

GRACE UNITED METHODIST PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

Philosophy

Each child is a unique and precious human being. The goal of the Grace United Methodist Preschool is to provide an atmosphere of "controlled freedom" on which the individual child may grow physically, mentally, emotionally and socially at his/her own growth rate, under the guidance of experienced and loving teachers. An integrated program of activities is carefully planned, based on a developmental learning theory.

A Brief History of Grace Preschool

Grace Preschool, founded in 1961, has a tradition of excellence initiated under the direction of Mrs. Jean Page. The school grew from the initial student body of nine four-year old children to its present size of 104 children ranging from two to six years old. Our school faculty is composed of 18 highly qualified professionals including specialists in art, music, physical education and science.

PRESCHOOL POLICIES

Admissions

Admission to Grace Preschool is open to all children from the age of 24 months to five years, regardless of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The school is not equipped to handle children with severe mental or physical handicaps and does not have a special education staff. Children having borderline or minimal problems can be admitted subsequent to an evaluation.

Programs

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|-----------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Two Year Olds | <i>2 yrs. by Aug. 31</i> | 9:00-11:00 | T, TH |
| January Twos | <i>2 yrs. by Dec. 1</i> | 9:00-11:00 | T, TH |
| Three Year Olds | | 9:00-12:00 | M, W, F |
| Four Year Olds | | 9:00-12:00 | M, T, TH, F |
| Kindergarten | | 9:00-12:00 | M, TH, F 9:00-2:30 T, W |

Placement

Classes are balanced by age and by sex. A child will progress through the classes automatically according to age unless the child's teacher and the Director feel that the child requires another placement or will not be ready for advancement. Parent-teacher conferences can be arranged to discuss the child's needs. The Director will make the final placement decision.

Registration and Enrollment

Parents may register their child for the following September's admission beginning October 1st. Children are considered for enrollment upon the receipt of a completed application and payment of the \$25 registration fee. The registration fee is not refundable.

Enrollment is on a first-come, first serve basis. However, Grace Church members and siblings of current and former Grace Preschool families are given preference for enrollment through January 15th. New students are then accepted to the Preschool based upon the need to balance existing class enrollment by age and sex.

A waiting list is maintained for each class from the completed enrollment forms. Vacancies will be filled from this waiting list. Waiting lists are not forwarded from one year to the next. A new enrollment application must be completed each year.

Contact the school for more information about January Twos registration procedures.

Financial Responsibility

A deposit of \$250.00 is due by March 1st. This deposit will be applied toward tuition charges for the following school year. The balance of the tuition is divided into two payments. The first half is due August 1st and the second half is due January 15th. All checks should be made payable to Grace Preschool and mailed to 5407 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21210. Prepaid tuition will not be refunded should a child be withdrawn mid-semester.

Gradual Entrance

School begins each year the second week in September. Prior to the school's commencement, we schedule an evening Parents' Meeting and a day of Parent/Teacher/Child conferences. A gradual entrance plan is arranged for the two and three year olds as follows:

Two's: Half of the class meets for a one hour session on the first class day: 9-10am or 10:30-11:30 am. The entire class attends the full two-hour session on the next class day.

Three's: Half of the class meets for an hour and 15 minute session on the first class day 9:00-10:15 or 10:45-12 noon. The entire class attends the full three-hour session on the next class day.

Four's: Half of the class meets for an hour and 15 minute session on the first class day 9:00-10:15 or 10:45-12 noon. The entire class attends the full three-hour session on the next class day

Arrival

We ask that your child arrive at school as close to 9:00am as possible. The time between 8:30 and 8:50 is an important preparation time for our teachers.

*** IF YOU ARRIVE EARLY PLEASE WAIT IN YOUR CAR OR IN THE LOBBY UNTIL 8:50. CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE UNATTENDED OUTSIDE OR INSIDE OF THE BUILDING.**

The doors will be unlocked at 8:50 and locked at 9:15. We will keep the doors locked for security reasons at all other times. If you come to school and the doors are locked, you can gain access by using the large intercom phone pad mounted beside the door. Please speak clearly and **identify yourself** when the call is answered. The school or church office will buzz you in.

We do have a staff code that opens our door – this code is not to be shared for security reasons.

***ALL PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST SIGN THEIR CHILD IN EVERY MORNING.**

There is a sign-in sheet near the door of each classroom.

Bringing your Child to the Classroom

We ask that you accompany your child to the classroom, **sign in** and say goodbye. Reassure your child that you will be back at lunchtime and then please leave the classroom area. Staying too long tends to make separation more difficult for your child. If you are concerned about your child, please wait near the Office and we will happily check on your child and report to you. Usually children become involved in a classroom activity shortly after the parent leaves the room.

Dismissal

All classes will be dismissed from the classroom. Please pick up your child promptly.

***ALL PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST SIGN THEIR CHILD OUT AT PICK UP TIME.**

There is a sign-out sheet near the door of each classroom.

Two's have an 11:00 am dismissal time. Three's, Four's, and Kindergarten are dismissed at 12 Noon.

We ask that you make sure your child's teacher knows you are taking him/her by saying, "Goodbye, Mrs. _____". Please do not engage the teacher in conversation at dismissal since she must watch all the children in her charge at this busy time.

Supervision of Children

Parents and guardians are responsible for their children at arrival time and dismissal time. Please keep our school rules in mind and reinforce them with your child. Let's all work together to keep our children safe and to teach them how to behave in a responsible and respectful manner.

Our School Rules:

Always walk in the halls. Running is not allowed.

Never sit or stand on windowsills, library shelves or heating and cooling units. Do not use loud voices in the halls.

Be considerate and patient with others as you travel the halls.

Reminders:

Always accompany your child when using the bathrooms.

Never leave your child/children unattended in the halls.

Keep your child/children with you at all times when outside of the school building. Hold your child's hand/keep them close to you physically when on the parking lot.

Car Pools

If your child will be arriving or departing by car pool please give your child's teacher a car pool schedule and inform her of any changes to this schedule in writing. Should transportation changes occur during the school time, please call the Office with that information.

At dismissal time, please take your group to the car as soon as you gather all the children.

Please do not allow the children to run free in the parking area.

Parking Rules

* Parents must use extreme caution while driving on the parking lot.

* Cars must be parked in marked spaces before children are delivered and/or picked up. *

Double parking is not allowed.

* The driver must escort the children to and from the car.

* Children are not to be left unattended in cars at any time.

* Engines should not be left running and unattended.

* Please do not use the handicapped spaces.

These rules are made for the safety of all our children. Parents with older children are asked to park in the upper parking lot. Please inform your babysitters and nannies of our parking regulations. We appreciate your cooperation.

School Closing Policy

In the event of inclement weather, our school closing policy will be as follows:

If Baltimore County Schools CLOSE for special weather conditions such as snow, Grace will be CLOSED. We will not make a special announcement on the radio. We will post the information on our website and email our families when we receive the Baltimore County notification.

If Baltimore County Schools OPEN ONE HOUR LATE, all Grace Preschool classes will meet from 10:00 am-12:00 noon.

If Baltimore County Schools OPEN TWO HOURS LATE, all Grace Preschool classes will meet from 10:00 am-12:00 noon.

On Late Opening Days, all afternoon classes will end at the regularly scheduled times. If the weather takes a turn for the worse in the afternoon, we suggest that our parents pick up their children early to avoid poor road conditions.

Conferences

Parent -Teacher conferences are scheduled for the parents of our Three's, Four's, and Kindergarten students. These conferences are in January. When deemed appropriate, teachers or parents may request an additional conference.

Health Forms

In accordance with Baltimore City Health Department regulations, Health Forms must be submitted before your child will be permitted to attend school in September.

All new students are required to submit the HEALTH INVENTORY-which includes a list of Immunizations and Lead Screening Results. Students previously enrolled in Grace Preschool have medical forms on file and need only advise the office of new inoculations.

Our Kindergarten students are required to have a second MMR. At age five, a child usually receives a second MMR, a fifth DPT, a fourth polio and the last Hib. Please report these vaccinations to the office so we can update your child's health form.

Illness

If there are any doubts about your child's health, the child should be kept at home. If your child has a fresh cough or has had a fever or has vomited within the last 24 hours, please keep him/her at home. If your child has any type of contagious disease, please notify the Office so that the teachers can be alerted.

PLEASE HELP US TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN AND TEACHERS HEALTHY – DO NOT SEND SICK CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.

Absences

If your child is unable to attend school, our licensing agent requires that we have a signed note from the parent or physician stating the reason for the absence. A note of explanation is required for every absence and must be given to the teacher the day the child returns to school.

School Clothing

Children should come to school dressed for play. Tennis shoes or rubber-soled shoes are recommended. Crocs, flip-flops and open sandals are not safe shoes for our playground and stairways. Children should wear clothes that they can manage themselves with minimal adult assistance. We try to go outside every day. Dress your child appropriately and remember to send your child to school with hats, mittens, coat/jacket, snow pants and boots when needed.

Personal Belongings

Please be sure that all articles of clothing brought to school are clearly **marked with your child's name**.

Show and Tell: Please check with your child's teacher about which day is Show and Tell day. Please do not send in items that are fragile, valuable or can be broken easily. Children may enjoy bringing things they have made or found. No toy weapons of any kind may be brought to school.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of our preschool curriculum for the Fours and Kindergarten classes. We transport children by school bus or private car. Parent drivers are asked to make other arrangements for siblings on field trip days. All children must be securely seat belted while in the car.

Snacks

Grace Preschool offers the following snacks: * 100% pure fruit juice

* 2% milk

* Fruits and vegetables (fresh and dried)

* Crackers, pretzels, cookies and Cheerios * Cheese

On occasion, a preschool parent may provide a special snack.

ALLERGIES: Please make your child's teacher and the Office aware of any food allergies. Parents may supply all food and/or drinks to accommodate special diet requirements for children with allergies. Speak to the Director and Teacher about limiting school snacks and providing snacks for children with allergies.

Birthday Parties

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays by bringing in a favorite snack to share with the class. Please discuss plans for your child's birthday with his/her teacher. * Never send snacks that contain NUT products!

Birthday Books

Birthday Books have become a tradition at Grace Preschool. In celebration of your child's birthday, you may want to purchase a book for our Library. A bookplate with your child's name and birth date will be placed in the front cover.

You may bring a copy of your child's favorite book or one that he or she has selected. For your convenience, we also have books in the Office that you may purchase.

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is an extended day program for the children in the Three's, Four's and Kindergarten classes. The children bring their lunch and drink and have play time both in the classroom and on the playground. Lunch Bunch is offered for our Four's and Kindergarten children Monday through Thursday - 12:00 - 2:30 pm. You may pick up your child any time before 2:30 pm. Our Three's Lunch Bunch is offered on Monday and Wednesday from 12:00 - 2:00. Three Year Olds may not stay until 2:30.

*** All children who attend Lunch Bunch need to be toilet trained ***

The cost is \$300 for each registered day for a 15-week semester. The semester plan is suggested for anyone planning to use Lunch Bunch on a regular schedule. A child may also "drop-in" on an occasional day by signing the calendar in the hall outside the Preschool Office. These spaces are limited. There is a \$22 per day charge for occasional use.

In keeping with school policy, children will be dismissed only to a designated adult. Please let us know who will be picking up your child from Lunch Bunch and give us a written note with any changes in your dismissal plans. Should a change occur during the school day, please call the school Office. At Lunch Bunch dismissal, you must sign your child out in the Lunch Bunch roll book.

Lunches for Extended Day and Lunch Bunch

Parents are required to prepare and pack a lunch for their children when they stay for Lunch Bunch and/or extended day Kindergarten. Because of limited refrigeration space, Grace Preschool cannot provide refrigeration for all of the lunches brought into the school. Therefore, lunches should contain ingredients and products that do not require refrigeration to prevent spoilage and/or contamination. If, on a specific day your child's lunch needs to be refrigerated, you will need to inform the teacher so that particular lunch can be placed in the refrigerator. Ice/cold packs are recommended.

Privacy Rights

The records for each student are kept confidential by Grace Preschool and its staff. These records will be released to other agencies ONLY upon receipt of a signed Release of Information Form from the child's parent(s).

Discipline Policy

Our staff uses positive techniques of guidance, including logical or natural consequences applied in problem situations redirection, anticipation of and elimination of potential problems and encouragement of appropriate behavior rather than competition, comparison or criticism. Consistent, clear rules are developed in conjunction with children and are discussed with them to make sure they understand. We will describe the situation to encourage children's evaluation of the problem rather than impose the solution. The staff abstains from corporal punishment or humiliating or frightening discipline techniques. Food or beverage is never withheld as a discipline device. This policy is in accordance with the NAEYC.

Termination

If the school, after a reasonable length of review and discussion with the parents, feels that a child's behavior is unacceptable, the Director retains the right to require the child's involuntary withdrawal.

Public Notice

Grace Preschool's Asbestos Management Plan, as regulated by the federal government, is available for review in the Preschool Office.

Alternate Contact for Grace Preschool

If you have an emergency and cannot get through on the school phone line – you may contact the church office and ask them to relay the message to “contact you immediately”. **The church number is 410-433-6650.** Please use this method of communication in emergencies only. The preschool monitors its answering machine and email messages throughout the day. Parents can leave messages on our school answering machine when there is not an emergency situation.

Grace Preschool Parents' Association

The Parents' Association is composed of Grace Preschool Parents. Its aim is to support the Preschool through parent volunteers and fund raising efforts. Our two main fundraisers are the annual Holiday Bazaar and the Greens Sale. Through these events, the Parents' Association has helped to make improvements to the school and to purchase equipment and materials for the classrooms.

Parents may choose from a variety of volunteer options, both in and out of the classrooms. Please consider sharing your talents and time.

GRACE PRESCHOOL EMERGENCY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Staff at Grace Preschool understands that if an unforeseen crisis situation were to arise, parents will certainly come to pick up their children as quickly as possible. With that in mind, it is important to have some simple procedures outlined.

Goals of the Crisis Plan

1. To keep our children safe until the crisis situation is over, or until help or responsible adults have arrived.
2. To facilitate communication in an emergency situation between Staff, families and emergency crews.
3. To keep emergency procedures simple so they are clear and easy to follow

Actions to Protect Children and Staff

While no one can predict what kind of “emergency situation” may arise, there are four actions that may become necessary due to an unforeseen crisis situation. They are as follows:

Level I--Lock Down: All classroom doors will be locked and blinds pulled down. At the discretion of Grace Staff, dismissal may be from the classroom or from the lobby at the main entrance. A parent or designated guardian must sign out the child out.

Level II--Safe Room Lock Down: Children and Staff go to a designated “Safe Room” in the Grace Church. There will be a box of emergency materials for a short term stay. Dismissal would be directly from the safe room. Children must be signed out by a parent or designated guardian.

Level III--Evacuate Building to Playground--Each class will have a designated area to wait. Children must be signed out by parent or designated guardian at the playground entrance.

Level IV--Evacuate to School of the Cathedral--A plan is in effect that if Grace Staff and children need to evacuate the Grace site, they can go across Charles Street to the School of the Cathedral. Dismissal will be from Cathedral. A parent or designated guardian must sign out the child. Cathedral emergency procedures may be in effect.

Communication Procedures

We will use the phone numbers and information on the children’s Emergency Card and on the Child Pick Up Authorization Form. – Please keep this information up to date.

ALL PARENTS WILL NEED TO FILL OUT A CHILD PICK UP AUTHORIZATION FORM TO BE USED IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

Each class shall organize a phone tree to facilitate communication of information between staff and parents. Cell phone and alternate contact information is crucial. This information should be updated throughout the year.