



## EARLY LEARNING

### Family Handbook

2026-27

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## **Mission and Vision**

The Powerhouse is Southwest Colorado's STEAM engine empowering curious young learners through interactive experiences, discovery, and play. Our vision is to build a community of curious, capable, and science-literate problem solvers.

WonderLab Early Learning seeks to embody this mission by engaging children and families in the **art of curiosity**. We accomplish this by:

- Creating safe, inviting, inspiring spaces for wonderment and creativity
- Empowering community and connection
- Supporting young learners with diverse needs and interests

## **Introduction**

The Powerhouse completed a strategic planning process in 2023 that identified a more active role in supporting children before they reach school age as a primary area of focus to ensure children arrive at school curious, resilient, and ready to learn. That initiative includes re-envisioning our indoor and outdoor spaces with an early childhood audience in mind, developing community-wide programs supporting toddlers and preschoolers not in full-time licensed care, and operating a licensed early childhood education center on the campus.

## **Why The Powerhouse?**

Museum-based child care is a well-established and growing model of program delivery. The Museum Playful Learning Collective includes almost fifty licensed early learning programs who build on their expertise in inspiring curiosity and open-ended exploration among children and the resources of their museum facilities to provide high-quality learning environments.

The Powerhouse partnered with the City of Durango to invest \$6 million to develop a 1.5 acre City-owned property as a learning space that puts children and their curiosity first. The Powerhouse campus offers 6,000 sf of indoor and 12,00 sf of outdoor exhibit and play space and is conveniently located adjacent to the Central Business District, Camino del Rio, and the Animas River Trail. The center is located in the Carlton Family Science Education Center and hosts three classrooms serving toddlers and preschoolers (18 months – 5 years old).

## **How does the early learning center connect with The Powerhouse's mission?**

Early learners are a core audience for the museum and among our most frequent visitors. Operating a licensed childcare center aligns with our educational work and plays a role in meeting an urgent community need for quality, affordable childcare. This initiative is part of a larger strategic goal of playing a more active role in supporting children before they reach kindergarten to ensure children arrive at school curious, resilient, and ready to learn.

## **What is special about a museum school?**

Museum schools aim to provide a unique and enriching educational experience that goes beyond traditional classroom learning, leveraging all resources and expertise of museums to enhance students' learning and engagement. Over fifty peer institutions across the country,

including the Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History, and Explora Science Center, have pioneered museum-based licensed early learning programs.

***The safety and welfare of your child is paramount, which is why it is vital that you read this policy book in its entirety. Upon signing your financial agreement with WonderLab Early Learning, you attest that you have read and agreed with our school policies in their entirety.***

### **Equal Opportunities Policy**

WonderLab welcomes students, families, and staff without regard to race, color, religious creed, age, national and ethnic origin, ancestry, physical, mental or developmental disability, sex, military status, marital or registered domestic partnership status, medical condition, gender, gender identity, transgender status, or sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state or local laws. We appreciate our human differences and similarities, and all people are treated with equal respect. We are an equal opportunities center, and as such, we strive to accommodate and educate children with sensory, physical, emotional and cognitive needs by working in partnership with families, the community, and appropriate/pertinent outside agencies to create an inclusive environment for our children, families, and staff.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

WonderLab is committed to providing all staff members, vendors, beneficiaries, and clients with an environment that is free of harassment, discrimination or retaliation of any kind. Our values include treating everyone with respect and dignity. WonderLab prohibits harassment and discrimination based on race, color, religious creed, age, national and ethnic origin, ancestry, physical, mental or developmental disability, sex, military status, marital or registered domestic partnership status, medical condition, gender, gender identity, transgender status, or sexual orientation, as well as any other category protected by federal, state or local laws. This policy also prohibits unlawful harassment and discrimination based on the perception that anyone has a protected characteristic or is associated with a person who has or is perceived as having a protected characteristic.

WonderLab will take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment, discrimination or retaliation from occurring. All complaints of harassment and discrimination will be handled promptly and discreetly. If WonderLab determines that this policy has been violated, it will take appropriate remedial action commensurate with the severity of the offense, up to and including dismissal from WonderLab and immediate separation of employment of any person found to have violated WonderLab's policies.

### **WonderLab Code of Conduct**

WonderLab expects all families/parents/guardians to:

- Use appropriate language and behavior within the school and its immediate perimeter.
- Be respectful of others (staff members, children, other families).

- Approach the Center Director with all questions and concerns during school hours and not engage staff members on school related issues outside of school hours.
- Refrain from using cell phones except for checking your child(children) in and out while on school property in order to give full attention to your child and their teacher.
- Adhere to all school policies outlined in this document.
- Adhere to all health and safety guidelines set forth by WonderLab.

### **Brightwheel**

WonderLab uses Brightwheel for all communication within our school and for sign-in/sign-out. Parents need to download the Brightwheel app on their phones. From there, you may access our school calendar, daily reports, pay your bill and view invoices, receive messages from your child's teachers, receive important updates, school cancellations due to weather, and emergency communications. All parents must download the app to their phones. You can also access Brightwheel from a computer. If you do not have a cellular device to download Brightwheel on, please let the Center Director or Assistant Director know as soon as possible.

### **The WonderLab Educational Model**

WonderLab's curriculum directly reflects our mission by engaging children and families in the **Art of curiosity**. Teachers support whole-child development through learning experiences guided by the children as well as creating opportunities for further growth and learning. Through a play-based approach, teachers are able to observe each child's unique interests and developmental needs in order to provide individualized support. Daily routines allow for ample opportunities for children to explore their environment and materials at their own pace. WonderLab will be utilizing the Experience curriculum and assessment tool through Brightwheel to help facilitate the best curriculum experience in our first year of being open. WonderLab respects each teacher's individual strengths and teaching style. Teachers are offered the freedom to create learning opportunities that best fit the needs of their class. We do expect that:

- Learning opportunities and experiences are based on the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines (CELDG) as well as developmental assessments, using Teaching Strategies Gold, emphasizing the following developmental domains: social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy, physical (fine and gross motor), math and science, social studies, the arts.
- Learning opportunities and experiences use scaffolding and individualized supports to meet the developmental needs of all children in the class.
- Classroom environments are set up using best practices modeled in the Environmental Rating Scales, ITES for toddler teachers and ECERS for preschool teachers.
- Teachers are observing children in their classroom, joining them as co-learners, and working towards expanding their knowledge based on their current level of development.
- Teachers respect the diversity of the children in their class and create a learning environment that suits individual learning styles.

Staff will receive annual training to support curriculum use and development. WonderLab will provide the annual training during the August work week prior to the start of the current school year. The curriculum training will reflect the current needs of the school and staff.

### **Classroom Ratios**

The high-quality, relationship-based community created at WonderLab is largely due to small classrooms and low adult to child ratios. We strive to maintain ratios that provide a high quality of care and meet National Association of Young Children’s recommendations. We also believe in the value of having interns and volunteers in our classrooms. While not supporting licensed ratios, these individuals provide support for classroom teachers and add rich value to our school community.

Toddler Room (18 months - 29 months) 2 adults to 10 children (1:5)
Preschool Room 1 (2 ½ - 3 ½ years) 1 adult to 8 children with 1 shared assistant
Preschool Room 2 (3 - 5 years) 1 adult to 10 children with 1 shared assistant

Because children remain with their class for a majority of the day with the same one or two teachers, they develop strong bonds with their teachers and classmates. This primary caregiver model supports continuity of care and helps children feel secure in their learning environment. The lead classroom teacher is responsible for communicating with families through Brightwheel daily reports, Brightwheel newsletters, and family conferences as well as collecting and uploading developmental information to Teaching Strategies Gold and to inform individualized curriculum using the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines.

### **Classroom Culture**

At WonderLab we seek to encourage creativity, curiosity, and wonderment through engaging in the world around us, and through developing meaningful relationships. Our educators strive to create classroom environments that embody this through modeling, guidance, intentional learning opportunities and spaces. We expect respectful interactions between all adults and students and honor and value the unique personhood every person brings to the space. In our classrooms, teachers are co-learners and teach students the value of open-ended questions and inquiry-based learning. We are all learning and growing together!

### **On-Going Assessment**

On-going assessment of each child’s development is tracked through the Experience Assessment Tool, an authentic observation online assessment program where teachers input each student’s developmental milestones with work samples, observations, and photographs. Teachers will be able to upload observations on a weekly basis and finalize checkpoints in the Fall, Winter, and Spring through Brightwheel directly. Based on their observations and

documentation, teachers are able to use the Experience Assessment Tool for sharing developmental information with families to track progress and inform learning goals as well as influence planning for individualized learning experiences in the classroom. Teachers offer twice a year family conferences – once in the fall and once in the spring to set goals with families, review developmental progress, and communicate one-on-one with families to discuss any questions, joys, and/or concerns regarding their child.

### **Positive Behavioral Supports**

Children experiencing behavioral difficulties need to be given extra support and understanding. The teachers at WonderLab work together to ensure every avenue is explored in terms of employing appropriate strategies, working with families and, if necessary, contacting outside agencies such as Child Find with the school district and our Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist through the La Plata County Early Childhood Council. We use Conscious Discipline, a trauma-informed approach to guidance that focuses on self-regulation, building connection and relationships through the development of the School Family, and using brain-research to understand how internal emotional states influence behavior.

### **External Family Supports**

WonderLab partners with external agencies to support children and families. Should a teacher request the opinion of an outside professional regarding a child's development and/or behavior, WonderLab uses the following steps to refer families to the appropriate agencies:

1. The teacher documents observations of the development/behavior in question.
2. The teacher notifies the Center Director, who will partner with the teacher to set up a meeting with the child's parents/guardians to discuss the concerns.
3. WonderLab will refer the family to the appropriate agency and can provide contact information for those agencies. WonderLab will review the process of referrals with the family for Community Connections (children under 3 years) and Durango School District Child Find (children ages 3 and up). WonderLab also can provide the referral forms for the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program.
4. Once parent permission has been obtained, WonderLab coordinates with outside agencies to conduct an assessment at school and complete any required paperwork from the child's teacher.
5. The child's teacher and/or the Assistant Director, and Center Director are active participants in the IFSP/IEP process and coordination of services provided at the school. WonderLab staff, families, and Community Connections/Child Find/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant collaborate to ensure that accommodations and supports are being provided so that the child's specific learning and development goals are being met in the school setting. This may include but not limited to environmental adaptations, social stories/visuals, tools to regulate sensory needs, specific language/verbal prompts used with the child, etc.

WonderLab provides a comprehensive list of local resources compiled by the La Plata Family Center Coalition that can be emailed, found on our website, and posted in the front entryway.

These local resources include information about adult education, employment/training, financial, health care access, housing, utility assistance, food, parent skills, family relations, childcare, legal, mental health, substance abuse, mobility, and support networks. A family can set up an in-person or phone meeting with the Center Director or Assistant Director to discuss the family's needs and what resources would be most applicable.

### **Family Involvement**

At WonderLab, we recognize that families are their child's first and most important teacher. Your involvement in our center is vital for positive outcomes during your child's early years. In the spirit of fostering a strong early childhood educational community, WonderLab encourages families to volunteer, visit during lunch, and find ways to engage in your passions and interests at the center. All adults who wish to volunteer in our classrooms must first pass a background check, and it is understood that volunteers will not be left alone with students at any time while on our campus.

To stay informed about how you can best use your time, talents and interests, you can:

1. Speak with your child's teacher about classroom involvement
2. Review the monthly school newsletters for any school needs or requests
3. Provide an activity or experience for your child's classroom
4. Volunteer to help for field trips, in the school garden, shovel snow over winter breaks or before school opens at 7:30, painting/fixing fences, helping the Center Director and Assistant Director with graphic design... the options are endless. See the list below for more ideas.
5. Join various governing and planning committees.\

Some specific examples of ways to get involved include, but are not limited to:

- Purchase school supplies
- Take home laundry to wash
- Provide healthy snacks (store bought only)
- Volunteer in the classroom/field trips
- Help with fundraising
- Help with building and garden maintenance
- Organize and/or contribute to teacher appreciation
- Serving on the WonderLab Board of Directors or Advisory Committee

### **Positive Communication**

We are here to welcome your ideas, listen to your concerns, and support your family's endeavors to be actively engaged in your child's early educational years.

The Center Director functions with an open-door policy and is available to meet with you or communicate by phone or email. WonderLab invites feedback from families and staff in a yearly program evaluation. Feedback from the program evaluation is used to inform our school quality improvement plan for the next school year. Teachers provide a monthly classroom newsletter via

Brightwheel and will use Brightwheel as the main communication for your child and their classroom.

For relaying important all-school information, we communicate via the Brightwheel app. It is imperative that families read the monthly school newsletter, which contains important dates and information. We also use Brightwheel for notifying about emergency school closures, messages, etc. It is the expectation that families will read all Brightwheel correspondences from WonderLab.

### **Grievance Policy**

If issues or concerns arise, please talk directly to your child's teacher, the Assistant Director, or the Center Director. If you feel your concern was not addressed after speaking directly with the Center Director, your next course of action is contacting the WonderLab Partner Council with the Powerhouse board. Contact information for members of this committee are listed below, along with the contact information for the Center Director

WonderLab Center Director:  
Elanor Meeker  
elanor@powsci.org  
970-259-9234 Ex. 111

WonderLab Partner Council:  
info@powsci.org

## **SECTION I: GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES**

### **Signing your child in/out of school**

Upon arrival, families are required to check in with a staff member to sign in their child via the Brightwheel app in the front entryway. Upon departure, you must check in with the attending teacher before removing your child from the classroom or playground, and sign your child out via the Brightwheel app. Staff, children, parents, and visitors are required to wash hands upon arrival and departure.

If you are late picking up your child, you will be contacted and the child will remain with the teacher until picked up. If your child is not picked up before 5:30pm and you and/or your emergency contact are unavailable, the Center Director or on-duty teacher is required to notify Social Services. Two staff members will remain until the child is collected either by you, your emergency contact, or a social worker.

A child will only be released to individuals authorized by the parent/legal guardian and listed on the Emergency Information Sheet. Parents/guardians must inform the school if anyone other than themselves will be collecting their child. The person collecting the child must provide valid identification.

Families will be charged \$3 per minute after their designated contract time (3:00, or 5:30). A \$100 charge will be applied after 3 instances of late pick-ups. Please make every effort to pick up on time as it affects student: teacher ratios and may require us to employ a teacher past their contracted schedule. If late pick is a consistent occurrence, a meeting with the Center Director will be required.

### **Attendance**

We ask that you inform the school in advance of any special family trips or planned absences. In case of illness, families need to inform the school promptly, particularly if it is a contagious condition. Planned classroom activities will begin between 8:30 and 9 on a daily basis. Please communicate with the classroom teacher or Center Director if you need to drop off after 9:30. Tuition is billed on a monthly basis regardless of absences. We do not swap days or offer refunds due to absences.

### **Late arrival to planned activities**

Children who arrive late to school, on a day their class is on a planned trip or excursion, will be given the option to meet up with their class if the parent/guardian can deliver their child to the class field trip location. If the parent/guardian is unable to do this and class ratios at school are not compromised, the child will be invited to join another class until their own class returns. If ratios are compromised, the child will join the Center Director until their class returns.

### **Nap/Rest**

Licensing rules and regulations state that children must not be forced to sleep and require that every child rest for 30 minutes on a mat or cot. Children who do not sleep will be provided with quiet activities and will be allowed to move to another area after the required 30 minutes. Preschoolers who fall asleep will be allowed to leave their napping area within 10 minutes of waking. Toddlers are allowed to leave the napping area immediately after waking.

Please provide labeled nap items: A blanket and one small stuffed animal. These items will be kept in your child's nap cubby, located in close proximity or in their classroom. Families are required to take all nap items home at the end of each week to wash and return the following week. The center will provide a fitted sheet for each cot and all sheets will be washed weekly, or more depending on need.

### **Labeling**

Please clearly label outerwear, water bottles, lunch boxes, and nap items. We will provide a lost and found area near our school entry way.

### **Proper attire and spare clothing**

Please dress your child in simple, washable, sturdy clothes to match the weather. We play outside every day, so please provide adequate, weather-appropriate outdoor clothing including

jackets, snowsuits, boots, hats, waterproof mittens, sun hats, sun glasses, etc. Please provide extra sets of clothing that can be kept in your child's cubby. Soiled clothes will be put in a Ziploc bag and kept in the "soiled clothes bin" in the laundry room for you to take home and wash. If your child uses WonderLab's clothing, we kindly request that you wash and return the items promptly. Teachers will let you know at pick up time if there are any clothes to pick up from the laundry room.

### **Sunscreen**

Families must provide one container of sunscreen for their child. We are required to apply sunscreen as directed on the specific bottle (generally, every 2 hours). Families not wanting their child to have sunscreen are required to sign an exemption and provide alternative sun protection such as long sleeves, sun hat, sun glasses.

### **Toys from home**

Toys from home are not allowed at WonderLab, as it is a distraction in the classroom. The one small stuffed animal for nap or rest time does not apply to this policy nor does special "show-and-tell" days as set up ahead of time by your child's classroom teacher.

### **Playground safety gear**

The school provides and requires that all children wear a helmet while riding any bicycles/tricycles. Any other desired equipment must be provided by the individual family.

### **Celebrations**

We encourage families to share their traditions with us here at school through family-led activities and presentations. WonderLab will have celebrations honoring our school community such as Back-To-School Night, dress-up and pajama days, and school/family gatherings.

For birthday celebrations, families are welcome to provide a fun birthday snack, treat, or activity. Please see Lunch and Snack policy on page 19 for specific requirements.

### **Diapering**

Our center checks and changes diapers every 2 hours, unless immediate attention is warranted or the 2 hours falls while your child is sleeping. It is the parent/legal guardian's responsibility to provide us with diapers, wipes, and extra clothing. Our teachers will work with parents on potty training issues and appreciate that children are comfortable with using the potty in their own time. We do not require children to be potty trained in preschool. Please talk with your child's teacher or the Center Director if you have any concerns or worries.

**Licensing does not permit us to potty train children under 18 months of age or until the child is able to verbalize or otherwise indicate need, help manage their own clothing, and be able to access toileting facilities.**

### **Insurance/Medical Home**

WonderLab does not provide medical coverage for students. It is recommended that your child be covered through your own medical insurance plan. WonderLab requires you to list your child's medical insurance, primary doctor (medical home), dentist as well as the last dates of vision, hearing, and dental screenings on their Emergency Information form. WonderLab can provide a list of providers to contact should a family need medical insurance and screening resources. This list can also be accessed on our website and in the "Family Resources" tab.

WonderLab provides annual hearing screenings on-site at the school. All children are screened unless a family opts out in writing.

### **Technology in the Classroom**

At WonderLab we focus on hands-on, experiential learning that emphasizes our natural environment. Teachers may access appropriate content from the internet for educational purposes only (i.e. a virtual field trip, researching student topics of interest), supplementing hands-on learning experiences for preschool aged children, and always used under the supervision of a teacher. As a general rule, screen-based technology will not be used in our center (such as students on computers, watching TV, etc). If a virtual field trip, or other educational program is being used, screen time will not exceed 30 minutes per day, per licensing requirements.

WonderLab supports the use of assistive technology for supporting individual developmental needs. Assistive technology will be utilized in the classroom once a meeting with the family, teacher/s, support staff, and the Center Director has taken place and all team members have agreed that it is appropriate for classroom use. WonderLab will ensure that our staff has been properly trained in the use of specific assistive technology equipment/devices prior to their use in the classroom.

### **Field trips**

Field trips at WonderLab are within walking distance and planned in advance of the trip unless it is within a 4-block radius of the school. Field trip information documenting the names of the children on the trip, the cell phone numbers of the accompanying teachers, the route taken, time of departure and return will remain at the center with the Center Director. Currently, WonderLab does not take any field trips that would require vehicle transportation.

### **Inclement weather**

The Center Director and Assistant Director alert staff when to shorten or cancel recess due to extreme cold or heat based on the Child Care Weather Watch. If the weather is severe enough to be hazardous for families and staff to get to school, we will follow the school closures and/or delays as reported by the School District. WonderLab will contact families via the Brightwheel

app by 6:30 am that morning for delays or closures. If weather problems arise during school hours, the Center Director may decide to close the school early. Your child will be cared for until an authorized person can pick him/her up. WonderLab does not reimburse families tuition for missed days due to inclement weather. Please speak to your classroom teacher or the Center Director if you have any worries or concerns regarding your child's safety or comfort in times of inclement weather or excessively hot temperatures.

### **Crisis Management Policy**

Our emergency procedures will be posted in the entryway, on our website, and as an addendum to this policy book. Please ensure that you read them and acquaint yourselves with our procedures.

In the event of an unexpected crisis (i.e. death or serious injury of a child/staff member on or off of the school campus), WonderLab reserves the right to close the school for a minimum of one day to process the event and engage appropriate services, such as the mental health team for counseling services and, if the injury or death is a result of school negligence, the licensing body and law enforcement. Families not directly impacted by such an event will be notified of any crisis closure via Brightwheel. Families who have/had direct engagement to the injured/deceased child or teacher will be contacted by phone. When families are experiencing trauma and adversity, WonderLab is available for support. The Center Director and Assistant Director will connect with the family individually and offer a meeting to provide resources applicable to the situation as well as strategies for at home. WonderLab can connect families to our Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, the Grief Center of the Southwest as well as a list of local therapists. All staff are trained annually on trauma-responsive care in a play setting. Our social-emotional curriculum, Conscious Discipline, is a trauma-informed approach that is used daily and appropriate for supporting children who have experienced trauma and adversity.

## **SECTION II: REGISTRATION and ENROLLMENT**

WonderLab Early Learning is committed to providing fair, equitable, and transparent access to enrollment. When the number of qualified applicants exceeds available spaces, enrollment will be determined through the lottery process described below. This process ensures equity and efficiency and aligns with our mission of community access, family continuity, and inclusive education. Please ask to see the complete enrollment policy document for full details.

### **Program Capacity**

WonderLab plans to operate three classrooms with capacity to serve 42 children per day. Eligibility is based on children's ages as of September 1 of the application year.

- **Toddler Classroom** (18-29 months old): Licensed for ten children.
- **Two Preschool Classrooms** (2.5-5 years olds): Licensed for 16 children each.

Families will have the option of enrolling for full-time care, three days per week (MWF), or two days per week (TTh) depending on classroom availability. Generally 2-4 part-time spaces would be available in each classroom and split between two- and three-day enrollments.

### **Registration Procedures**

Once a family has received an enrollment opportunity through the lottery, they will be notified via email with instructions for securing their space. If a family does not confirm their space by completing application materials and paying a non-refundable registration fee (\$450 per family) by the specified deadline, the spot will be released and assigned via the waitlist.

If a family received weighted consideration based on income or is requesting discounted tuition, they must provide documentation of household income (preferably the most recent year tax return).

### **Waitlist**

Families not offered enrollment through the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the order their names were drawn. Families applying outside of the spring application period will be added to the end of the waitlist on a first-come, first-served basis. If a space becomes available:

- The next child on the waitlist within the appropriate age group will be offered enrollment.
- Families will have a specified timeframe to accept or decline the offer.
- If declined or no response is received, the next child on the waitlist will be contacted.

The waitlist remains active for the current school year only. Families must reapply for the lottery for continued consideration for the following year.

### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

Enrollment decisions are made without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, marital status, or any other protected status under applicable law.

### **Policy Transparency**

This policy shall be made available to families upon request. The center reserves the right to correct clerical errors but will not alter lottery outcomes once finalized.

### **Enrollment**

We require that all new families visit prior to starting at WonderLab. Play dates will be scheduled once we receive the above registration requirements. Enrollment paperwork is emailed to families and is due prior to the beginning of the new school year.

Annually, the parent/legal guardian is responsible for completing ALL enrollment/registration forms and returning them to the Center Director, as required by the State of Colorado, including:

- Financial agreement, which commits you to your scheduled days and contracted time for September through August
- Permission statements

- Family Intake form
- Health evaluation signed by your child’s physician (annual requirement, to be completed within 30 days of enrollment)
- Copy of up-to-date immunization card OR signed paperwork allowing WonderLab to access your child’s immunization record on the CIIS system
- Emergency information that lists your child’s name and birthday, contact information for your child’s primary guardians and emergency contacts, family’s medical home and insurance (primary doctor and dentist), dates of most recent vision, hearing, and dental screenings, and who is allowed and not allowed to pick up. This information must be kept current by parent/guardian —your child will not be admitted to WonderLab without it
- Emergency procedures and notification protocol

WonderLab also requires:

- Notification of any pertinent information regarding specific needs or family dynamics.
- If your child requires a medical plan or medication to be administered at school, a meeting with the Center Director, WonderLab’s health care consultant, and the family is needed. All paperwork must be completed and signed by the child’s pediatrician prior to starting at WonderLab.

### **Starting at WonderLab**

WonderLab works closely with newly enrolled families to ensure a smooth transition into our program. Students and their families are invited to visit the school for a “playdate” where they visit their new classroom, meet their new teacher, and have the opportunity to engage with their new peers. Families receive a welcoming letter from their classroom teacher that includes the best way to get in touch with them should a family have questions prior to starting.

### **Kindergarten Transition**

For students transitioning to Kindergarten, we provide the times and days for registrations and up-to-date information as to the elementary school expectations of a kindergartener. If requested, we will arrange a family meeting to discuss any questions. The final parent/teacher conference illustrates the child’s current development and how it relates to kindergarten readiness.

The Durango School District sends out a form to all teachers with Pre-K age children, requesting information regarding children moving to the district for kindergarten, ensuring district staff/kindergarten teachers are aware of developmental milestones, individualized learning and/or behavior strategies that were successful at WonderLab. Families are invited to share any additional information they feel would be relevant with the Center Director. An email will be sent out prior to classroom teachers completing the form in order to notify families and gain permission to share information.

## **SECTION III: FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Operating Hours and Tuition**

The center will operate on a year-round, extended day schedule. Standard tuition would cover care between the hours of 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. An extended day option (7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.) is available at an additional cost. Families will have the option of enrolling for full-time care, three days per week (MWF), or two days per week (TTh).

The annual calendar will generally include approximately 240 days of care with school-wide breaks that align with the school district calendar whenever possible, typically 3 days of Fall break around Thanksgiving, 1 week of Winter break around Christmas, 1 week of Spring break, and 1 week of closure in August to reset for the next school year. There will also be a couple of professional development days spread throughout the year.

### **Affordability and Financial Aid**

The Powerhouse and its partners intend to maintain policies and practices that provide equitable access to the early learning center across income levels. Please view our current tuition schedule on our website: [powsci.org](http://powsci.org)

We will participate in both CCAP and Universal Pre-K (after our first year) to leverage available public funding for low-income families and four-year-olds. WonderLab can provide referral information on contacting the Department of Human Services and applying for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP).

Additionally, we offer a sliding scale tuition model to support families earning between 165% of the federal poverty level (CCAP eligibility level) and \$192,000 annually to keep the cost of care to a maximum of 10% of household income for a single enrolled child.

### **Late payment**

If your bill is not paid by the last day of the month and alternative arrangements have not been made with the Center Director, tuition payment is considered late and a fee of \$30 will be added to your bill. Families with an outstanding balance from the previous school year will not be allowed to start the new school year until their account has been paid in full. Any account more than 60 days past due will result in your child's disenrollment. Accounts that are more than two months delinquent may be taken to the Small Claims Court or turned over to a collections agency. WonderLab makes every effort to work with families when necessary; please speak with the Center Director if you need an alternative payment plan.

### **Withdrawal from WonderLab**

WonderLab tuition is split into 12 equal monthly payments regardless of child absence and/or school closures (August-July). Early withdrawal requires a minimum of one month's notice in writing and the annual tuition will only be prorated at the discretion of the Center Director after meeting with the family.

### **Dismissal**

Any situation where dismissal is considered will be thoroughly discussed and explored to ensure every effort has been made to prevent the action.

**Students:** WonderLab firmly believes that it is every child's right to be in school. Therefore, dismissal is an absolute last resort for students. We have a formalized system of approach for challenging behaviors that will be implemented in partnership with staff, families, and outside agencies if necessary. An early childhood mental health consultant is required to be consulted prior to any dismissal of children from WonderLab, per licensing regulations. If implementation of various behavioral interventions proves unsuccessful, and it is determined that WonderLab does not have the resources or ability to best support the student, the Center Director will make the final decision regarding dismissal.

**Family/Parents/Guardian:** Families who do not adhere to the WonderLab Family Policies and Code of Conduct will have an in-person meeting with the Center Director to resolve the issue. An early childhood mental health consultant is required to be consulted prior to any dismissal of a family from WonderLab, per licensing regulations. A written plan documenting agreed changes in behavior will be signed by the Center Director and the family. The final decision regarding dismissal lies with the Center Director. Two weeks' notice will be given to the family if enrollment is terminated. Families can appeal the dismissal decision to the Powerhouse Board of Directors.

**Teachers:** The severity of the behavior will determine whether the teacher is placed on probation or his/her contract is terminated. Specific policies are outlined in the WonderLab Personnel Policy Book. If a teacher's agreement is terminated, the action will be immediate.

## **SECTION IV: SAFETY, HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

### **Hand washing**

In order to comply with licensing, public health and safety, and quality standards, all students, their families, staff, and visitors are required to wash their hands for 20 seconds upon arrival and departure from school. This small action helps to minimize infection.

### **Emergency Information**

Please notify the school when anyone other than direct caregivers will be picking up your child. You must list names of people on your emergency information sheet who are authorized to pick up.

Authorized people, including other WonderLab families, will be asked for a picture I.D. until they become familiar to all staff. Without this I.D. and instructions from you, the school will not release your child.

The emergency information must also include names of those NOT allowed to pick up your child. If there is a restraining order on a named person, you must give the school a copy to be held on file. If there is no restraining order, you will be phoned immediately and informed of the

situation. You will be asked to come to school immediately to pick up your child unless other directions are given by you in relation to the presenting person.

Each family must keep emergency information up to date. If any person picking up your child is recognized as being under the influence of any intoxicating substance, the school is required to contact Law Enforcement and the Department of Human Services.

### **Immunizations**

Colorado law requires all students attending public and private Colorado licensed child care and schools to be vaccinated against certain diseases unless they have a medical or non-medical exemption (personal or religious) on file ([Colorado Board of Health rule 6 CCR 1009-2](#)). The vaccinations required or if absent need an exemption on file are:

- Hepatitis B.
- Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTap).
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib).
- Inactivated poliovirus (IPV).
- Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV13) or polysaccharide (PPSV23).
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR).
- Varicella (chicken pox)

WonderLab provides a copy of the recommended vaccination schedule to families upon enrollment.

### **Medical exemptions**

Families must file a medical exemption for every school their child attends. This means that families must file a medical exemption to attend WonderLab even if they have such an exemption on file at their child's previous childcare center/daycare.

### **Non-medical exemptions**

Parents who wish to file non-medical exemptions for their child must do so at 2, 4, 6, 12 and 18 months of age. Non-medical exemptions expire when the next vaccines are due or when the child enrolls in Kindergarten.

For more information, please see <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/vaccine-exemptions> or ask the Center Director or Assistant Director for more information on how to file an exemption. If your child is not in compliance with the vaccination schedule and does not have an up-to-date exemption on file, WonderLab will notify you, which triggers a 14-day period to comply by either: 1) filing the appropriate exemption; or 2) submitting an "in-process vaccination plan" from your child's doctor that is signed by the parent/guardian and outlines the plan for getting your child up-to-date on the required vaccinations. If an exemption or in-process vaccination plan is not submitted within 14 days, then your child will not be able to return to WonderLab until you are following this policy. Tuition will not be prorated for any delays or missed school days.

WonderLab requires parents to provide the school with a copy of their child's immunization form prior the start of the school year and after any new immunizations have been received. Alternatively, families may opt to sign a permission form that grants the Center Director permission to access the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) to view and print a copy of their child's immunization record for their file. To protect unvaccinated children, WonderLab may require students and staff with an exemption on file to remain out of school during a disease outbreak for the duration of the incubation period or until advised by the local health department. This time period may last three weeks or more depending on the circumstances. Tuition will not be prorated for missed days during such an outbreak.

Please note that Colorado Board of Health rule 6 CCR 1009-2 requires WonderLab to report aggregate immunization and exemption data to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment on an annual basis.

### **Lunch and snacks**

Families must provide a packed lunch and an afternoon snack for their children. Please place the afternoon snack in a labeled container, separate from your child's lunch. Please send your child's lunch in a lunch box with an ice pack to keep items cold, or in a thermos to keep items warm. WonderLab is unable to warm up any food items in the microwave.

Morning snacks are provided by the school and follow the recommendations set out by Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP):

[https://fnsprod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP\\_MealBP.pdf](https://fnsprod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP_MealBP.pdf). When possible, we will incorporate vegetables and fruits from the school garden for the children to try.

If you wish to provide a snack for your child's class, please discuss it with your teacher as there may be children in the class with specific allergies or food intolerances. **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment states that homemade snacks may not be brought to share.** Whole, un-cut or pre-packaged fruit and vegetables are allowed. Some examples of acceptable pre-packaged snacks include cheese sticks, plain yogurt, whole-grain crackers, apple sauce, hummus, and whole wheat tortillas.

### **WonderLab staff members facilitate a pleasant social snack and lunch period by:**

- Supplementing food as required by licensing.
- Encouraging children to eat their lunch and to begin with protein and/or fruits and vegetables first.
- Not using food as a punishment, nor insisting that a child eats everything that has been packed.
- Welcoming families who wish to join their child for lunch.
- Facilitating conversation about healthy eating habits.

- Promoting self-help and independence skills by involving students in some preparation for eating as well as cleaning up after (i.e. wiping down tables with soap and water, passing out supplies, packing up own lunch, throwing out personal trash, etc.)
- Serving snacks family-style when possible.
- Incorporating learning discussions about where their food came from, classifying the types of foods, counting lunch items, identifying colors, comparing who has similar and different types of food, etc.

**WonderLab requires families to:**

- Ensure their child has an adequate breakfast or inform the teacher if your child has not eaten before school.
- Avoid items that are considered choking hazards in children under 4 years (see handout)
- Send a well-balanced lunch. State regulation number 7.702.65 advises that lunches should provide 1/3 of your child’s nutritional requirement:
  - 1 serving of protein, (meat, fish, cheese, egg, beans, nut or sun butter)
  - 1 serving of bread, or bread alternative
  - 2 servings of vegetables and/or fruit
  - 1 serving of dairy (yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese)
  - Water; milk is optional, though milk needs to fit in your child’s lunch box or in an insulated, leak-proof container. Licensing rules require that children are sitting up while drinking beverages.
- No candy or soda
- No glass containers or plastic bags

No child at WonderLab will go without eating lunch. If you forget to provide your child a balanced lunch, food will be provided by the school.

**Health**

All staff members are required to have current and up-to-date training in First Aid and CPR, provided through approved vendors with Colorado Shines/PDIS. This training is staggered to ensure coverage throughout the year.

Families will have 30 days from enrollment to complete and return the required WonderLab Health Evaluation Form. Please note that there is a section that must be completed by your family doctor.

**An infectious disease is defined by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment as “any contagious sickness or condition that substantially impairs vital functioning and which poses a risk to the health and welfare of other students and staff.”**  
 A list of illnesses/conditions explaining when it is necessary to keep your child at home is posted in the entryway of the school and attached at the end of this document.

If a child or staff member has contracted an infectious disease, return to school is only permissible after 24 hours of antibiotic use, or with a written note from their physician. If a child has a temperature above 100 degrees or feels too ill to function adequately at school, families will be contacted and required to take their child home. Our facility does not allow us to care for sick children. Therefore, timely pick up of your sick child is appreciated. Children should not be sent to school with a fever, vomiting, diarrhea or any symptoms that impair reasonable functioning, nor should they attend if you have needed to administer fever reducing medication, such as Tylenol or Motrin. It is WonderLab's policy that all children are expected to play outside daily. We do not have adequate supervision for a child to remain indoors during recess. If your child is well enough to come to school, your child is considered well enough to play outside. Please contact the school immediately if your child has been diagnosed with a contagious condition so that other families may be informed. Tuition will not be reimbursed for a child absent due to illness.

### **Medication**

WonderLab staff may only administer medication if they have received Medical Administration Training (in compliance with the Nurse Practice Act, C.R.S 12-38-132). Before medication can be administered, families must obtain a medical permission form completed by your child's doctor and the school is provided with the medication in its original container. These forms are available from the Center Director. There must be a form for each required medication and presenting condition. A 'blanket' permission form that covers all or any medication will not be accepted.

If your child has a chronic condition, a meeting will be arranged with the school nurse and school staff. From this meeting a health plan will be established with any staff training requirements. A child who requires a medical plan will not be allowed to attend WonderLab until the above steps have been completed.

No over-the-counter or homeopathic medications (i.e. Emergen-C, Pedialyte, vitamins, etc.) will be administered unless there is a doctor's prescription for them, along with completed medical administration permission form. Families are welcome to come to the school to administer their child's medication themselves.

Staff members are not allowed to administer any creams (i.e. diaper rash cream, hand lotion, lip balm) if the child's skin is broken or cracked. This then becomes a treatment as opposed to a preventative measure and will again require a completed medical administration permission form. Please hand any medication to the teacher in its original container and do not leave in your child's backpack or cubby. Children may not have in their possession creams or medications (i.e. cough drops, lip balm).

### **Reporting child abuse**

The WonderLab staff, as mandatory reporters, has a legal responsibility to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Colorado Department of Human Services. Abuse is defined by the

Children’s Code as, “an act or omission (by the care giver) which threatens the health or welfare of a child, including: physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.” Detailed definitions for child abuse and neglect can be obtained from the Center Director. The school is NOT obliged to inform families if a report of suspected abuse has been made.

### Reporting suspected licensing violations

WonderLab is licensed as a large childcare facility by the State of Colorado. Our license number is **1773961**. Complaints of suspected licensing violations may be addressed to:

Center Director  
WonderLab Early Learning  
422 West 12th Street  
Durango, CO 81301  
(970) 259-9234 Ex. 111

Division of Childcare  
Colorado Department of Human Services  
1575 Sherman Street, First Floor  
Denver, Colorado 80203-1714  
(303)866-5958

***By signing your annual financial agreement, you agree to adhere to all policies laid out in this family policy book. Thank you for choosing WonderLab Early Learning! We are excited to work with you and your family!***



Communicable Disease  
How sick is too sick?  
Public guidance document

Available languages:

[Spanish/Español](#) | [Amharic/አማርኛ](#) | [Arabic/العربية](#) | [Burmese/မြန်မာစာ](#) | [Farsi/فارسی](#) | [Dari/دري](#) | [French/Français](#) | [Karen/ကညီကျိာ်](#) | [Korean/한국어](#) | [Nepali/नेपाली](#) | [Pashto/پښتو](#) | [Russian/русский язык](#) | [Simplified Chinese/简化字](#) | [Traditional Chinese/繁體字](#) | [Somali/Soomaali](#) | [Swahili/Kiswahili](#) | [Tigrinya/ትግርኛ](#) | [Ukrainian/українська мова](#) | [Vietnamese/Tiếng Việt](#)

This document outlines guidance for routine decisions about when children and staff should stay home from school or child care. There may be situations where public health determines more stringent return-to-school requirements.

There are four main reasons for children and adults to stay home:

1. The child or staff member could infect others with a contagious illness, either because of symptoms, a diagnosis, or recent exposure to a contagious illness.
2. The child or staff member does not feel well enough to take part in usual activities. For example, a child is overly tired, fussy, or will not stop crying.
3. A child needs more care than teachers and staff can give while still caring for the other children.
4. The child or staff member has symptoms or an illness on this list, and staying home is required.

When to seek emergency medical attention:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone

These are not all possible indications of a medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 or your health care provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

The contents of this document are not to be altered without the express permission of the Department.

[Guidance for symptoms not due to a specific disease](#) | [Guidance for specific diagnosed illnesses](#)

Guidance for symptoms not due to a specific disease

Symptom	Must the child or staff stay home?
<b>Severe or new cough, including croup</b>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Severe cough is often present in people with infectious respiratory illness. A person with severe, uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, or rapid or difficulty breathing (if new or worsening from baseline) should not attend school or child care and should talk to a health care provider.</p> <p>If all symptoms are consistent with the usual symptoms of a known chronic condition and the person is otherwise well enough to return to school, no further evaluation is necessary.</p> <p>Students and staff may return to school, even if the cough is not fully resolved, as long as exclusion is not required for other symptoms or diagnosis.</p>

<p><b>Diarrhea</b></p> <p>Frequent, loose, or watery stools (poop) compared to normal ones that are not caused by food or medicine</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Unless the diarrhea is related to an existing chronic condition, is explained by a diagnosed condition not requiring the person to stay home, or is consistent with the person's baseline.</p> <p>The child or staff member may return to school or child care 24 hours after their last episode of diarrhea unless the diarrhea is caused by an illness that requires them to stay home longer. If the diarrhea is explained by a specific illness, then the child or staff can return to school or child care following exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p>
<p><b>Fever</b></p> <p>Fever is a temperature of 100.4°F or greater. Babies who are 3 months or younger need to see a health care provider right away for a fever of 100°F or higher. Call your health care provider for any fever in an infant aged 6 months or younger.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — The child or staff member may return to school or child care if the fever has been resolved for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications unless the fever is caused by an illness that requires them to stay home longer.</p> <p>If the fever is consistent with the usual symptoms of a known chronic condition and the person is otherwise well enough to return to school, no further evaluation is necessary.</p> <p>A temporary, elevated temperature due to overexertion or overdress, without other symptoms of illness, should not be considered a fever.</p> <p>For more information about fever, read Children's Hospital Colorado's <a href="#">recommendations on fever care for children</a>.</p>

Symptom	Must the child or staff stay home?
<p><b>Flu-like symptoms</b></p> <p>Fever with sore throat or cough. Other flu symptoms can include runny nose, congestion, fatigue, body aches, vomiting, and diarrhea.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Children and staff may return to school or child care as long as they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms are improving, unless the symptoms are caused by an illness that requires them to stay home longer. If the symptoms can be explained by a specific illness, then follow the exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p> <p>In consultation with a health care provider, additional evaluation for flu-like illnesses, sore throat, and upper respiratory symptoms may be appropriate, including evaluation for strep throat.</p>

<p><b>Vomiting</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Unless the vomiting is related to an existing chronic condition or is explained by a diagnosed condition not requiring the person to stay home. If the vomiting is unexplained and inconsistent with the person’s baseline state of health, the child or staff member may return 24 hours after their last episode of vomiting. If the vomiting can be explained by a specific illness, then follow the exclusion guidelines for that illness.</p> <p>If a child with a recent head injury vomits, seek medical attention.</p>
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Guidance for symptoms not due to a specific disease

Illness	Must the child or staff stay home?
<p><b>Chicken pox</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Exclude until the blisters have dried and crusted (usually 6 days), or in immunized people without crusting, until no new lesions within 24-hour period.</p>
<p><b>Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)</b> Pink color of eye and thick yellow/green discharge</p>	<p><b>No</b> — Children and adults do not need to stay home unless they have a fever or are not able to participate in usual activities. Practice good hand hygiene.</p>
<p><b>Fifth’s Disease (parvovirus)</b></p>	<p><b>No</b> — The illness is no longer contagious once the rash appears.</p>
<p><b>Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackie virus)</b></p>	<p><b>No</b> — Exclusion is not necessary unless the child or adult meets other exclusion criteria, is drooling uncontrollably, and has mouth sores or is not able to take part in usual activities.</p>
<p><b>Head lice or scabies</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Children and staff may stay at school or child care until the end of the day, but cannot return until after they have had the first treatment.</p>
<p><b>Hepatitis A, Salmonella, Shigella, or Shiga Toxin Producing E. coli</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b> — Children and staff may return to school or child care when cleared by the health department.</p>
<p><b>Herpes</b></p>	<p><b>No</b> — Exclusion is not necessary unless there are open sores that cannot be covered or there is uncontrollable drooling.</p>

<b>Impetigo</b>	<b>Yes</b> — Children and adults need to stay home until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has started.
<b>Norovirus</b>	<b>Yes</b> — Exclude children and staff for at least 48 hours after their last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhea. <b>During an outbreak of confirmed or suspected norovirus, exclusion may be increased to 72 hours after the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhea.</b>
<b>Ringworm</b>	<b>Yes</b> — Children may stay at school or child care until the end of the day, but cannot return until after they have had the first treatment. Keep the area covered for the first three days if participating in activities with person to person contact.
<b>Roseola</b>	<b>No</b> — Exclusion is not necessary unless there is a fever or behavior changes.

<b>Illness</b>	<b>Must the child or staff stay home?</b>
<b>Respiratory viruses</b> COVID-19, influenza, RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)	<b>Yes</b> — Children and staff should remain out of school or child care until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have been improving for 24 hours.  Additional precautions are recommended for at least five days following the return of anyone recovering from respiratory symptoms, including hand and respiratory hygiene, improved ventilation, masking, physical distancing, and testing.  Refer to CDC's <a href="#">Respiratory Virus Guidance</a> for additional information.  <b>During an outbreak or when case rates are high, exclusion times may be increased to protect hospital capacity.</b>
<b>Strep throat</b>	<b>Yes</b> — Exclude for 12 hours after starting antibiotics.
<b>Other vaccine-preventable diseases</b> Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German Measles), Pertussis	<b>Yes</b> — Children and staff can return to school once they are no longer contagious (see <a href="#">Infectious Disease Guidelines</a> ). Public health consultation may be necessary.

(Whooping Cough)	
<b>Yeast infections</b> Thrush or Candida diaper rash	<b>No</b> — Follow good hand washing and hygiene practices.
<b>Other</b> Symptoms or illnesses not listed	Contact the child care center director or school health staff to see if the child or staff member needs to stay home (see <a href="#">Infectious Disease Guidelines</a> ). Public health consultation may be necessary.

This document was developed in collaboration with pediatricians, medical epidemiologists and public health professionals.

The information presented is intended for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of your personal doctor’s advice and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information should not be used in place of a visit, call or consultation or advice of your doctor or other health care provider.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics. *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide*. Aronson SS, Shope TR, eds. 5th ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2020.20.

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