

Toys, money, food or other personal articles from home should not be sent to the classroom, unless it is a request from your child's teacher to supplement or illustrate a concept or theme that is being explored in the classroom. Jewelry items should be left at home due to the possibility of them being lost or damaged. When you are dressing your child for school please consider all of the activities that they will be involved in and the day's weather for outdoor play considerations. Some shoes (sandals, flip flops) make it difficult for your child to be actively and safely involved in gross motor activities. Tennis shoes really do work the best for students. Some skirts and dresses limit a child's ability to engage in all activities (running, climbing and sitting on the floor). Finally, remember that we are in preschool. Many of the hands-on experiences we engage in can get messy. The classrooms have smocks, but these do not always prevent substances from getting on clothing.

## **Health Services & Screenings**

### **Health Procedures and Services**

In order to assist with the health of all children in the program, parents are encouraged to screen their child for illness before they are sent to school. School staff will work to promote health safety practices and education in the school setting in an attempt to reduce the transmission of germs and illnesses.

If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be contacted and they will need to be dismissed from school until their illness is resolved. **It is very important that the school office and your child's teacher have current phone numbers for you, as well as emergency contacts in the event that you cannot be reached.** Parents are responsible for providing or arranging transportation for your ill child.

First Aid will be given at school when needed and parents will be informed as necessary. If it is a minor accident, you will be notified after class. However, if the child needs medical care and/or has a head injury, you will be called immediately. Staff will call 911 in case of a severe life or limb emergency. If your child needs to go to the emergency room and you are not available to go with your child, a staff member will accompany the child and stay until you arrive.

Children may be excluded from school if they

- Have or are suspected to have a communicable disease (Chicken Pox, Flu, untreated Ringworm, etc.)
- Have an illness (vomiting, diarrhea, and/or fever of 100 degrees or higher)
- Have an injury that limits their ability to participate in the classroom. (Modifications will be made for special circumstances with a doctor's order.)
- **Children should have no vomiting, diarrhea or fever (without medication) for at least 24 hours prior to attending school. Please contact the school if your child is ill and will not be at school.**

\*The school nurse may send any child home if she feels there is a health concern.

**Immunizations and School Health Assessments: All students, age eight and under, entering a Kansas school for the first time must present the results of a physical exam completed within 12 months of school entry or 90 days following enrollment.** Kansas Immunization Law requires that each student must have proof of age appropriate immunizations at the time of enrollment and prior to school entry.

**Special Health Concerns and Medications: Inform the school nurse if your child has specific health or dietary issues/needs, such as diabetes, seizures, asthma, allergies, vision or hearing difficulties and/or needs medication dispensed during school hours.** The nurse, along with the family and possibly the physician, will develop a plan of care. The nurse will inform the appropriate staff of the plan, if a student cannot fully participate in classroom activities and/or has special dietary needs. **Special dietary needs must be documented by a physician on the Food Substitution Form, which is available in the school nurse's office.**

**Medication prescribed by a health provider will be administered at school with written permission from the parent or guardian, and must be in the original package.** Medication must be reviewed by the school nurse before it will be administered. **Please refer to the USD 475 Medications Guidelines sheet in the enrollment packet.**

**Screenings:** Health screening programs are provided for the following: vision, hearing and other health issues as needed. If you have a hearing or vision concern, please contact your child's teacher or nurse.

**Personal Health and Hygiene:** Preventive dental and hygiene health practices are supported in the program. A broad range of health and safety practices and concepts are encouraged through group discussions, songs and books and through daily practices in the classroom setting.

**Safety:** Your child is growing rapidly and experiencing motor changes continuously. Your child's motor changes coupled with gross motor play, naturally increases the risk for falls. Our staff need parents to assist in the prevention of "play related injuries". **The Early Childhood Program highly discourages the use of footwear such as flip-flops, crocs, and sandals.**

*\*\*Statements embedded within this guidebook are subject to change if Federal, State or Local responses to a pandemic warrant revisions in procedures.*