



Family Handbook

2023-2024

Welcome to Paladin's Early Childhood Programs

This handbook contains important information regarding our philosophy and operations. Please read this handbook and keep it accessible while your child is enrolled in one of our programs. Thank you for choosing our programs to help your family thrive!

My Teacher(s) and Class Name:

My Family Advocate:

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Letter from the Director

Dear Families,

I realize the preciousness of the first 5 years of life and I am honored that you have chosen our program to serve your family.

At Paladin's Early Childhood Programs, we strive to provide our students with experiences that honor the unique qualities of each child while fostering growth in every area of development.

Here, we believe that every child has the right to quality early education, meaningful experiences, playful friendships, and nurturing relationships.

We are grateful for your trust, and hope that in the coming year we are able to build a meaningful bridge with you between home and school.

I will do all that I can to ensure the safety of your child, enrich their days with joy, and instill a love of lifelong learning.

With Gratitude,

Theresa N. Argueta
Director of Early Childhood Programs

Locations

Head Start at Niemann Elementary

-Paths to Quality Level 3

811 Royal Road

Michigan City, IN 46360

(219) 873-2146

Hours: 8:30am-3:30pm

September -May

Imagination Station

– **NAEYC Accredited**

– **Paths To Quality Level 4**

1200 East Coolspring Avenue

Michigan City, IN 46360

(219) 872-6723

Hours: 7:00pm-4:00pm

Year Round

Bethany Lutheran Church

-Paths To Quality Level 3

102 G Street

La Porte, IN 46350

(219) 203-1387

Hours: 8:30am-3:30pm

September - May

School Closings and Delays

Our programs prioritize the safety of our children, families, and staff above all else. This is why, in the event of inclement weather, there is a possibility of closure at one or all of our sites.

Each site will follow the closure/delay decisions of the Michigan City Area School system. In the event that we decide to close a facility due to developing hazardous road conditions, a building related emergency, or other emergencies during regular operations, we will contact **all** families to pick their children up within one hour.



***Please note, our Bethany Lutheran Church classes will be closed when either LPCSC or MCAS closes school based on inclement weather.**

Please refer to your program site's yearly calendar for other site-specific closings, as they may differ from the local school districts'. Also, be sure to sign up for text message notifications with your school district:

MCAS: <http://educateMC.net/texts>

LPCSC: <https://www.lpcsc.k12.in.us/closings.asp>

You can also use our Learning Genie app to receive messages regarding closures, delays, and

other notifications.

Closings and delays are announced on our Facebook pages:



Paladin:

<https://www.facebook.com/Paladin.Care/>

Early Childhood Programs:

<https://www.facebook.com/imaginationstationmichigancity/>

For our **Imagination Station** site on Coolspring Ave:

- If Michigan City Area Schools are closed, we will have a 2-hour delay. (Ex. We will open at 9:00 AM rather than 7:00 AM.)
- If after that time we make the decision to close the facility, we will do our best to post any announcements before 8:00 AM.
- In the event of an inclement weather closure, each tuition-paid family will receive a credit of \$10 per child per day.
- In the event that the Paladin corporate site closes, all of our sites will be closed.
- In the event that we make the decision to close the facility due to developing hazardous road conditions, a building related emergency, or other emergencies during regular operations, we will contact **all** families to pick their children up within one hour. If you are unable to do so within that timeframe, you will be assessed a fee of \$5.00 per minute late.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Procedures

-For the safety of children, and with respect to their developing lungs, all of our properties are “No Idle Zones” and are smoke-free. There are no drugs or weapons allowed on any of our premises.

- All persons picking up children must be authorized at the time of enrollment by the primary caregiver(s). Any changes made to the child’s pick-up list must be made in person by the child’s caregiver(s) and will **NOT** be accepted over the phone.

- Denial of release to a biological parent listed on the birth certificate requires court documentation, as indicated by Indiana State law.

- All of our sites are “No-Cell Phone Zones.” This is to ensure the safety and confidentiality of all children.

Please keep a few things in mind when you drop off and pick up your child:

1. Show interest in your child’s activities. When you take time to look at your child’s artwork or listen to them tell you about their day, you show them that they are important to you.

2. Talk to your child. When children hear language, they are building vocabulary and developing conversation skills.

3. Help them transition from home to school. This aids in your child’s progress towards self-regulating while helping them to adjust to the classroom.

4. Exchange important information. This will help with communication between you and your child's teacher in order to meet your child's needs.

Philosophy and Goals

Our philosophy is to regard the personal qualities of each child as gifts to be nurtured, shared, and appreciated. Each child is unique in his or her combination of strengths, areas for growth, interests, talents, needs, and styles. Each child's individuality is appreciated and considered in the context of the children around them. The diversity inherent among families is recognized and respected.

Paladin, Inc.'s Early Childhood Education Programs' curricula and philosophy are inspired by the *Reggio Emilia* approach, and are based on current research and best practices that balance physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. A unique feature of our programming is the emphasis on building self-awareness, self-esteem, creativity, and social problem-solving skills—tools all children need to grow and thrive.

We aim to provide the highest quality early childhood education while supporting families' growth and ensuring the safety of all children in our care.

Our Staff

Our staff are dedicated educators who are professionally trained to provide only the best care and educational environments for your children. All of our lead teachers hold a Bachelor's or Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education or the equivalent. Our Assistant Teachers hold a Child Development Associate Credential, are enrolled in a Child Development Associate Credential program, or hold a degree. All staff undergo tuberculosis screening, drug screening, physical exams, and a federal criminal and Child Protective Services background check. All staff are required to undergo training in CPR, first aid, Universal Precautions, emergency response, child abuse and neglect detection, and medication administration.

In the state of Indiana, all persons, including teachers and school staff, are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.

Daily Schedule

Our classrooms offer a predictable routine that is posted in each classroom.

Teachers provide a rounded, immersive classroom experience that includes sensory, social and emotional learning, art, writing, fine motor, gross motor, mathematics, science, dramatic play, reading, music, construction, and outdoor play.

Attendance

Research shows that attendance is very important for children to succeed in school. Even one day of absence can put your child behind, as they miss important lessons and socialization with other students. Participating fully in our programs is a perfect opportunity to introduce this responsibility to your child.



We understand that sometimes your child may be too sick to attend, or an emergency may arise.

At our **Imagination Station** site, families may call the front office at 219-872-6723 ext. 221 and speak to office staff, or leave a message with details of absences due to illness, appointments, or planned vacations.

For **Head Start funded families**, you must call us if your child will be absent by calling our main office at 219-873-2146 and selecting option 1 to leave a message with your student's name, class name, and reason for absence. If your child does not arrive at school by 9:00am and we have not heard from you, we will send a message to you through the Learning Genie app.

If your child is absent for 3 days in a row or more due to illness, we will require a doctor's note to return. We will review attendance on an individual case-by-case basis. Our main concern is your child's ability to succeed in the classroom!

If your child is absent **more than 10% of the time (or roughly 2 days per month)**, we will schedule an attendance meeting with you to create a plan together to improve attendance. If after this you are still unable to meet attendance requirements, your child may be put on the wait list or withdrawn from the program to allow other students an opportunity to enroll.

Fee Agreement- Imagination Station

1. Every non-Head Start funded family enrolled at Imagination Station is required to make a \$200 deposit.
2. Payment is due in advance of the first day of the week that your child will attend Imagination Station. If tuition is not paid weekly, a \$20 per week fee will be assessed. We retain the right to terminate care if fees are not paid. By enrolling, you agree to the terms of this fee agreement and further agree to be responsible for any costs of collection, including attorney fees.
3. Those paying with government vouchers are responsible for completing and keeping current all relevant paperwork. Families receiving government voucher tuition assistance must swipe in their attendance daily. Families who do not keep up-to-date on their swipes will be assessed a \$20 late-swipe fee. Imagination Station reserves the right to suspend or terminate care if swipes are not completed. If you neglect to swipe and fall below the required minimum number of hours, the voucher office will not pay your full subsidy. You will then be responsible for paying the remainder of your subsidy. This may be deducted from your \$200 deposit if necessary. If you deplete any portion of your deposit, you are required to match the deposit amount that was depleted.
4. Tuition is due and payable whether or not your child attends Imagination Station, whether due to illness or other circumstances, including emergency building closures. However, we do provide two (2) weeks (i.e., two times the

amount of days that your child attends each week) of vacation credit per year which can be utilized after six months of attendance. **No vacation credits are provided for the school-age summer program.**

5. If you decide to withdraw your child for any reason, we require at least two (2) weeks' notice. Failure to provide adequate notice will result in your being charged for two (2) weeks of tuition. Your initial deposit of \$200 will be applied to your final \$200 tuition.
6. Imagination Station closes at 4:00 p.m. All families who pick up their children late will be assessed a \$5 per minute per child charge. This fee must be paid before your child can return to school.
 - a. Excessive late pick-ups will be subject to a required meeting with administration to discuss a pick-up plan.
7. Imagination Station is closed on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. A \$10 per child per holiday credit will be issued for each of these days.
8. We will also be closed the last two weeks of August annually for staff training, professional development, and home visits. No tuition is charged during this time.

Disabilities Services

Paladin, Inc. is here to help identify children with special needs and make sure that they receive any services that they need. All children are screened within 45 days after their first day of school.

We encourage parents/ guardians to notify their child's teacher or Family Advocate if they believe their child may have a disability of any kind.

If a screening shows a developmental concern, you will be contacted to discuss evaluations and other services. In designing an individualized plan, we may refer your child for outside support services for developmental evaluation. Our behavior intervention team will guide you through this process.

Evaluations by specialists will determine if your child needs additional services. A meeting with the parent/guardian, specialists, teachers, and an administrator or support staff will take place to discuss the results and the best way to help your child succeed. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may be developed by Michigan City Area Schools and/or La Porte Community School Corporation. This meeting will guide teachers and specialists in providing the necessary services. The IEP will be reviewed annually through Michigan City Area Schools and/or La Porte Community School Corporation at a meeting to assess your child's progress and update the plan with future services.

Paladin reserves the right to reduce or modify care for any child whose needs cannot be met by the

existing program, whose behavior is such that it creates a danger to other children or staff, or whose family refuses to participate in intervention processes.

Transition to Kindergarten

If your child is moving on to kindergarten in the fall, we want to help! We will host field trips to kindergarten classrooms in the spring so the upcoming-kindergarteners can visit their new school and teacher before school starts, and help with school registration.

School Readiness

It is our commitment and passion that children and families in La Porte County will be prepared for school and develop a genuine love of life-long learning. This means that children are provided with rounded experiences to nurture growth in all eight areas of development. Here is a list of the school readiness goals for children that are entering kindergarten:



- **Language and Literacy Development:** Children will: 1) engage in pre-writing activities (e.g. drawing, tracing, cutting, and scribbling) and develop progressively in their use of writing to convey meaning; 2) use oral language through conversations with adults

and peers to develop proficient two-way communication skills and increase use and understanding of varied vocabulary; 3) understand print awareness (that print conveys meaning), identify letters of the alphabet, and produce sounds associated with letters; and 4) be read to throughout the day (e.g. picture books, poetry, etc.) in order to develop foundational reading skills as demonstrated by telling a personal or fictional story connected by a sequence of events. Children who are dual language learners will demonstrate increased competency in their home language while developing proficiency in English.

- **Mathematics Development and Scientific Reasoning (Cognition):** Children will: 1) understand the relationship between written numbers, counting, sequence, and quantities up to the number 10; 2) engage in activities that promote higher order thinking skills, such as: comparing, classification, computation, problem solving, sequencing, patterning, and algebraic thinking; 3) use observations and problem solving skills to make predictions and gain an understanding of new situations and activities; and 4) investigate problems, propose hypotheses, and describes observable phenomena.
- **Approaches to Learning:** Children will: 1) manage emotions, follow classroom expectations and routines, and will take responsibility for materials and their choices; 2) maintain focus, engage in purposeful play, persist in tasks, and follow multi-step

directions with minimal adult support ; 3) engage in activities that demonstrate growth in creativity, independence, and determination; 4) demonstrate flexibility in thinking and behavior, incorporate different problem-solving strategies, and transition successfully between activities; and 5) demonstrate an eagerness to learn and take initiative when investigating new topics.

- **Perceptual, Physical and Motor Development:** Children will: 1) demonstrate control, strength, and coordination of large muscles while utilizing perceptual information to guide movements and interactions with people and materials; 2) demonstrate increased fine motor control in tasks which require hand-eye coordination and use a pincer grasp while utilizing tools for writing; 3) engage in activities that introduce and promote independent living skills along with health and safety (i.e. how to dress, wash hands, brushing teeth properly, and toilet independently).
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Children will 1) develop positive relationships, engage in prosocial behavior and cooperative interactions with adults and peers; 2) demonstrate the ability to follow positive expectations, resolve conflict with peers and adults, as well as understand and exhibit empathy and sympathy; 3) identify and label emotions such as: happiness,

sadness, anger, excitement, etc.; 4) engage in activities that help manage emotions and promote self-regulation; 5) recognize their own abilities and interests, express confidence, and develop a sense of belonging to a community.

Curriculum Statement

Our curriculum is informed by a Reggio-Emilia inspired approach. In this approach, we will consider the following as the building blocks to our curriculum:

- 1) *Image of the Child*: The image of the child being capable of constructing their own learning is central to the Reggio philosophy. Children are endowed with curiosity which fuels their unique interests acting as a catalyst for learning. Our program will foster growth towards these goals through supporting children in their curiosities, recognizing a child's unique interests, needs and strengths, and by fostering an environment where children are central in their learning process.
- 2) *Children's 100 Languages*: Loris Malguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, observed that children have multiple modes of communicating- he referred to this as "The Hundred Languages." Children are natural communicators and will be encouraged to communicate through whatever means they can: verbal, kinesthetic, musical, and through varied art experiences. The Children's 100 Languages will be supported by the *Atelierista*, the studio teacher.

- 3) *The Atelierista*: Ensures that children have the tools to communicate their thoughts through various media (e.g. paint, clay, wire, natural materials etc.). Children will be encouraged to use many materials for discovery and communication. These modes will serve as a demonstration of what they understand, wonder, question, feel, or imagine. It is the studio teacher's responsibility to facilitate the exploration of a child's surroundings.
- 4) *Parents and Community*: Relationships between all persons in our Reggio inspired model are foundational in creating a community where the child and family are central to the learning process. The relationship between the teacher and student is authentic and based on positive interactions. The teacher serves as a learner in the inquiry process. The teacher builds trust with the child through affirming the competencies of each individual child and family that they serve. Our teachers recognize that parents are the child's primary teachers and will stand alongside them as advocates for the family.
- 5) *Children as Collaborators*: Students will form meaningful relationships with their peers through inquiry-based learning opportunities. Children will work together to ask questions, explore, discover, and reflect on their experiences. During these experiences, children will engage in positive social interactions, engage in cooperative play, and utilize problem solving skills to help resolve conflicts with other children. A critical component of learning is that parents are partners in their child's education.
- 6) *Teacher as learners*: This requires staff to participate in constant reflection in their approaches to children's learning and on their contributions to

the classroom environment. Teachers observe, record, share, analyze, and discuss their emerging understandings of children's ways of thinking and learning and then share these understandings with others.

- 7) *Progettazione*: A primary feature of this Reggio inspired curriculum is focused on long-term open-ended projects. The curriculum is adjusted through a continuous dialogue among the teachers and with the children. This approach encourages the voices of children, parents and teachers and is accountable for learning in an authentic, emergent way.
- 8) *Physical Environment "The Third Teacher"*: The classroom sets the stage for children's experience at school. This challenges us to consider how a space impacts the children's feelings and thoughts. We will create spaces which are centered around children's needs, are inviting and warm, and which are responsive to changing interests and inquiries. The environment will support the work and interests of the children and will offer opportunities for independent and group exploration.

Our curriculum, High Scope, brings together developmentally appropriate practices in a fun, inquiry-based format. This curriculum provides teachers with strategies to promote children's development and learning, foster social competence, support learning through play, create nurturing and rich environments for learning, encourage strong home-school connections, and offers techniques for building positive relationships, and developing self-regulation skills.

Child Assessment Plan

The purpose of child assessments is to evaluate language, cognitive, gross motor, fine motor, and social and emotional development. These evaluations provide teachers and families with information that will help decide if a child will need any further developmental screenings. These assessments also provide information to inform planning for overall program growth. Teaching teams will adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs and interests of the children based on information gained from child assessments and parent knowledge. Teaching teams will also use child assessment outcomes to design activities or lesson plans that meet the needs and interests of the children. All assessments are shared with families by written report and parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are held twice per year or as needed per individual child plan. During these conferences, families are given the opportunity to raise questions or concerns about how the assessment methods will meet their child's needs and to contribute to the learning process by sharing their knowledge of their child and family culture with the teacher. Families are provided information within our Family Handbook that explains how teaching staff or others have been trained to conduct child assessments. Assessments are administered by the child's primary teachers. It is our goal to demonstrate continuity of care by keeping children with the same primary teacher for a minimum of nine months; especially with children under the age

of 3. This practice helps to ensure healthy relationships so that teachers are able to authentically assess their students.

Listed below are the assessment and screening methods we currently use in our program:

- 1.** Teachers assess children at least 3 times per year using COR Advantage, which works seamlessly with the High Scope curriculum. COR Advantage is an observation-based tool for assessing child development at all stages from birth to kindergarten, with distinct and well-defined criteria that are easy to apply.
 - a.** Teachers assess children individually and in groups throughout the year by anecdotal note taking.
 - b.** Anecdotes are documented weekly to ensure a complete picture.
- 2.** Teachers conduct the ASQ and ASQ-SE once annually to help screen for developmental delay.
 - a.** ASQ and ASQ-SE are development screenings which evaluate language, cognitive, gross motor, fine motor, and social and emotional development.
 - b.** Children with areas of concern will be screened at least twice annually.
- 3.** Teachers and the Behavioral Coach (as needed) will meet with families to offer further developmental screenings through

Michigan City Area Schools and La Porte Community School Corporation which include:

- a. Speech
 - b. Language Development
 - c. Developmental Delay
4. Parent/Teacher conferences will be conducted twice a year, or on an as needed basis.

Mixed-Aged Groups

We individualize learning plans to meet each child's needs because we recognize that not all children develop and learn in the same ways or at the same rate. We believe that this approach is supported by mixed-age classrooms. Research by Dr. Lilian Katz, and others, shows that 4-year-olds are more likely to take on leadership roles, help peers, teach, explain, communicate appropriately, and are less competitive, while 3-years-olds are more likely to engage in complex play, be cognitively stimulated, and nurture peers in mixed-age classrooms. [1][2] She also found that children in mixed-aged classrooms showed increased social-emotional and language skills. We believe that mixed-age classrooms give children the opportunity to learn and grow as a classroom community in a more diverse environment which supports empathy and tolerance.

[1] Katz, L. G. (1998). *Twins in school: What teachers should know*. ERIC Digest. Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

[2] Katz, L. G., Evangelou, D., and Hartmann, J. A. (1990). *The case for mixed-age grouping in the early years*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Discipline Policy

It is the philosophy of Paladin's Early Childhood Programs that each child is unique in their combination of strengths, areas

for growth, interests, talents, needs, personality attributes, and behavioral styles. These differences will be respected and each child's individuality will be appreciated and will be considered in the context of the children around them. Every child exists within the larger context of their family, and the diversity inherent among families will be recognized and respected.

How do you feel?



Angry



Scared



Sad



Happy



Frustrated



Anxious



Disappointed



Calm

Our approach to discipline is positive and staff will make every effort to use techniques that will encourage the development of high self-esteem, self-respect, independence, creativity, social problem-solving skills, and self-control. Such practices include, but are not limited to, appropriate and genuine praise, guidance in personal problem-solving, exploration of feelings, redirecting or not giving attention to negative behavior, and appropriate use of humor.

Brief, supervised separation from the group may be necessary only to ensure safety of all children in the program. Such a separation will be coupled with self-regulation skill use and followed by a private discussion with the child regarding the reason for separation and the child's alternative choices in similar situations in the future.

Positive methods must be used for classroom management and handling individual behavior. All behavioral correction will be administered with primary consideration for enhancing the self-esteem, problem-solving skills, and the self-regulation skills of the child. At no time is cruel or abusive behavior on the part of the staff allowed. No child shall be placed in a locked room. Corporal punishment, including shaking, spanking, and hitting or any other humiliating or frightening techniques are prohibited. Discipline must not be associated with food, rest, or toilet training. Children who are wet or soil themselves shall not be shamed or punished.

Behavior Intervention Plans

Teachers, families, and community supports will work together to ensure children have an appropriate Behavior Intervention Plan, when necessary, to promote success within our program.

When a child's behavior is destructive or potentially dangerous to staff or other children, the following steps will be taken and communicated (via phone, note, and conference) with the parent/guardian(s):

1. The rules and expectations will be stated and/or reiterated to the child.
2. If the behavior ceases, the child will be appropriately praised.
3. If the behavior continues, the child will be safely removed and supervised for the safety of him/herself and others. The adult will give the child opportunities to regulate emotions by using Positive Behavior Strategies to assist in the process. (Appropriate use of restraint for safety reasons is permissible).
4. Upon the discretion of the teacher/director, the child will be permitted back into the group with the rules and expectations restated.
5. If the behavior persists, or if, upon discretion of the director, the behavior is considered to be dangerous or disruptive beyond the capacities of the staff, the parent or designated emergency contact will be called to pick up the child.
6. If the dangerous behavior continues on a consistent basis, one or more of the following options may be pursued at the discretion of the administration:
 - a) A Behavior Intervention Plan will be

developed by the Director, Behavioral Coach, Education Manager, Health and Special Services Manager, Family Advocate, and the parent/guardian (as needed)

- b) With parental consent, a referral would be made to a consultant to help with behavior
- c) Child is put on half-days until the unsafe behavior ceases
- d) Parent is asked to volunteer in the classroom and/or field trips with their child daily until the child is able to have a routinely positive and safe behavior day-to-day, and/or participate in parenting classes
- e) After a program has explored all possible options and documented all steps taken, if the behavior continues as a serious safety threat to the child, other children, and staff, the child will be sent home for an agreed upon time period with a continued plan in place in order to return. The program offers assistance to families in accessing services and an alternative placement.
- f) Paladin reserves the right to reduce and/or modify care, (up to suspension), for any child whose needs cannot be met by the existing program or whose behavior is such that it creates a danger to other children or staff. A temporary suspension must be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the

provision of reasonable modifications.

**This policy complies with federal and state laws.*

Parent-Teacher Conferences and Home Visits

Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences will be held twice during the school year. These meetings are imperative for your child's success in our program. Parents will be invited to speak with teachers about their child's progress, get activity ideas to support them at home, and to give the teachers invaluable insights about their child. Additional conferences may be requested by the teacher or parent to address emergent needs, in alignment with our discipline policy.

Home Visits

Student and family home visits are an opportunity for you and your child's teacher to get to know one another. It will also be a time to share a variety of information concerning school readiness, health, family engagement, and to get input from you about the child and our program.

Home visits will be completed twice per year. The initial (1st) home visit will take place before the school year starts. The final (2nd) home visit will be completed at the end of the school year.

Connected Learning Experiences



In alignment with our Reggio Emilia inspired approach, connected learning experiences help to tie the child and school to the community through meaningful experiences within the context of related topics of study. You will receive notice before an upcoming trip. Though enrollment in our program implies consent for participation in trips, an additional form will be sent home requiring a second signature for each trip. Please fill the form out and send it back in a timely manner. Families are invited to join their child for trips. For children ages 3 and up whose families would prefer NOT to participate, care is NOT provided. Behavior Intervention Plans may require parent/guardian chaperones. If a child with a BIP does not have an eligible chaperone, they may come to school only when the trip is concluded.

* **Imagination Station** will provide alternate care for all Toddlers and two-year-old students and will require assistance from parent/guardian volunteers for transportation.

Outdoor Play

Gross motor play is an essential part of children’s healthy development and is a key objective in our school readiness and curriculum goals. Teachers are required to provide children daily gross motor play time including outdoor time when the “real feel” temperature is 25 degrees Fahrenheit and above. We follow the guidance from local weather stations regarding ozone days and extreme temperatures or weather. A child will only be excused from outdoor play with a doctor’s note clearly stating why the child cannot go outside.

Education Resources for Parents

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – Research on child development, advocacy, activities, parent and community outreach, teacher education and training:

<http://www.naeyc.org/>

Zero to Three - Parenting, early child development, policy and advocacy

<https://www.zerotothree.org/>

Head Start - Everything Head Start

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning - Activities and ideas for helping children develop social and emotional competencies. Dealing with feelings.

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

The Ounce of Prevention - Parenting tools, advocacy, videos

<http://www.theounce.org/>

High Scope

<https://highscope.org/active-learning-at-home/>

Conscious Discipline

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/about/parents/>

Ages and Stages

<https://agesandstages.com/>

Eligibility and Enrollment

To complete the eligibility application process for the **Head Start** program, the following documents are required:

- Child's Birth Certificate
- Child's Insurance Card
- Child's Current Immunization Records
- Previous 12 months of income (W2s, 1040, SSI statement, Proof of SNAP benefits, etc)
- Parent's Photo ID

Eligibility will be determined based on Head Start federal guidelines. Selection and enrollment will be based on our approved set of criteria that is designed to prioritize the children and families who are most in need in our community.

Enrollment will be completed with your Family Advocate during an in-person meeting to sign enrollment forms and learn the ins and outs of the program. Additional medical documentation such

as physical exam, dental exam, allergy forms, lead and hgb results will be due prior to enrollment into the program.

Enrollment at **Imagination Station (non-Head-Start funded)** is on a first come-first served basis, and contingent on the availability of open spots in the program. Potential enrollees will be required to provide:

- Program application
- Birth Certificate
- Current Immunization Records
- Current physical exam
- Allergy forms
- \$200 tuition deposit

Health and Safety

Required Health Screenings and Immunizations

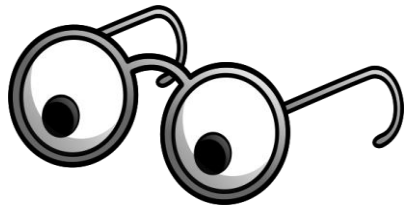
Head Start requires health screenings for all children that participate in the program. These screenings are also available for all students that attend our early childhood programs, to ensure a healthy, safe, and well-rounded program for all children.

Hearing Exams

Your child will receive a hearing exam **upon entry into the program** within the first 45 days of the first day of school. Your child will be re-screened should an issue be noted by either the parent or teacher. If they fail that exam, we'll refer your child to a hearing specialist for a professional evaluation. You will be asked to provide documentation of that evaluation and treatment plan (if applicable) to us no later than (5) days after the evaluation.

Vision Screenings

Your child will receive a vision screening within the first 45 days of the first day of school. If your child fails this test, you will be given a list of eye doctors for a professional evaluation. You will be asked to provide documentation of the evaluation and treatment plan (if applicable) no later than (5) days after the evaluation.



Hemoglobin Test

Your doctor should provide a hemoglobin screening during your child's physical exam to check for anemia, or low iron levels. If not, we'll provide a hemoglobin screening, which does not require your child to be stuck with a needle.

Lead Test

Upon entry into the program, you must provide results of a lead test, which can be obtained through your child's physician or the La Porte County Health Dept. If you need assistance in obtaining a lead screening, please contact our Health Services Department.

Immunizations

We require a current immunization record for your child during the application process. If your child is not up-to-date, your child's doctor will create a plan to get your child on track, and we will require a copy of that plan.



Physical Exam

We require a copy of your child's physical examination prior to enrollment. The

examination must provide details of all information on our physical form and is required to be updated annually. We recommend that you make an appointment with your child's physician at least (1) month before the exam expires. The exam must have the printed name of the physician as well as a signature and date that the exam was completed. We encourage families to find a "medical home," or a regular doctor who can see your child for regular well-child exams as well as for illnesses or injuries. If you need help finding a medical home, please contact your main office and we will assist you.

Dental Exam

We require a completed dental exam report within 45 days of the first day of school. If your child requires treatment, you must also provide documentation of the treatment or appointment for treatment within 5 days of the dental visit.

Although dental exam reports are valid for one year, we recommend dental check-ups every six months. We encourage families to find a "dental home," or a dentist who can attend to your child's dental needs on a regular basis. If you need help finding a dental home, please contact your main office and we will assist you.

Sick Child Policy

If your child is absent for more than (3) days due to an illness we must receive, either by fax or by hand delivery, a return to school note from your

child's doctor. To ensure the health and wellness of all of the children and staff, no child will be permitted back in school unless a note is received.

Please do not send your child to school with a fever of 100 degrees or greater. If they have a fever at school, the child must be picked up within 30 minutes. Your child must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before they can return to school. Our strict sick policy is the only way to keep communicable diseases from spreading to other children.

If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness, or you suspect they have a contagious illness, do not send them to school. If you need help getting them into a doctor, please do not hesitate to call your main office for assistance.

An ill child will not be able to attend school if one or more of the following exists, and **MUST** have a doctor's note to return:

- A. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the facility activities
- B. The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of all children
- C. The child has any of the following:
 - A temperature above 100 degrees
 - Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness (abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea,

two or more episodes of vomiting in 24 hours, a rash with fever, wheezing, behavior change, or other unusual signs)

- Ringworm (scalp/body) until treatment is started.
- “Pink eye” or “red eye”: consists of white discharge from the eye, often with matted eyelids. Child cannot return until examined by a physician and approved for readmission 24 hours after treatment has been started.
- Pertussis: child cannot return until five days after treatment started.
- TB(Tuberculosis): until a health care provider determines that the disease is not contagious
- Chicken Pox: until six days after start of rash or all sores have crusted over
- Mumps: until nine days after start of symptoms (Swelling of cheeks)
- Measles: until six days after start of rash
- Rubella: until six days after start of rash
- Shingles: (if lesions cannot be covered) until lesions are dry
- Scabies: until 24 hours of treatment
- The child who has been diagnosed with a communicable disease will need a physician’s note determining that the child is no longer communicable and can participate in the

classroom activities.

If your child is actively vomiting during the morning before school, do not send them to school.

If a child is injured at school, staff will take necessary steps to obtain emergency medical care. These steps may include, but are not limited to:

- Administering appropriate first aid
- If an injury is serious, we will contact parents, guardians, or your family physician
- We will call an ambulance if we feel it is necessary to get emergency medical services
- Staff will prepare an incident/accident report for parents and for the State Licensing agency in the case of serious injury.

Lice Policy

If your child has lice or nits (white eggs that adhere to the hair shaft), please contact your child's physician for a prescription for lice treatment or use an over-the-counter product. Your child can stay in school until the end of the day upon notification of lice, but will have to bring in a doctor's note or copy of prescription that your child has been treated prior to returning to school. We recommend all family members in the household to be treated as well to lower chances of child getting lice again. This policy is the only

way that we can prevent lice from spreading to other children. If you need assistance with education on how to remove lice, contact our Health Services Department.

Medication Policy

If a child must take medication while at school, it must be in the original container. Prescriptions must have the original pharmacy label showing a prescription number, name of medication, date filled, physician's name, child's name and directions for use (frequency and dosage). Over the counter medications must also be accompanied by a doctor's note with the reason for using it and instructions for dosage.

Medication cannot be sent to school with your child. It must be brought to the school by the parent/guardian. Additionally, no medication will be sent home with a child; it must be picked up by a parent or guardian.

Medication can only be administered at school when the scheduling of the medication cannot be altered. BID (Twice Daily) medications will NOT be given at school, as these medications must be administered at home. No expired medications will be accepted and medications that expire at school must be picked up by a parent/guardian.

Parents must also complete a Request for Medication Administration Form, signed by the parent, indicating the dosage, time(s) of administration, name and phone number of the doctor, and any other important information related

to the medication or illness. Staff will record the medication administration, dosage, time, and child's name in the daily medical log.

Dietary substitutions for any child will be implemented only with a written order or prescription from the physician indicating the specific reason for the substitution and what is to be substituted.

In the case of a suspected allergic reaction to a medication, appropriate first aid will be initiated. Should that child require transport to a medical facility, the child's health file, the order for the medication, and the medication itself will accompany the child.

Parents will be responsible to ensure that we have sufficient medication for ongoing medication administration and to provide adequate refills.

If a medication should stop being administered, a discontinue order written by a physician, or other such qualified professional, must be provided to the main office.

Asthma

Inhalers must be accompanied by a doctor's prescription like other medication. Inhalers must also include a spacer device (to ensure proper dosage) which can be requested from your doctor. We will also require your doctor to provide an Asthma Rescue Plan.

Family Services

A major component of **Head Start** programming is Family Services. We strive to provide comprehensive services not only to Head Start children, but also to their families. In our program, every family will have their own Family Advocate.

Your Family Advocate will provide family visits, create goals with family members, plan family events, and connect your family to community resources. They work closely with teachers to develop plans of action and determine ways to make Head Start programming even better. Let them know what they can do for you!

Your Family Advocate will help you achieve your goals, support your volunteer and education opportunities, and help navigate local community resources. For example, if you currently have a part-time job, but want to further your education through a vocational program...ask your Family Advocate for assistance! They will help locate vocational programs or direct you to where to go to obtain your GED, etc.

Family Goal Setting for Head Start children

Each year, your Family Advocate will complete a Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) with you. The FPA is a goal-setting process so the Family Advocate can learn your interests, strengths, and needs. They can help you reach your goals, whether it be to get a new job or find ways to volunteer in your community. Within the first 60 days of school, your Family Advocate will set up a family visit at school, your home, or in a safe place in the community to check-in on the FPA that you

developed during enrollment. After that, Family Advocates will follow-up with each family monthly to check-in on FPA and family well-being. However, you can always contact them sooner if you need something!

Parent Engagement

Parent and family engagement is key to your child's education and success. We provide a variety of opportunities for parent engagement and also invite you to make suggestions for how we can improve! Some of the activities that we provide on a regular basis are:

- Parent Committee Meetings
- Policy Council
- Family Fun Nights
- And more...let us know if you have other ideas, too!

We distribute important information on upcoming events on Learning Genie and Facebook, as well as through email, and in your child's backpack.

Father/Father-figure Engagement

We acknowledge, respect, and promote the unique identity of each child and family composition. Research indicates that positive adult male figures are important to kids' growth and development! Our program wants our fathers and father figures involved in our programming, events, and children's education! If you are a father or father figure, we want YOU engaged. We offer

opportunities year-round for father engagement and would like to hear from you about how you want to be involved.

Parent Committee & Policy Council

Parent meetings provide an effective and meaningful way for parents and guardians to guide our program decision-making. Meetings will provide parent education, curriculum planning, and methods of communication with staff.

Our **Parent Committee** holds regular monthly meetings, at least 6 times per year. ALL parents are members of the Parent Committee and will elect Parent Officers as well as Parent Representatives on the Policy Council. If you are interested in taking on leadership roles, or just helping out, please let your Family Advocate or office staff know!

Policy Council members meet every month to approve financial reports, funding requests, and policy changes. The Council is made up of at least 51% parents, but also includes governing board members and community members. This is a fantastic opportunity for parents and guardians to learn more about program operations, funding, and programming. It is also a chance to make decisions that ensure we are doing the best that we can to improve the lives of children and families, as well as the broader community.

Parent/Guardian Trainings & Workshops

Our programs will offer trainings and workshops to families that are of interest to them. Once parents and guardians complete the Family Interest Survey, staff will set up workshops and trainings for parents to attend. We can offer childcare after school hours and will provide certificates for attending and completing the training sessions. We work with community partners to provide relevant and useful sessions to parents and guardians.



Community Resources

Each site and Family Advocate has a Community Resource Directory. If you are looking for a certain type of resource, you can go to your center or call your Family Advocate who can help locate resources and refer you if it is outside of our programs.

Nutrition and Food

Our programs provide nutritious meals daily. We serve breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Our menus are posted near the front doors, outside of the kitchen, and in your child's classroom. All meals and snacks comply with the nutritional standards provided by the USDA and CACFP.



Because a varied diet is the healthiest diet, we encourage children to try new foods. We also provide fun food and cooking activities in the classroom to encourage children to experiment with new foods. We hope that you'll support us in this effort by trying new foods at home and allowing your child to help you prepare meals.

CACFP and Indiana State childcare center regulations do not allow parents to bring in foods that have not been prepared in a kitchen approved by the County Health Department.

We invite you to join your child for any meal or snack here at school. Please let us know in advance if you plan to join us so that we can prepare enough food.

Allergies and Food Substitutions

A doctor's order must be provided in order to substitute foods due to allergies. The form can be found in the front office, and **MUST** be submitted prior to the child's start date or at enrollment.

Volunteering

Volunteers are an essential component of our programs, and by donating their time and energy, they make a huge contribution to the success of our programs and community efforts. We believe that utilizing parents/guardians as volunteers provides enriching school experiences for all participants. We provide structured opportunities and appropriate support for all interested parents/guardians to participate in the classroom.

We highly encourage parent volunteering and strive to put parents in volunteer positions that match their interests, abilities, and time availability, as well as provide opportunities that add to their skillset and experience.

Parents and guardians can volunteer in a variety of ways, including:

- ✓ **In the Classroom:** Put your talents, skills, time, and knowledge to use in the classroom!
 - Field trips
 - Read to the class
 - Organizing classroom materials
 - Sharing a cultural experience or talent
- ✓ **At the Site:**
 - Help in the office
 - Plant and maintain outside gardens
 - Clean storage areas
 - Help set-up/clean-up during events and celebrations

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your child's teacher or your Family Advocate.

Public Relations Release

The exceptional program in which you have enrolled your child is likely to be considered newsworthy, as it represents a unique collaboration of many community organizations and boasts the highest quality of care. It is also likely that our marketing efforts would be enhanced by pictures, sound recordings, or artwork of the children in the center. Please indicate on the form provided at enrollment whether or not you consent to releasing such material for these purposes.

Such uses may include advertising, publicity or public interest purposes in newspapers, newsletters, radio, magazines, social media, or TV.

Photographs and video recordings will be used internally for all children for the purpose of assessment documentation, portfolio development, practice-based coaching, and behavior intervention plans. Enrollment in our program implies consent for use for these internal purposes.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

Staff Standards of Conduct

All persons employed in our Early Childhood Programs are required to abide by the following standards of conduct:

- It is my responsibility to implement positive strategies to support children's well-being, to prevent and address challenging behaviors within the classroom and on-site.
- I will not maltreat, nor endanger the health or safety of children. I will not: use corporal punishment; isolation; bind or tie a child to restrict movement; or tape a child's mouth as part of the disciplinary process.
- I will not use or withhold food as a punishment or reward, nor use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child.
- I will not physically abuse a child, or use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejection, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corruption toward a child.
- I will not use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family.
- I will not use physical activity or outdoor time as a form of punishment or reward.
- I will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family. I will not stereotype on any basis, including gender,

race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.

- I will comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members.
- I will ensure no child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants or contractors while under their care. Volunteers are NEVER to be left unsupervised with children.
- I understand that all staff are "mandated reporters". All staff are legally obligated to report suspected child abuse and neglect immediately (within 1 hour) to the Indiana State Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-800-5556).
- If applicable, I am responsible to recognize my need for assistance or support when working with a child. I am to express my need for assistance in writing, forwarding the request on to my direct supervisor or management staff.

Family Code of Conduct

All parents, guardians, and family members that participate in our programs are required to abide by the family code of conduct, outlined below:

- It is my responsibility to implement positive strategies to support my child's well-being, to build reciprocal relationships with staff,

and to, at all time, treat others with dignity and respect.

- I will dress my child appropriately for the day's weather forecast
- I will protect the confidentiality of everyone in the program by refraining from taking pictures or videos on any Paladin property or at any Paladin sponsored event
- I will not swear, curse, threaten, or argue with family, children, or staff
- I will not inflict punishment, physical or verbal, on my child
- I will not leave any children unattended on Paladin property or in a vehicle without adult supervision
- I will not bring tobacco, vapes, alcohol, illegal substances, weapons, or firearms on the property, per the State of Indiana Childcare Licensing Regulations

We all have an ethical responsibility to one another. The bond between our children, families, and staff begins with respect. By enrolling in Paladin's Early Childhood Programs, I agree to engage with staff and other families in a way which fosters positive communication and with the well-being of children at the center of our decision making. I will conduct myself in a manner which preserves the physical and emotional safety of children, staff, and families.

Conflict Resolution

We place immense value on the parent-teacher relationships formed in our programs. When

families and staff have conflicts, we encourage them to work together to find a mutually agreeable solution. Use the following steps when navigating conflict with staff:

1. **Communication** in a secure two-way conversation, clarify the cultural or philosophical difference leading to disagreement
2. **Negotiate** by brainstorming ideas. Highlight the strengths of each perspective to come to an agreeable solution
3. **Work together** to discover a solution on which both parties can compromise
4. **Resolve** the dispute by coming to an agreement which results in the best action for the child. This may be your solution, the teacher's solution, or a mutually derived solution reflecting both perspectives.

If you engage in this process and no solution can be agreed upon, then you may request to meet with the staff person and their immediate supervisor.

Acknowledgment of Family Handbook

I understand and agree to the terms and conditions outlined within this parent handbook, including the Family Code of Conduct and the Conflict Resolution Statement, for Paladin’s Early Childhood Education programs.

Date: _____

Child Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Staff Signature: _____