

PARENT HANDBOOK

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE LEARNING AND BELONGING PRESCHOOL?

The University of Montana's **Learning and Belonging (LAB) Preschool** has a rich history in providing early care and education for Missoula area children while simultaneously serving as a best practice clinical field-experience site for UM students. The program began its operation as a nursery school affiliated with the former Home Economics department back in the 1930s!

Preschool operations were transitioned to the College of Education in 1988. In 2009, the program moved from McGill Hall to its current location in the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education building. A recent 2019 addition includes two more classrooms with accompanying observation rooms as well as a second seminar room. Today the LAB continues to meet the needs of young children, their families and future early childhood professionals.

WHAT ARE THE LEARNING AND BELONGING PRESCHOOL'S MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY?

Mission:

The Learning and Belonging (LAB) Preschool is a model early childhood program supported by the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education. The LAB works in partnership with the Department of Teaching and Learning to provide University of Montana students an opportunity to enhance their understanding of young children and the teaching/learning process. The LAB Preschool provides academic course support, resources, mentoring and key practicum learning experiences for students studying early childhood and elementary education as well as other human service degree programs at the University of Montana. The LAB's multi-age early childhood program invites children of all abilities and their families to participate in a caring community designed to promote lifelong learning (L) and (A) belonging (B) in terms of self-acceptance and as a member of a group.

Philosophy:

At the Learning and Belonging Preschool, we maintain a small group size in each session in order to support our goal of meeting the individual strengths, interests, and needs of every child in the program. The classroom environment and expectations are created with respect for child development and the individuality of children. In order to achieve our goal, we:

- Welcome and value the uniqueness of each child.
- Support each child's active participation in real, meaningful projects designed to allow success and challenge at individual developmental levels.
- Introduce activities and materials that foster development of the whole child in multiple areas including creative arts, language and literacy, mathematics and numeracy, physical development and health, science, social and emotional development, and social studies.
- Offer multiple opportunities for self-selected exploration, social interaction, and problem solving to enhance children's natural motivation to learn.
- Use positive child guidance techniques that teach skills and support children's emerging self-control.
- Understand that parents/guardians are the child's most important teacher(s). We respect families' expertise regarding their individual cultural beliefs and practices and welcome all to the LAB Preschool community.

WHAT CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT APPROACHES ARE USED?

We value the significance of early learning for children and understand how important quality education is to parents. The LAB Preschool relies on knowledge of child growth and development, current early childhood education research, recommendations of professional organizations and the Montana Early Learning Standards in all our programming. We observe and document children's progress utilizing formal and informal assessment tools and strategies in order to guide our teaching practices. Our team of informed and highly educated teachers offer preschool children a stimulating learning environment that supports the development of knowledge, skills, and a love for learning that will prepare for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Core Practices:

While there is not a single curriculum that has been identified as "the best" for meeting the early care and education needs of children, the following practices are linked with positive learning outcomes and form the foundation of our curriculum. The LAB Preschool is committed to:

- Providing a rich, engaging verbal environment.
- Blending play, authentic learning experiences, and direct instruction so children have multiple opportunities for learning in key areas.
- Arranging a schedule and routines that are consistent but not overly structured or regimented.
- Developing respectful and reciprocal relationships with children and their families.

Meaningful Interest Based Learning:

We recognize the importance of creating meaningful learning experiences for young children based upon their interests. Teachers introduce projects that provide children hands-on opportunities to use skills they are learning to explore the real objects, events and places that they are currently curious about. In this way children become highly engaged in the learning process enhancing the likelihood developing skills will be mastered and sustained.

Curriculum Content:

The content of the LAB Preschool curriculum has been developed in response to what children ages three to five need to know, understand, and be able to do as established by the Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS). These standards were developed through the collaborative work of early childhood professionals, public school teachers and principals, and parents. MELS are organized into seven curriculum areas: **Creative Arts, Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Numeracy, Physical Development and Health, Science, Social Emotional Development AND Social Studies.**

Teachers have access to multiple assessment tools that are in alignment with the MELS such as the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* for screening and *Teaching Strategies GOLD* for monitoring developmental growth. Equal in value to these more formal tools, is a teacher’s ongoing informal observational assessment. The LAB teachers document child growth and development using multiple informal methods (i.e., notes, work samples, photos, video) daily. All assessment results, formal and informal, guide and support curriculum planning. In this way, an emergent curriculum develops and no two school years look the same.

WHEN IS THE LEARNING AND BELONGING PRESCHOOL OPEN?

Operating Schedule:

The Learning and Belonging Preschool is in operation during the University of Montana’s academic school year, September through mid-May. The program follows UM’s calendar and observes all UM holidays. This calendar is typically quite similar to the calendars established by Missoula’s local school districts.

The LAB Preschool **closes for weather** if the *University of Montana* closes classes or if *Missoula County Public Schools* close. It is smart to stay tuned to your favorite local network, or check [UM’s](#) and [MCPS’s](#) websites. In the event either UM or MCPS has a delayed start to their day, the Morning classes will close, but the Afternoon class will begin as usual.

Preschool Classes:

Class Option	Times
Morning	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Afternoon	1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Extended Preschool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning & Afternoon sessions • Lunch care between sessions 	9:00 am – 4:00 pm

All classes include a mixed age group and are in session Mondays through Thursdays. Fridays are reserved for UM student seminars, teacher reflection and program planning.

HOW ARE CHILDREN ENROLLED IN THE LEARNING AND BELONGING PRESCHOOL?

Enrollment in each class is limited to 16 children. We are committed to developing a connected community for young children supported by the small group size. In addition, all children are enrolled for the full four-day session. This means that you and your child

can anticipate interacting with the same group of teachers, children and their families consistently throughout the school year.

Age Requirements and Eligibility:

All three, four and five-year-old children of the greater Missoula community are eligible for enrollment. Affiliation with the University of Montana is NOT a requirement.

Enrollment Process:

A waiting list is maintained on an ongoing basis at the LAB Preschool. Families can request to be added to the waiting list at anytime by contacting the director. Enrollment for the upcoming preschool year takes place in four phases:

1. Near the beginning of spring semester, enrollment for the next year is opened to children who are currently enrolled, as well as their age eligible siblings.
2. The next enrollment phase is open to siblings of children who were enrolled at the LAB in previous years.
3. Children qualifying with “high needs” per Montana’s STARS to Quality program are offered enrollment during the third phase. As a participant in the STARS program the LAB is required to reserve 20% of our slots for children with high needs according to Montana’s STARS to Quality program.
4. The final phase invites all remaining families. Vacant slots are offered in order of intake date on the waiting list until all three class lists are filled.

WHAT ABOUT TUITION? WHEN AND HOW DO I PAY?

Tuition is charged on an annual basis. An annual tuition based approach is important to the LAB’s sustainability allowing us to meet daily and monthly expenses, which remain consistent even when your child is absent.

For your convenience, the annual tuition amount is divided into 10 equal payments. The **first of the 10 payments serves as a non-refundable deposit** and is collected upon enrollment. This first payment secures your child’s slot.

The **nine remaining tuition payments are due by the 15th of every month, September – May**. Payment (in form of check or cash) can be dropped in the orange locked box located in the hall towards the playground doors. It is also possible to line up direct billing payments through your financial institution. Simply instruct your bank or credit union to issue a monthly payment to:

Learning and Belonging Preschool
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, Mt 59812

Class	Total Annual Tuition	10 Payments of:
Morning or Afternoon 3-hr Sessions	\$ 3050	\$ 305
Extended Preschool Includes AM & PM sessions, and lunch care	\$6500	\$650

WHAT WILL MY CHILD'S PRESCHOOL DAY BE LIKE?

The classroom environment:

Our classrooms are large, open light filled spaces. Each has an exterior door that leads to a patio or playground in order to extend the learning environment outdoors. Materials and furnishings have a natural aesthetic. Centers within each classroom invite small groups of children to engage in play-based learning. Learning centers include block play, art, reading and writing, science and math, dramatic play, and sensory exploration. Each classroom has a bathroom with preschool-sized sinks and toilets. Every child has an individual cubby to store personal belongings.

Typical Daily Schedule:

The day is guided by a routine developed to meet the needs of children in the preschool years. Through careful planning, each day offers a balance of large and small group experiences, child and teacher-directed time, and active and quiet activities. While the schedule remains flexible to meet the daily interests and needs of the group, a typical day includes:

- WORK JOBS and GATHERING: Children engage with manipulative toys, writing materials, books and one another while waiting for everyone to arrive. The teacher then gathers the group to describe the day's center choices and activities.
- LEARNING CENTERS: Children choose from a range of play areas presenting opportunities for social interaction, project work, and learning. A nutritious daily snack is offered during center time and gives children an energy boost for a busy day.
- CIRCLE: A large group meeting time used to build community through sharing, songs, and stories. Project topics and investigations are often introduced through books, discussions, and presentations from visiting experts.
- SMALL GROUP: Children gather in small groups to complete a teacher-planned activity that often relates to the project topic and introduces social, science, math, and/or literacy concepts using age-appropriate materials and methods.
- OUTDOOR PLAY: Opportunities to run, jump, and climb are provided on the playground daily.

The Extended Day includes:

- LUNCH: A small group of children enjoy a lunch brought from home in their morning classroom. Two student employees dine with the children to supervise and model healthy eating habits.
- TRANSITION: After lunch, children brush teeth, collect their belongings, and enter the afternoon classroom. The student employees accompany the small group to support greeting with afternoon classmates and update teachers with any pertinent information.

Field Trips:

Learning within the campus environment is supported by many opportunities to move beyond the walls of the classroom. Children enjoy a spacious playground as well as opportunities to use campus facilities. Most all of our field trips are within walking distance. Parents sign a field trip permission slip at the beginning of the school year. When an event is planned, you receive notice of the date, location, and times of the excursion. There are, however, times when we choose to take advantage of

spontaneous events, interest or perhaps a glimpse of good weather. In this case, teachers will do their best to keep you fully informed of where on campus the group is adventuring outside the classroom. Should a field trip be arranged for off campus, advanced notification from the teacher will be provided along with a separate field-trip permission slip.

WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO BRING TO SCHOOL?

Every child will need:

- A labeled bag (such as a gallon-size Ziplock) containing **one change of clothes**; shirt, pants, socks and underwear. *Children attending the Extended Preschool option should bring two bags each with a spare set of clothing.* This bag(s) will be stored in the bathroom throughout the school year. If an item is used, the soiled piece of clothing will be placed in your child's cubby. Montana Child Care Licensing policy requires soiled clothing be wrapped in plastic and set home for laundering. Simply bring a replacement of the clothing item back to school the next day to replenish the supply in the Ziplock bag.
- **Shoes or sturdy slippers** are required inside the classroom. During inclement weather it is helpful to keep a pair of house shoes/slippers at school to change into in order to keep the floors clean and safe to play on.
- Weather-appropriate **outdoor clothing** is essential. Please pay attention to seasonal and daily temperatures. We go outside everyday unless in the case of the following extremes:
 - Wind chill at or below 0° Fahrenheit
 - Heat index at or above 95° Fahrenheit
 - For air pollution/smoke levels the LAB follows the [Department of Environmental Quality's "Today's Air" website](#) and keeps children indoors when the air quality is deemed Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, orange zone.

Extended Preschool will need a lunch:

- We suggest a healthy and balanced variety of foods that do not require refrigeration or reheating.
- Filtered water is provided. We would prefer that children not bring juice or drinks.
- Please also ensure that packed food does not include typical choking hazards such as; whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, hard pretzels, or hot dogs.
- Per DPHHS Child Care Licensing Regulations, *lunch and supper for children who are between one and 12 years old must include one serving of meat or meat alternate, two vegetables or two fruits or one vegetable and one fruit, one serving of bread or bread alternate, and one serving of fluid milk.*

WHAT WILL PARENT INVOLVEMENT BE LIKE FOR ME?

Parent/Preschool Partnerships:

As your child's first and most significant teacher, you are invited to:

- Share your goals, hopes, and dreams for your child. The LAB teaching staff is committed to hearing from and partnering with you.
- Complete the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* screening tool with your child twice annually.
- Know, understand, and discuss with us the program's mission, philosophy and

- goals.
- Stop in any time! Our observation rooms are the perfect place to be able to watch your child in our classrooms without disrupting the natural flow of the day. Of course, you are also always welcome to join in the classroom.
 - Provide feedback and suggestions to teachers and the director via face-to-face communication, phone, email, annual surveys or the confidential suggestion box. The director has an “open door policy”. Feel free to stop by anytime.
 - Work with your child's classroom teachers to plan special activities or events based on your family traditions, celebrations, talents, and interests.
 - Be involved in the parent planning committee or the LAB advisory committee.
 - Participate in conferences with your child's teacher (fall and spring) to discuss your child's progress in the program.
 - Contact your child's teacher to schedule a meeting at any time to share your celebrations and/or concerns about your child.

Arrival and Departure Routines:

Please plan to allow transition time for your child and to visit with your child's teacher.

- Sign your child in and out each day on the posted attendance sheet. This is an important Montana Child Care Licensing requirement that ensures your child is accounted for.
- Please be certain to always say goodbye to your child and assure them that you will return.
- Complete and sign an authorized release permission slip if anyone other than the parent/guardian will be picking the child up from the LAB. We cannot allow a child to leave with anyone other than the parent/guardian unless we have signed consent. Inform those picking up that we ask for picture identification.
- It is important to arrive on time at the end of the day (12:00, 3:30 or 5:15 dependent upon the class your child is enrolled). Teachers are expected to be engaged in processing meetings with field-experience students immediately following the preschool session limiting their availability to provide quality child contact time after school hours.

HOW DO YOU GUIDE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR?

The LAB practices a proactive approach to child guidance in order to develop a caring community of young learners. See the LAB's Positive Child Guidance policy below for specifics.

Policy Title: *Positive Child Guidance*

NAEYC Criteria: **1B.8, 1B.9, 1B.10, 1E.1, 6D.3, 10B.18, 10E.2,**

References: *Learning and Belonging Preschool Positive Child Guidance Procedures, Guiding the Behavior of Young Children (Child Care plus+), Effective Practices in Early Childhood Education, by Sue Bredekamp, 2011.*

Guidance Philosophy: *A positive guidance approach is used in our classrooms to help children understand limits and to support their emerging self-regulation skills. Appropriate guidance allows children to value themselves and others and to cultivate respect for each other within a classroom setting. Children's behavior typically reflects what they are experiencing. It is vital to assess the function of behavior in order to understand the child's actions.*

Guidance Strategies: The LAB's guidance approach begins even before children arrive through thoughtful planning of the environment, placement of materials, grouping of children, scheduling of activities and transitions within the classroom in order to prevent potential problems. Individual children and situations vary. Thus, it is important to follow a guidance approach that can be individualized as necessary.

Our approach to guidance includes:

- A focus on developing a positive relationship with each child and family,
- Reflecting on the antecedents (What happened before the behavior?)
- Use of strategies that support the development of a positive classroom community characterized by joy and respect for diversity
- Clear, consistent boundaries which are supported with encouragement, practice, and ongoing teaching
- Encouragement of internal self-regulation
- Modeling, as well as teaching, positive behaviors
- Facilitating positive self-esteem by accepting children's feelings
- Modeling multi-step problem-solving techniques*

A Positive Approach: We teach and implement a multi-step problem-solving process* in our classrooms. We believe that children are capable of coming up with proactive solutions to most of the problems they encounter. We provide encouragement, offer choices, redirect and set reasonable limits. Isolated "time-out" practices are not utilized in the LAB Preschool program.

Physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion shall never be used in our program. We do not equate guidance or discipline with punishment.

- Examples of physical punishment include: Shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.
- Examples of psychological abuse include shaming, name-calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.
- Examples of coercion include Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).

Family Involvement: The LAB Preschool staff values partnering with families (and as necessary professional service providers) to effectively problem-solve and jointly develop behavior action plans. Together, we discuss the child's successes and challenges at home and in the preschool. Teachers strive to incorporate the family's successful guidance strategies into the classroom as appropriate. Parents are encouraged to observe, ask for information, voice opinions and make recommendations.

Positive Child Guidance; Action Plan and Resource Binder:

The LAB's Positive Child Guidance; Action Plan and Resource Binder provides Positive Child Guidance Procedures and Resources for teaching staff. Staff will utilize the binder when developing behavior action plans.

LAB Preschool Rules:

1. Take good care of yourself
2. Take good care of each other
3. Take good care of the school and the things in it

***Multi-Step Problem Solving Process:**

1. Identify the problem;
2. Brainstorm three ways to handle it;
3. Choose one;
4. Try out the strategy;
5. Evaluate how well the strategy worked.

Suspension/expulsion: The LAB Preschool is an inclusive environment where staff strive to ensure all children are able to participate and thrive. The LAB views the suspension, expulsion, or other exclusionary practices to be the last possible scenario after all efforts have been made to meet the needs of the child within the program. The decision to suspend or expel will be an agreement made in collaboration with the family, any related-service team members, LAB teaching staff, and director that suspension/exclusion is in the best interest of the child.

Suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures may only occur after LAB teaching staff have attended to and followed the LAB's Positive Child Guidance procedures.

If exclusionary measures must be taken, the LAB Preschool will offer assistance to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement within the community.

This policy complies with federal and Montana civil rights laws.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO KEEP CHILDREN HEALTHY AND SAFE?

Routine Health and Safety Practices:

Prevention is the focus of our health and safety practices. Children are supervised at all times. An **up-to-date immunization record per Montana Department of Health and Human Services regulations, is required on the first day of preschool.** Effective hand washing is used by teachers and repeatedly taught to both UM students and children to reduce the spread of illness in the program. Toys, materials and equipment are routinely cleaned and maintained.

A telephone is available in each classroom in case of emergency and family contact information is kept with the phone as well as the number to the poison control center. Stocked first-aid kits are kept in the classrooms and on the playground. A portable first-aid kit is taken along on field trips.

Exterior doors to the LAB remain locked at all times. Access is limited to the LAB Staff, field-experience students, currently enrolled families, and a select few director-approved UM and College of Education staff/faculty. Parents are issued a key fob at open house that allows access during school hours. All others, including non-ECE field-experience students, must ring the door bell and be admitted by a LAB staff member.

Meeting Children's Nutritional Needs:

The curriculum includes learning experiences for the children regarding healthy foods. Parents are encouraged to share diet restrictions with the teachers. It is essential that information about food allergies is expressed and recorded on the program intake and emergency contact forms. Daily snacks, provided by the LAB Preschool, represent a range of food groups across the week and provide a natural opportunity for discussion of healthy food choices. Snack is offered as a center time choice so that children are able to self-monitor their hunger needs. A rotating three-week menu is provided to all families and is posted on the family bulletin board.

When Children Are Ill the Illness Exclusion policy copied below is followed:

Policy Title: Risk Management: Illness Exclusion

NAEYC Criteria: 6A.8 and 10B.19

Resources: State of Montana Licensing Requirements of Child Day Care Centers, "Model Child Care Health Policies."

Procedure/practice:

At the LAB Preschool, we believe that mild illnesses can be managed in the program, but children with moderate to severe illnesses may need to be excluded because they need special care and/or to protect the other children in care. We believe planning ahead for possible exclusion will make it easier and less stressful for the child and family.

This Illness Exclusion Policy was developed to increase awareness of the increased potential for group transmission of illness in the childcare setting and to decrease the spread of communicable disease between all. Unless otherwise noted, this policy applies equally to teachers, support staff, and field-experience students as it does to children attending the LAB. All notations of "child" below apply also to any adult participating in the program.

The decision to exclude or dismiss a child from preschool will be based on the child's signs and symptoms and/or the diagnosis of a health care provider as outlined below:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the routine activities of the program.
- The illness results in a greater care need than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- Signs or symptoms of possible severe illness such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or complaints of severe pain.
- The child has any of the following signs or symptoms of contagious illness:
 - Fever accompanied by behavior changes, oral temperature of 100.3 degrees or greater, or a temporal (forehead) temperature of 100 degrees or greater, in the past 48 hours, or until a medical evaluation determines the child may be in child care.
 - Vomiting: Two or more episodes in the previous 48 hours.
 - Diarrhea: increased number of stools, watery stools, stools with mucus or blood, and/or stools that cannot be contained by a diaper or clothing and are different and more frequent than the child's regular pattern.

- Bacterial infections listed until treated for 24 hours with antibiotics and the child feels well enough to participate.
 - Conjunctivitis
 - Strep throat
 - Impetigo
 - Skin infections or draining burns
 - Lice or Scabies until after treatment and no nits present.
- Generalized rash with fever or behavior changes or jaundiced skin color until medical evaluation determines symptoms do not indicate excludable communicable disease.
- Chicken Pox until 6 days after onset of rash or until all sores have dried and crusted.
- **COVID positivity or COVID exposure/close contact** – The LAB Preschool will follow the current guidance of the Missoula City-County Health Department (MCCHD) in regard to COVID exclusion. If a child, parent, staff member, field-experience student, or other adult receives a positive COVID test or is a close contact to a positive case, they must refer to the MCCHD website <https://www.missoulainfo.com/> for direction.

Parents will be notified if their child becomes ill at the preschool and meets the criteria for exclusion. If unable to reach parents with the contact information provided on the Emergency Contact Form, the emergency contact persons listed on the form will be notified. The child must be picked up as soon as possible. If parents are unable to pick up within 30 minutes of notification, they are responsible for coordinating someone else who can meet this timeframe.

Readmission to the program: After an absence, the family needs to share pertinent information with the staff regarding the illness. In most cases, the child needs to be **symptom free without fever reducers for a full 48 hours**. A release from the health care provider is required after a serious illness and/or the diagnosis of a communicable illness. COVID positive and close contact cases must follow direction for readmission from the MCCHD website <https://www.missoulainfo.com/>.

This policy applies to all enrolled children, teaching staff, and participating adults, from the first date of attendance. Parents are provided a copy of this policy at the time of enrollment and a copy is given to all parents every year in October. This policy is consistent with state regulation and may be more restrictive.

Medication Administration During Preschool Hours:

In most cases we prefer that medication be given directly by the parent. However, for children who require medication to be administered during preschool hours, the appropriate medication administration forms must be completed and signed by the parent. Medication will be stored in the locked box located in the director's office unless deemed necessary to have in closer proximity to child (i.e., EpiPens/inhalers). Medications must be in original bottle and clearly labeled with the child's name. Only staff who have completed Montana's DPHHS Medication Administration courses are permitted to administer medication. A medication log will be completed at each administration. For the full Medication Administration policy see appendix.

Emergency Procedures:

The LAB Preschool teachers maintain current CPR and first-aid training certifications. In the event of any emergency, 911 will be called immediately. Emergency services will be used to transport the child, if necessary. Whenever indicated, the teacher will also call the poison control number (1-800-222-1222).

Relocation sites are identified annually in the unlikely event that the LAB must be evacuated. Emergency relocation information and permission forms are included in the enrollment paperwork.

DOES MY CHILD NEED TO BE TOILET TRAINED? ARE THERE PROCEDURES FOR USING THE BATHROOM DURING THE SCHOOL DAY?

Toileting independence is not a requirement at the LAB Preschool. If your child is still gaining independence please visit with the teachers to ensure a supportive plan is in place that meets the developmental needs of your child and feels comfortable for your family.

Children are free to use the bathroom at anytime throughout the school day. Bathrooms are located inside each classroom and have been designed so that children have some privacy within stalls while at the same time teachers are able to visually supervise for safety and good hygiene practices.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE LEARNING AND BELONGING PRESCHOOL STAFF?**LAB Preschool Staff:**

Each LAB Preschool classroom is taught by an **Early Childhood Clinical Specialist (ECCS)**. An **Early Childhood Specialist (ECS)** and/or an **Early Childhood Education (ECE) field-experience student** co-teaches with the ECCS. This co-teaching team insures mastery level and current evidence-based early childhood teaching practices. At a minimum, the ECCS and ECS positions require a four-year degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education or related field. In addition, these teachers must be registered on the Montana Early Childhood Practitioner's Registry at a Level 6 Certification. The ECCS and ECS positions differ only in that the ECCS is also responsible for UM student supervision, reflection and course work implementation. All ECE field-experience students are listed as staff though our Montana Child Care License.

A small staff of **student employees** supports the LAB co-teaching teams. Student employees are primarily responsible for prep-work, cleaning and clerical support. They are able to participate fully in student orientation and training seminars and are often long-term employees throughout all four years of college.

The LAB's **director** is responsible for program administration in operations as well as family, community and campus/faculty outreach. This position requires a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education, or related field.

University Student Supervision:

Preschool operations and teacher schedules have been carefully orchestrated to support the development of a strong teaching team with the student interns. A thorough orientation is completed prior to involvement in the LAB and students can attend a weekly instructional seminar to enhance their developing knowledge and teaching skills. In addition, teachers meet with the UM students on a daily basis before and after each

preschool session to provide ongoing instruction and support. UM students are supervised in their work with the children.

Building Campus Partnerships:

Strong campus partnerships have emerged over time bringing a range of experiences to the children. Collaboration examples in the past have included art lessons in collaboration with the Art Department faculty and students, weekly music classes provided by Music Education students, creative dance with students in the School of Fine Arts, and PE classes with students from the Department of Health and Human Performance. While these experiences will vary from one year to the next, the teachers work hard to maintain a range of collaborative partnerships with UM programs that can enhance the preschool experience.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A CONFLICT WITH A STAFF MEMBER,
OR A CONCERN ABOUT THE PROGRAM?**

The LAB Preschool staff value family perspective and work hard to build respectful-reciprocal relationships with parents. In the event that you should have a question,

concern, or conflict of opinion, we ask that you first communicate with your child's teacher in person, by phone, or by email. If meeting with the classroom teacher doesn't resolve the issue, you may bring it to the director. If you prefer, you may also leave a suggestion, or comment, in the locked orange tuition box.

**WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
LEARNING AND BELONGING PRESCHOOL POLICIES?**

This handbook provides an overview of perinate policies and procedures. Parents have full access to the LAB Preschool Policy Handbook located in the Family Room. Digital copies are available upon request by emailing the director.

CONTACT INFORMATION

LAB telephone number: (406) 243-4262

Director email: kristin.horejsi@umontana.edu