

Palmer Public Schools

Preschool Handbook

2026-27



HOME OF THE TIGERS!

Palmer Public Schools...a community that prides itself on commitment, growth, and achievement.

Palmer Public School, 201 Commercial Street, Palmer, NE 68864



You teach your child their first and most important lessons.



Our goal is to be your partner in your child's education!

Palmer Public Schools Early Childhood Program

Tiny Tigers staff and program partners would like to welcome you and your family. We are looking forward to working with you and your family. We are excited about the upcoming year and want you to know you are a vital part of our program and we are glad you and your family will be a part of it.

Who are we?

The Palmer Public Schools Early Childhood program includes partnerships of varying degrees with agencies and institutions including: Christie Eilers Family Child Care, Planning Region #26 Family Interagency Team, Platte Valley Early Childhood Professional Development Partnerships, ESU7, Palmer Local Market, Reed's Do It Best, Palmer Volunteer Fire department/EMT, Palmer Service Center, Triple E, Palmer Vet Clinic, Palmer Childcare Center, Pinnacle Bank, Kunze Repair, Palmer Public Library, Palmer Post Office and the Palmer Community Foundation. We offer developmentally appropriate learning and play opportunities for all preschool children regardless of ability or income.

Tiny Tigers promote mental, social, emotional and physical growth in children and families. The staff recognizes that, as parents, you are the first and most important teacher of your children. We welcome your involvement in Tiny Tigers

activities. Together we will work as partners! Tiny Tigers offers you a sense of belonging, support services, and opportunities to be involved in activities that benefit your whole family. CNCS Early Childhood Programs and Platte Valley Early Childhood Professional Development Partnerships along with Tiny Tigers sponsor a variety of activities that are available to you. If you have a family member with special needs, Tiny Tigers can help.

Tiny Tigers Preschool Enrollment Guidelines (2026-2027)

Tiny Tigers Preschool welcomes children ages 3 and 4, based on age eligibility as of July 31 of the enrollment year. Enrollment is determined as follows:

- **Kindergarten Bound:** Children born before January 1, 2021 must enroll in Kindergarten.
- **Kindergarten / PreK4 Transition:** Children born between January 1, 2021 and July 31, 2021 may enroll in Kindergarten if recommended; otherwise, they are eligible for PreK4.
- **PreK4 Eligible:** Children born between August 1, 2021 and July 31, 2022 are eligible for PreK4.
- **PreK3 Eligible:** Children born between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2023 are eligible for PreK3.
- **Late Summer Birthdays:** Children born between August 1 and the first day of school may be considered for enrollment only if they meet administrative criteria.
- **Mid-Year Birthdays:** Children turning 3 after the first student day of a semester must wait until the following school year to enroll, unless identified with special needs and approved by administration.
- **Not Yet Age-Eligible:** Children not yet age-eligible for PreK3 (i.e., born after July 31, 2023) are not eligible for enrollment, except in cases of approved special education need.
- **Five-Year-Old Provision:** Five-year-olds not enrolled in Kindergarten may be eligible for preschool if special needs are present and approved by administration.

Enrollment is open to students both in and out of the Palmer School District, with the following priority:

1. Palmer district residents
2. Out-of-district students with older siblings Option Enrolled at Palmer K-12
3. Other out-of-district students, pending administrative approval and available space

Tiny Tigers Teachers

Whitney Mamot, Tayma Rasmussen, Elizabeth Shotkoski

All teachers and paraeducators will meet the requirements of NDE Rule 11. The lead teacher involved in the Palmer Early Childhood Education possesses a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education. The preschool aid qualifies for provisional certification and necessary training to obtain full certification will be coordinated and provided through ESU 7 and the Platte Valley Early Childhood Professional Development Partnership.

Where is the Tiny Tigers Preschool?

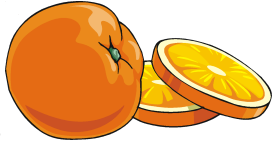
The Tiny Tigers classrooms are located in the Palmer Public Early Learning Center, 201 Commercial Street, Palmer Nebraska.

What is the daily schedule?

The Tiny Tigers normally operates Monday through Thursday during the school year and will follow the Palmer Public School calendar. There are exceptions and it should be noted that our first day of operation is on **Monday, August 17th**. The 3-year-old morning session begins at 8:00 am and concludes at 11:30 am (**please pick up promptly at 11:30 am**) with breakfast provided. The 3-year-old afternoon session begins at 12:00 pm (**please do not drop off before 12:00 pm**) and concludes at 3:30 pm with lunch provided. The 4-year-old program will start at 8:00 and go to 3:30 with breakfast and lunch provided. They will also have a rest time built into their schedule. A detailed calendar is provided to all parents and partners. There are exceptions to these "general rules" so please pay close attention to the preschool calendar that is sent home monthly, the preschool newsletter that is sent home weekly and extra notes/papers in your child's school bag.

Necessary Information

Parents/guardians are asked to provide contact information and to keep that information current. We want to be able to reach you when necessary and know whom we should contact if you are unavailable. If any information changes, for example: phone numbers, place of employment, childcare, etc. it is very important that we know right away to update your child's file. Emergency numbers need to be kept current at all times. Thank you!



Meals

Breakfast and lunch are provided through the school lunch program. Meals, and learning how to eat and dine in a family setting are part of the curriculum. Meals will be served in the cafeteria. We do request that ***each family complete a free/reduced meal application, as this will benefit the preschool program.*** If possible, we also request that families supply a snack for the 4-year-old class throughout the course of the year. Please keep snacks as healthy as possible; crackers, pretzels, etc. For celebrations, we ask that any snacks are pre-packaged with nutritional information available. If you have questions please ask the administration.

What about the Tiny Tigers curriculum?

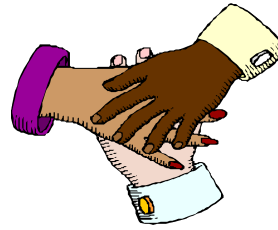
Tiny Tigers Preschool will utilize Creative Curriculum.

As teachers and caregivers:

- Adults listen to children's spontaneous comments, and understand how children think about their activities.
- Adults in Creative Curriculum settings converse naturally with children as they work and play, focusing children's actions and encouraging them to elaborate on their thoughts and actions.
- We avoid asking children too many questions knowing that such interference can make children stop talking. Rather than asking questions that require a specific answer, we ask open-ended questions that may draw any number of responses.
- We are on hand if children become frustrated or if situations become unsafe, at most other times we encourage children to try different solutions.
- We encourage children to help one another solve problems whenever possible.

Curriculum Goals

1. To plan experiences based on children's interests and their developmental level.
2. To learn to make choices and plan many of their own activities, carry them out, and talk to other children and adults about what they have done and what they have learned.
3. To gain knowledge and skills in important content areas that pertain to their development including: social-emotional (regulation of emotions and building relationships with others), Physical (large and small motor strength and coordination), language (speaking and listening), Cognitive (problem solving and self-help skills), literacy (reading and writing), mathematics (sorting, arranging, and counting), science and technology (investigation of things in their world), social studies (knowledge of self and those around them), the arts (use of imagination in relation to drawing, music, movement, and drama).
4. To foster children's primary language while supporting the continued acquisition of English
5. To become independent, responsible and confident-ready for school and ready for life.
6. To ensure that no child is excluded based on race, religion, gender and family backgrounds and cultures.
7. To encourage diversity and respect the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual.
8. To promote active learning through involvement with families, children, staff, communities, materials, events and ideas.
9. To provide mental and physical health/safety education, materials, experiences and discussions that benefit children and families.
10. To provide families with education and opportunities that supports their role as their child's first and most important teacher.
11. To offer opportunities for parents to take an active role in planning, implementing and evaluating the program.
12. To provide support in the transitions that families experience.



Children's Book Bag -

Please send a book bag daily with your child. **Be sure and check their bag daily** for important notes and papers that are sent home on a regular basis. Some might also need to be returned. It is easiest to have a book bag to transfer these notes and papers so they do not get lost in the shuffle.



Transportation

Transportation of ALL children is NOT guaranteed due to the large service area covered by Tiny Tigers Preschool.



At this time, we plan to provide morning and mid-day transportation for 3-year-old preschoolers so long as a driver can be coordinated for such, and only to daycare providers. Morning and afternoon transportation for 4 year olds will also follow the below listed limitations and stipulations along with 3 year olds:

- Morning routes will pick up 3 and 4-year-old preschoolers within the district and Option Enrolled preschoolers, providing existing routes go by the pick-up address or pick up K-12 siblings at that address.
- Mid-day delivery may be provided with a stop list being available at the beginning of the year. Due to the number of students the stop list is subject to change.

Please keep travel/transportation consistent and safe by using the following safety rules:

1. The staff, prior to the first day of school/activity will make a transportation schedule. If there is a change in pick-up or delivery, a written notice or phone call must be made to the staff notifying them of the change.

2. Parents must notify the staff when a child or family will not be attending.
3. Parents should notify staff a week prior to moving.
4. Your child/you should be ready when the bus arrives. If a child needs assistance, it is helpful for the parent or caregiver to see the child on the bus, as the driver cannot leave the children on the bus alone.
5. If no one is at home or at the designated caregiver's address, the child will be returned to the site until an adult can be contacted.
6. There is no food or drink on the bus.
7. Toys or other items must be in a bag. These bags will not be allowed to sit in the vehicles but secured in a designated area.
8. All preschool passengers are required to use a safety restraint.
9. Students will be dropped off at the main north door of the Tiny Tiger Early Learning Center.
10. The bus driver may determine if a child is ill at the time he or she boards the bus. A sick child will be returned to the parents or caregiver.

Children's Clothing

An extra set of clothes to keep in your child's book bag is helpful in case of spills, accidents or wet play. We do have a limited amount of extra clothing at the school in case of multiple accidents. We ask that if your child comes home in something from the school that it is washed and returned as soon as possible. Children's clothing should be comfortable, not too dressy and suitable for the weather. Shoes should be suitable for running and climbing. Boots are needed for rainy and snowy days. On days boots are worn; please send shoes for indoor use. A warm coat, mittens, snow pants and a hat are needed for cold or chilly weather.

Disabilities

Every effort is made to meet the needs of all enrolled children. Screening and assessments are completed on your child on an ongoing basis and referrals may be made for future evaluations by you or by staff with your permission. If you are concerned about your child's development please visit with the staff. You are the best advocate for decisions or plans involving services for your child. If you pursue an evaluation we are here to support you and your family. If following the assessment and your child is verified with a delay or disability, and it is determined that an early childhood program is the

best placement site, we want to be involved and support you during this process, by participating in your child's IFSP/IEP. The preschool staff will utilize the IFSP/IEP goals in planning for your child on an ongoing basis.

Positive Guidance Procedure

Tiny Tigers Preschool Program feels that children must have a safe orderly environment so that they can have a positive and successful learning experience.

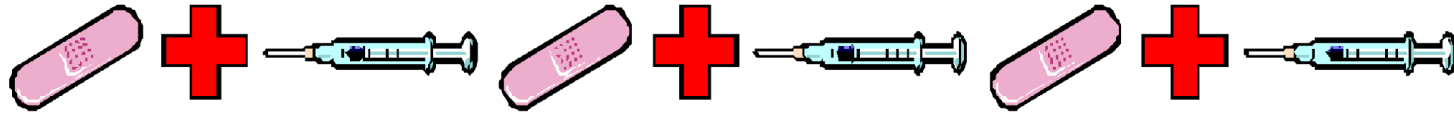
Goals of all Staff

- ☺ Promote positive social interactions between children.
- ☺ Help children learn self-control.
- ☺ Develop a healthy self-image.
- ☺ Communicate clear expectations, limits and rules.
- ☺ Be partners with families and other caregivers to meet these goals.

Steps to Be Taken For Positive Guidance:

1. Staff makes sure children understand rules and boundaries.
2. Staff may reinforce rules and boundaries by talking, making visual contact, modeling proper behavior, physically helping them, reinforcing good behavior, encouragement, offering new activities, planned ignoring, redirecting and moving the child. The teacher's response depends on his or her own style and each individual child.
3. When a teacher feels that a child does not understand. They will involve the parents in helping to solve the problem. They will also look at the classroom to see what may be affecting the child's behavior, such as schedule, daily routine and room arrangement.
4. Staff and/or other professionals will observe unacceptable behaviors that appear in the classroom on a regular basis. Families will meet with staff (and professionals if applicable) to problem solve.
5. Physical disciplining methods such as spanking, slapping, shaking or biting are not allowed, neither food, rest nor bathroom privileges can be used as punishment. Restraining children is prohibited.
6. Parents and other volunteers should refer problems to staff.

When Your Family Is Sick



**Children may not come to school and Family members may not participate in activities when:
(or maybe sent home when)**

- ☺ Elevated temperature: Oral Temperature 100 degrees F. (must be below 100 degrees for 24 hours without medicine)
- ☺ Thick, foul smelling, bloody, or (PUS) drainage from wounds, nose, eyes, and ears.
- ☺ Uncontrollable coughing, causing vomiting or spitting up of mucus.
- ☺ Vomiting (within the last 24 hours) or stomachache
- ☺ Diarrhea, watery stools or blood in the stools (within the last 24 hours)
- ☺ Sore throat, enlarged glands or stiff neck.
- ☺ Persistent pain, including earaches, stomach pains, pain when urinating or injured limbs.
- ☺ Chicken pox.
- ☺ Skin conditions and rashes that itch or that are blistered. (must be treated at least 24 hours)

With pink eye, scabies, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, intestinal worms, scarlet fever and/or other strep infections students may return to school after verified treatment has been started and/or when a physician gives permission.

PLEASE NOTE

- Please call the preschool if your child will not be in preschool or is unable to attend an activity.
- Please do not send your child to preschool if he/she cannot go outside with the group. All staff and volunteers must remain with all the children. There is not enough staff to have one person stay in with a sick child
- If a child has an infectious condition, a written doctor's note must be obtained before the child can return to the center.
- Although attendance is not mandatory everyday it is encouraged. Your child is missing out on valuable lessons by missing school days.

Family Involvement



Families have several ways to be involved with the program. We would like all family members to know that **without your participation we do not have a program**. You are the backbone of the quality services available to your child. Please ask staff how you can help. We also would like any suggestions, as you are your child's first teacher. The following are just a few ways to be involved. Please contact the staff to let them know what works best for your family.

- * **Volunteering** - Time that parents are spending doing activities at the center or at home can count as volunteer time (in-kind) to the program.
- * **In-Home In-Kind** - Time families spend doing Education Goal activities together at home.
- * **Parent Group/Socializations** - You are automatically a member because you have a child in the Tiny Tigers Program. Parent Group meets to set goals and to make decisions regarding their local site. Family/Child (ren) activities are also planned by the group throughout the year. All parents are invited to attend. Meeting notices will be sent home in the bag in advance usually with a reply notice back.
- * **Family Contacts** - Program staff and families have continuous contact. Together they complete assessments that help families identify areas of strength and also set manageable goals.

* **Families are surveyed** at various times during the year. A questionnaire is given to each family annually to find out how they felt about the services they received. Your comments and suggestions on these surveys are used to plan for future services.

* **Advisory Group** meets quarterly to discuss various issues. Our advisory group consists of representatives from each of our partnering agencies. Any parent may attend.

Volunteer hours are a vital part of the program. A quality program calls for many people working together, sharing talents, knowledge, and energy so that families receive the greatest benefits available. Individuals of many ages are needed to provide this quality.

If you know of anyone who would like to volunteer, contact the Tiny Tigers staff.



Helpful Hints For Volunteers



- ❖ Each time you come to the classroom please sign the in-kind sheet. Your volunteer service provides the program with the necessary "Match" for our government funds.
- ❖ Be sure to wear comfortable clothing. Children are very busy and active and will keep you busy and active.
- ❖ The teacher will review the lesson plan with you each time you volunteer. Please let the staff know how you would like to be involved that day. We want to ensure you feel comfortable and enjoy the day as much as the children. (Please feel free to offer comments and suggestions about the day, and share your ideas on activities that could strengthen our curriculum.) **Remember this is your program too.**
- ❖ If you are ill or cannot volunteer on your scheduled day, please let the staff know so they won't be shorthanded.
- ❖ At the center we move quietly, slowly and speak softly this has a calming effect.
- ❖ Be generous with affection, encouragement, and praise. Feel free to hold, hug, read, and visit with the children. By learning each child's name, you will be helping each child feel significant and will be helping to build their self-esteem.
- ❖ We would like each of you to share ideas on classroom activities, field trip suggestions, or share your talent by offering special project suggestions. We need you to help us strengthen our curriculum.
- ❖ **When you volunteer it is a special day for your child.** Make sure your child knows how much you enjoyed the time you spent with him/her.

- ❖ Part-time daycare can be very challenging to find on your volunteer day so we encourage parents to offer each other childcare for siblings.
- ❖ Without involvement from people like you our program would suffer. We truly appreciate each time you have the opportunity to volunteer. **We ask all volunteers to follow the confidentiality policy so when things happen at the center such as behavior or a child having a bad day, we need to respect the child's feelings and leave this situation within the program. A good rule of thumb is "What happens at the center stays at the center."**

---Ways of Working with Children---

1. It is very important that we keep in mind that children have different rates of development. Tiny Tigers Preschool Program works with a wide variety of ages, so remember all children are not at the same level of learning.
2. When working with children, adults get down to their level. We sit on the floor or on a small chair.
3. Don't feel like you must constantly be "doing something" to be useful. Just being at child level monitoring children's play, promoting language development and problem solving by asking questions about their activities etc., is the important work we do.
4. At Tiny Tigers children learn to interact in a group. They are learning to share and take turns, which is a very important developmental task.
5. When conflicts arise we redirect behavior, and suggest a substitute activity that will meet the needs of the child.
6. When redirecting use "Yes" statements rather than "No". Example "We sit on chairs."
7. Children also learn the importance of cleaning up after themselves. Do work alongside the children when possible.
8. Encourage children to become involved. You might have to suggest one or two activities to get them started.
9. All meals are served family style; children learn to pass food, serve themselves and communicate at the table.

Family and Community Partnerships

Tiny Tigers Preschool believes that family is the most important part of a child's life. For this reason, staff is employed to serve and support the entire family. Staff can answer most questions, provide support, and link parents to community services and resources that will help them meet their needs. Together the parents and staff will develop a plan to meet the family's goals and needs.

Family Literacy activities are very important. They include four legs. 1.) Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children. 2.) Training for parents on how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the

education of their children. 3.) Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency. 4.) Age appropriate approaches that prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Child/Adult Protection

State law requires staff to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect. Tiny Tigers strives to work with community agencies in providing positive support services to families. Crisis assistance and support is available through program staff and community resources. All staff is checked through the Nebraska Child and Adult Abuse Central Registry. All information is confidential.

Medications

Over The Counter Medications: We **cannot** give over the counter medication without a statement from the doctor. If your doctor suggests a non-prescription medication, the doctor must sign a statement giving the name, dosage and frequency of the medication to be used.

Prescription Medications: If your child's condition requires a staff member to give the medications or treatment, you must bring the medication in the **original container** from the pharmacy or doctor's office. The container must be clearly marked with the child's name, date, name of medication, doctor name and a frequency and amount to be given along with a medicine sheet that outlines possible side effects we should be watching for. Parents/guardians must fill out a signed permission to medicate form. Staff will attach the form to the original bottle of medication.

Things To Remember:

- ☺ Medication will be kept in the office. Children must not handle medication. (Includes cough drops, ointments, inhalers, etc.).
- ☺ Be sure the staff understands directions and knows if the medication needs to be refrigerated.
- ☺ A designated staff person will be responsible for giving medications to children. This person will be trained on an individual basis.
- ☺ Each time a medication or treatment is given, the person administering will indicate time and sign their name on a form for your child's records.

Early Childhood Program Code of Conduct

All Staff, Consultants, and Volunteers must follow the Code of Conduct.

1. They will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
2. They will follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and staff members.
3. No child will be left alone or unsupervised while under their care.
4. They will use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. They will not use methods of discipline that involves isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs.

Rights and Responsibilities Of Parents In Early Childhood Programs

Confidentiality of Records

Each staff, family, and volunteer signs the Tiny Tigers Confidentiality Policy. All family information is kept in a locked file cabinet and is confidential within the agency. This policy will be explained in depth by our program staff. Violations of the Confidentiality Policy are handled by the Early Childhood Programs Director. Information will be shared with a Release of Information form, or in the event of an emergency.

HEALTH

Health care for children is an important part of the Preschool Program. The health component includes screenings, immunizations, and physicals, dental and mental health. Palmer Public Schools' partnership with ESU 7 makes available a nurse to monitor the health component and ensure your child is up to date in all health areas. Open communication between families and the nurse is very important.

HEALTH HISTORY: At enrollment a health history will be completed. The history will include past health information as well as current health needs. This information will help staff get to know you and your child. Children with serious health conditions are required to have a health plan signed by a physician on file.

GROWTH AND NUTRITION: Your child's height and weight will be taken throughout your child's participation in the program. All participants receive a nutritional assessment that is evaluated by a registered dietician within 45 days of entry into the program. Feedback is given by written comments on the form. The preschool nurse reviews the comments, if there are any concerns she will address them preschool staff and the parents. Discussion can be done per phone, nurse's notes and/or at parent-teacher conferences. Discussion is documented on health forms. Any children with nutritional allergies must have on file a nutrition plan signed by their physician. This is essential in planning for school lunches and other activities.

MENTAL HEALTH: Many questions from the health history form relate to your child's mental health. It is our goal to help children to develop skills to deal effectively with the environment they live in. The questions you answer and information given along with observations help staff in relating to your child's mental and physical health. It is our goal to help you and your child feel successful.

PHYSICAL and DENTAL EXAM: Physical and dental exams are a requirement of all children entering the program. Families have 60 days from the first day of class to complete these exams. If you have difficulty locating a doctor or dentist, the staff is available to help your family find a medical home to obtain the required health services for your child.

IMMUNIZATIONS: State law requires that all children in Early Childhood Programs be up to date on their immunizations. For those children who are not up to date, the series must be completed according to Regulations/Palmer Public Schools policy standards. Remember, no child can participate in activities without an immunization record on file. And, they must be kept current.

Early Childhood Programs Philosophy

What we believe about each child in Tiny Tigers early childhood program:

1. Each child has their own experiences and strengths and can learn.
2. Each child needs an on-going, consistent program, which fosters development.
3. Each child needs high quality, educational services, in a safe setting.
4. Each child needs a curriculum and materials that meet their individual needs.
5. Each child needs socialization experiences.
6. Each child needs positive, supportive, nurturing, caring and well-trained staff.
7. Each child needs complete health screenings and necessary follow-up treatment.

What we believe about families:

1. Families are the child's first and most important teacher and continue to be the main influence on the child's development.
2. Families must participate directly in the child's education and development.
3. The child's family as well as community must be involved.
4. Families must be connected to on-going services within the community.
5. The family and child's self-esteem can be strengthened through the program.
6. The family and child's ability to relate to one another and others will be increased.

What we believe about the program:

1. The program must work to provide high quality standards.
2. The program should strengthen each child's own experiences and abilities.
3. The program must build community relationships to provide high quality services to children and families.
4. The program is designed to prepare children for life.
5. The program evaluates its services through input from families, children, staff and community.
6. The program must strive to provide families with continuity of staff and services.

Grievance Procedure

There is a written procedure for program concerns. It is meant to guarantee the quality and unity of the Tiny Tigers Preschool Program. There must be open communication between the partners, staff, parents and the community. In the event there is a concern or problem, it will be handled as follows:

1. The person should inform the program staff of the concern or problem.
2. If the problem or concern cannot be resolved within the program, the staff **MUST** contact the Palmer Elementary Principal.
3. To ensure proper communication, the person stating their concern or problem should fill out the grievance form and submit to the Elementary Principal within 5 days. These forms are available from the program staff.
4. The person then will receive a follow-up letter from the Elementary Principal stating the results.
5. If the person feels the problem or concern has not been resolved, then the concern will be forwarded to the Palmer Public Schools Superintendent and the person will receive a follow-up letter from the Superintendent.
6. If the person still feels the problem or concern has not been resolved, then the person may request that the concern be placed on the regular meeting agenda for the Palmer Public Schools Board of Education in accordance with Policy 204.10.

Our Goal is to be sure that the children and families of our programs gain from positive experiences. Working together and helping each other is what it's all about!