

# The Parent Handbook

**St. Mark's Nursery School and Kindergarten**

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*"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."*

*From Rachel Carson's*  
***A Sense of Wonder***

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# Section 1: Welcome to St. Mark's!

Our classrooms, play yards and community spaces are designed to be learning environments where children and their families feel free to be themselves, to make choices, to try new ideas and to delight in their discoveries and abilities. We celebrate the diversity of our community, and welcome families of all backgrounds, faiths and cultures. Our mission statement was developed and written collaboratively by our directors, teachers and parents.

This is a place where:

- Children know that they are loved.
- Children learn to trust and are trusted.
- Children are valued as individuals.
- Children's natural creativity is fostered.
- Children and adults become a peaceful community of learners, sharing their joy and wonder.

## ***Our Mission:***

*We believe that children learn best through play and meaningful relationships with peers and loving adults.*

*Our environment allows children to experience and develop a deep love of learning.*

*The tools for healthy social interactions are modeled, taught and applied.*

*We foster a sense of wonder with opportunities for discovery and experimentation.*

*We value and accept each child's developmental stage and unique style.*

*We provide a supportive network for families to build a bridge between home and school.*

## **Our Diverse St. Mark's Community**

As a ministry of St. Mark's United Methodist Church, we embrace the call for "Open Hearts, Open Doors, Open Minds." We welcome and enjoy families from a variety of cultures, faiths and backgrounds. Our goal is that each member of our St. Mark's school family begins to know and care about the other members. For this reason, we ask for information about your family traditions, the part of the world that you are from, the way you live your daily lives and the languages you speak. By sharing this information you help us create an environment where children experience inclusive activities and attitudes on a daily basis.

For young children who do not yet have a sense of history, we believe that religion is largely about caring relationships and the experience of wonder in the world around us. We do not teach specific religious doctrine. We celebrate Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Jesus and as a time for giving. In our classrooms we present some of the symbols of the season. We celebrate Easter in terms of the new life which

# Section 1

- Community
- History

abounds in the spring. We try to minimize the commercial aspects of all holidays.

We welcome opportunities to celebrate the holidays which are important for families of other religions. We invite families to share their customs and traditions. We try hard to make these celebrations age-appropriate for each group of children.

### **History of St. Mark's Nursery School**

In 1969 a small group of parents at St. Mark's United Methodist Church joined together to start a part-time nursery school program. Starting with one classroom of three-year-olds, a play-based program was designed that would foster the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of young children, recognizing that the needs of this age group are unique. Required parent participation was an integral part of the classroom experience. The next year, the program expanded to include four-year-olds and has continued to expand throughout the years.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of St. Mark's Nursery School, community outreach programs were added to the annual programming activities. Several Saturdays throughout the year are set aside for special events. These include the annual "Getting Ready for Christmas" event in early December and the "Young at Art" festival in the early spring. Over the years programs have included "Science Alive," "Multicultural Festival," "Bubblefest," and other creative endeavors. Parents are invited to help create, develop and implement these events.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of St. Mark's Nursery School, we entered into the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) accreditation process. We have maintained our accreditation since 1990, and take pride in receiving special commendations in the area of teacher-child relationships. By the 30th school anniversary a church building renovation allowed programming opportunities for infants and toddlers. The 40th anniversary sees further expansion as we add a long-awaited Kindergarten program.

While we value the history of our past, we embrace the children of the future with an understanding that some things never change—the need for companionship, love, safety and acceptance.





## Section 2: The St. Mark's Program

Throughout the history of St. Mark's Nursery School, the essential beliefs in children, play, childhood and parental involvement have been a constant. With this in mind, we are adapting *The Creative Curriculum* by Diane Trister Dodge et al as an educational framework. This helps us plan and consider all aspects of the child's school experience—the social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language development.

On the following pages, 8-13, you will find the goals and objectives of *The Creative Curriculum* alongside an explanation of how these are manifested in the classrooms. Information is also provided on how you can help at home. We use these goals and objectives in planning classroom activities and in evaluating and assessing progress by our children.

### **A Typical Classroom Experience**

Each of our classroom experiences is unique, but certain routines and characteristics can be found throughout our program. Upon arrival, the teacher will most likely first greet the child and then the parent, asking for any information the parent would like to share about the child for that day. We believe that a child must feel safe before a successful separation can occur, so it will help if parents relax and encourage the child with positive words and a smile!

Most of the school day is spent exploring. Teachers thoughtfully prepare interest centers to provide developmentally appropriate activities, including dress-up, tactile tables, easels, art activities, literacy areas, writing centers, toys and games, etc. They consider

the ages, interests, background experiences and activity levels of the children in their care. They make certain that there is something for everyone.

If a child's interest moves in an unanticipated direction, our teachers help the child follow his interests. So if, for example, a child wants to have dinosaur puzzles in the classroom, our teachers assist the child in retrieving these from the supply closets. We believe that children learn best when they are learning about meaningful things.

Children also gather together for a group activity when appropriate. This is a time when members of the group share stories, songs, ideas, and experiences, and learn to listen, to wait, to be considerate, and to honor the thoughts and opinions of others. Teachers present children with favorite children's literature and problem-solving opportunities, asking lots of questions to provoke thoughtful answers.

Gross motor movement is encouraged daily both indoors and out. "The Big Room" is visited by many classes on a daily basis and by others on occasion. Within this room are opportunities for climbing (our climbing wall among other things), jumping, bouncing, rocking, riding, running and tumbling. If the temperature is above 19 degrees, the children may play outdoors on one of our three play yards, and occasionally elsewhere on the church grounds.

At the end of the morning the children are picked up by a designated adult. They are often excited to show off some of their artwork, or they may enjoy telling a story

## Section 2

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about what they did each day; for this reason, we ask parents to turn full attention to the child—all cell phones off at pick-up time. **Parents should let the teacher see that they have arrived for the child**, collect bucket or belongings, and then accompany the child out of the building.

### Positive Guidance and Classroom Management

There are moments when adults need to help negotiate disagreements and help with self-regulation. In other words, conflicts and disagreements arise, and we do our best to help the children during those times. Sometimes it means waiting and watching patiently to see if the children are able to work things out on their own, but other times it means we need to step in to ensure the safety and well being of all.

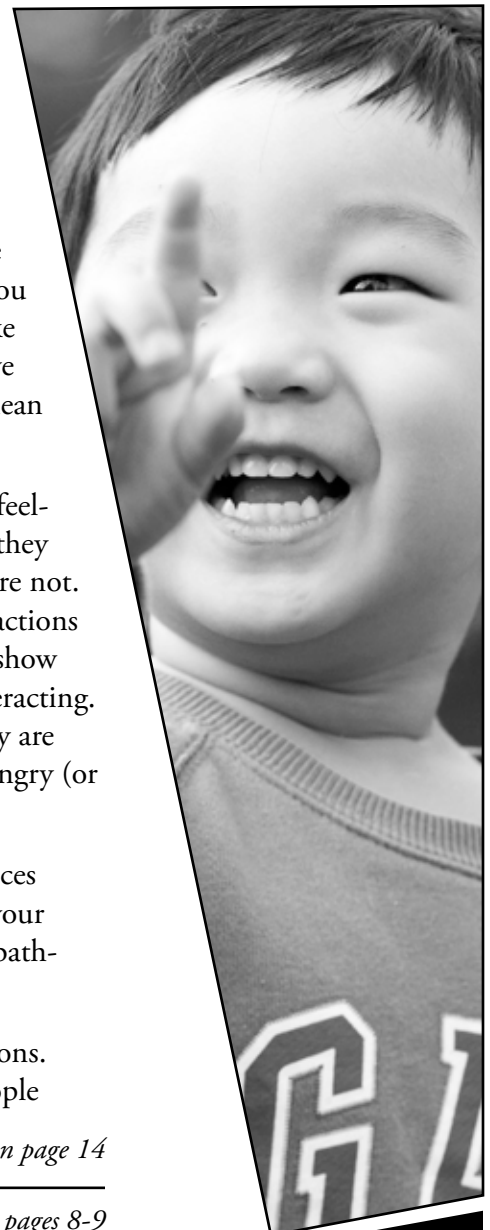
Parents can help with this process in several ways. First, understand that the children are young, inexperienced and verbally challenged. It is easier and faster for a child to hit, grab or push than to find the words needed to voice their wishes. Please be patient with the children who are slow in learning this, and we will do all that we can to protect your child from the physical aggression in the classroom. Next, attend one of our free positive discipline classes, developed by Dr. Becky Bailey ([www.beckybailey.com](http://www.beckybailey.com)). During these classes we offer concrete examples and explanations of the ways we work with children. Our library has several books and CDs by Dr. Bailey available for checkout. Finally, help us model the following positive discipline practices and techniques that our teachers

are trained in and employ regularly in the classroom:

- Accentuate the positive. We tell the children what we want them to do rather than what we want them to stop. We may say, “Paint on the paper at the easel,” rather than “Don’t paint on the wall.”
- Redirect children when their actions or play become inappropriate. When a child dumps sand from the sand table onto the floor, we say “You may dump the sand in the table, like this...” and then we help him, or we may offer a brush and dustpan to clean up the sand.
- Allow children to have their own feelings. We do not make children say they are sorry for their behavior if they are not. We do help children see how their actions may be upsetting to others and we show them more appropriate ways of interacting. We give names to the ways that they are feeling--“She hit you and you feel angry (or hurt or scared or sad).”
- Give children two acceptable choices whenever possible. “You can wash your hands in the classroom sink or the bathroom sink.”
- Help children control their emotions. Brain research shows that when people

*Text continues on page 14*

- *Infant Toddler Curriculum pages 8-9*
- *3-5-Year-Old Curriculum, pages 10-13*



### **Social/Emotional Development**

Goal: To learn about self and others

Objectives:

1. Trusts known, caring adults
2. Regulates own behavior
3. Manages own feelings
4. Responds to others' feelings with growing empathy
5. Plays with other children
6. Learns to be a member of a group
7. Uses personal care skills

### **Physical Development**

Goal: To learn about moving

Objectives:

8. Demonstrates basic gross motor skills
9. Demonstrates basic fine motor skills

### **Cognitive Development**

Goal: To learn about the world

Objectives:

10. Sustains attention
11. Understands how objects can be used
12. Shows a beginning understanding of cause and effect
13. Shows a beginning understanding that things can be grouped
14. Uses problem-solving strategies
15. Engages in pretend play

### **Language Development**

Goal: To learn about communicating

Objectives:

16. Develops receptive language
17. Develops expressive language
18. Participates in conversations
19. Enjoys books and being read to
20. Shows an awareness of pictures and print
21. Experiments with drawing and writing

# The Infant and Toddler Curriculum

At St. Mark's Nursery School our classrooms for infants, toddlers and twos reflect their unique stages of development.

### **Social and Emotional Development**

For many of our youngest children this is their first experience in a place other than home and very often the first experience in a group setting. Our teachers will try to help make this transition a smooth one for everyone, knowing that the process will be different for each child.

*You can help by talking with your child's teachers about separation issues. Tell us what comforts your child. If separation anxiety is prolonged, we will make a plan together to try to help your child through it. Remember that your child is learning to trust this new environment and these new people. It helps the most if you show that you trust us. And, remember that every time you leave your child, she goes through separation. Therefore it is best not to leave for a little while and then come back and then leave again. You are welcome to stay with your child as long as that seems to be helpful.*

### **Physical Development**

Our infants, toddlers and twos demonstrate a wide range in their motor skill levels. Each of these rooms is equipped to reflect the needs of the groups of children using the room. We keep a variety of toys and equipment in storage to be brought out as a group of children become ready for it. Blocks, ramps, tunnels, push and pull toys encourage use of large muscles. Manipulative toys of all sorts are rotated in and out of the classrooms for fine motor skill development.

*You can help by telling us your child's favorite toys and activities and by sharing milestones in motor development that you observe at home. Our teachers will share with you (by photograph if possible) things like first steps that are taken here!*

### **Cognitive Development**

As our teachers observe each child interacting with the materials in the classroom they will make choices about which things to introduce next. Open-ended manipulative toys that can be sorted, stacked, lined up and rearranged are always available. Puzzles that need to be put together in only one way are also supplied. Toy animals, cars and trucks, dishes, dolls, etc. encourage the beginnings of pretend play. Classrooms for these ages are set up for parallel play. There is always more than one of a particular item. We expect children to play alongside each other as well as with one another. We don't expect that they can share toys until they have really experienced ownership – which means playing with it until they are finished.

*You can help us by understanding that the word “share” has many different meanings. Adults use it to mean taking turns, giving up part of what you have or giving up all of what you have. It is confusing to young children. We can help them move toward recognizing needs of others but it is not helpful to force them to give up something they need.*

### **Language Development**

The years from birth to age three are amazing ones. The growth in the area of language development alone is enough to boggle the adult mind.

At St. Mark’s Nursery School we are privileged to enjoy children who are developing language and sometimes are developing more than one language at once. Children who grow up bilingual will have that advantage all their lives. We hope to help in that process.

And we believe that all of our children are readers and writers at whatever stage they are. Our babies scribble on large sheets of paper, our two year olds begin to recognize their printed name. Each classroom has lots of books and the nursery school library provides many more. In our classrooms you will usually hear a quiet hum of conversation.

*You can help by sharing your love of books with our children. Feel free when you are participating to spend time on the couch with some children and some books. Share your native language with the group. Sing a song in Korean or French. Bring a favorite book. Value your child’s scribbles – they are the beginnings of writing.*

*“Children forget 99% of what they are exposed to unless it is physical, natural and relevant to the child.”*  
– Dan Hodgins



### Social/Emotional Development

Goal: Sense of Self

- Obj: 1. Shows ability to adjust to new situations  
2. Demonstrates appropriate trust in adults  
3. Recognizes own feelings and manages them appropriately  
4. Stands up for rights

G: Responsibility for Self and Others

- O: 5. Demonstrates self-direction and independence  
6. Takes responsibility for own well-being  
7. Respects and cares for classroom environment and materials  
8. Follows classroom routines  
9. Follows classroom rules

G: Prosocial Behavior

- O: 10. Plays well with other children  
11. Recognizes the feelings of others and responds appropriately  
12. Shares and respects the rights of others  
13. Uses thinking skills to resolve conflicts

### Physical Development

G: Gross Motor

- O: 14. Demonstrates basic locomotor skills (running, jumping, hopping, galloping)  
15. Shows balance while moving  
16. Climbs up and down  
17. Pedals and steers a tricycle (or other wheeled vehicle)  
18. Demonstrates throwing, kicking and catching skills

G: Fine Motor

- O: 19. Controls small muscles in hands  
20. Coordinates eye-hand movement  
21. Uses tools for writing and drawing

*Continued on page 12*

# The Three-to-Five Year Old Curriculum

At St. Mark's Nursery School our classrooms for preschoolers reflect their unique stages of development.

### Social/Emotional Development

To help children develop a strong SENSE OF SELF you will see our teachers give notice before classroom changes, keep promises from one day to the next, use reflective listening to help children verbalize their feelings and provide support for children who tend to give up too easily.

*You can help by reading our newsletters and classroom letters so you can talk with your child about any upcoming changes, by showing that you trust the other adults here, by allowing your child to have any feeling, by modeling appropriate ways of dealing with feelings and by learning the difference between praise and encouragement. (We'll help!)*

To help children develop RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF AND

OTHERS you will see our teachers providing an environment with lots of choices, modeling care and good stewardship in their use of books and materials, keeping a consistent classroom schedule that allows for flexibility when needed and having ongoing conversations about ways each person can help the well being of the classroom community.

*You can help by giving your child lots of experience in making a choice from two or three appropriate alternatives, by talking with your child about our routines like hanging up coats, what goes in the bucket, signing in, etc. You can model care of possessions at home and become aware of the classroom schedule and rules.*

To help children develop PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR you will see our teachers providing opportunities for large and small group play, helping children to listen to each other and to figure out ways to solve conflicts.

*You can help by planning play dates with other children, by learning to use the word "share" appropriately, by not forcing your child to say "I'm sorry," and by trusting children to be able to solve problems with only a little encouragement from adults.*

### Physical Development

St. Mark's Nursery School is available to any child regardless of his/her level of physical development.

To enhance children's GROSS MOTOR SKILLS our teachers will provide outdoor play everyday unless the temperature is below 20 degrees or it is raining hard. The "Big Room" is available on a scheduled basis. Space for

running, tricycles to pedal, structures to climb, balance beams, balls, etc. are all available daily. In the classroom or out, large blocks and other large scale building toys are available. Large size paper is used at easels to encourage whole arm use when painting.

*You can help by watching carefully when you are in the play yard. Please do not lift children higher than they can climb by themselves. Stand nearby to watch a climbing child until you are confident of his/her skill level. Give your child lots of outdoor time at home. We are actually reading research about "nature deficit disorder" in children who spend most of their time indoors. In the "big room", stand near the climbing wall when children are on it.*

To help children develop their FINE MOTOR SKILLS our classrooms are rich in small manipulative toys, art and writing materials, woodworking tools, puzzles of all types and a myriad of tactile experiences. Teachers will observe each child in order to provide materials that will interest and encourage use of small muscles in the hands through squeezing, grasping, pinching, etc.

*You can help by not being too impatient for these skills to develop! Each child is on his/her own time line and may or may not be interested in some of these activities. The large muscles develop first and then the small ones. Use encouraging phrases such as "I remember that you put this puzzle together yesterday. I'll bet you can do it today, too."*

### **Cognitive Development**

Our ultimate goal for children at St. Mark's Nursery School is that they discover a wonderful love of learning which will stay with them all their lives.

To stimulate children's LEARNING AND PROBLEM SOLVING skills, our teachers constantly evaluate and reevaluate the materials and experiences provided in the classroom. Open-ended questions are asked so that there are no wrong answers. The majority of our manipulative materials are ones which can be put together in a variety of ways. We believe that young children are like scientists in the ways they approach tasks. The teachers watch how children observe, how persistent they are, how they explore cause and effect and what they do next. Then the teachers

*"Every stage of development is complete in itself. The three-year-old is not an incomplete five-year-old. The child is not an incomplete adult. Never are we simply on our way! Always have we arrived!*

*Enjoy now!"*

*– J.C. Pearce*



## Cognitive Development

G: Learning and Problem Solving

- O: 22. Curious about objects and events
- 23. Approaches problems flexibly
- 24. Persistence in approaching tasks
- 25. Explores cause and effect
- 26. Applies knowledge or experience to a new context

G: Logical Thinking

- O: 27. Classifies objects
- 28. Compares/measures
- 29. Arranges objects in a series
- 30. Recognizes and repeats patterns
- 31. Awareness of time concepts and sequence
- 32. Spatial awareness of position
- 33. Uses one-to-one correspondence
- 34. Uses numbers and counting

G: Representation and Symbolic Thinking

- O: 35. Takes on pretend roles/situations
- 36. Makes believe with objects
- 37. Makes/interprets representations

## Language Development

G: Listening and Speaking

- O: 38. Hears and discriminates the sounds of language
- 39. Expresses self using words and expanded sentences
- 40. Understands/follows oral directions
- 41. Answers questions
- 42. Asks questions
- 43. Actively participates in conversation

G: Reading and Writing

- O: 44. Enjoys and values reading
- 45. Demonstrates understanding of print concepts
- 46. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
- 47. Uses emerging reading skills to make meaning from print
- 48. Comprehends and interprets meaning from books and other texts
- 49. Understands purpose of writing
- 50. Writes letters and words

decide how to add to the process by bringing in new materials or asking appropriate questions.

*You can help us the most by spending time just watching the children in the classroom. Allow them to make mistakes (safe ones). Being “intelligently wrong” about something is a great step toward understanding. See if the child can come up with a new plan on his/her own. Then try a carefully chosen question, “What do you think will happen if you . . . .?” Refrain from showing a child how to do something. Never make a model for children to follow – with playdough, with paint, with blocks, etc. Allow them to be creative.*

To help children develop LOGICAL THINKING skills teachers provide materials for sorting and classifying, encourage children’s storytelling, listen carefully as children retell stories, use words and phrases like “next to”, “in front of”, “between the red and blue blocks”, etc. and look for any opportunity to count objects that children are using. Block play interests many children and requires the use of many logical thinking skills.

*You can enhance your own child’s experiences by letting him/her sort laundry with you, by choosing categories of foods at the grocery store, by letting your child set the table for meals making sure each person gets one of everything and by making sure the counting you do is in relationship to things and is not just a rote recitation of numeral names.*

As children develop REPRESENTATIONAL AND SYMBOLIC THINKING they are beginning to move from concrete thinking to more abstract thinking. This kind of thinking develops later and can be observed in children’s dramatic play and in their art. Our teachers provide props for many kinds of pretend play including dress up clothes, dishes, dolls, mail, fire hats, etc. They will encourage the children to figure out something they can use to represent a fire hose or a telephone or a pizza pan. For their art, we provide a wide variety of materials and allow creative use of them. We never suggest that a child paint a particular thing.

*You can help by entering into dramatic play with children. Follow their lead as long as play is productive and safe and everyone is having a good time. Suggest the need for a new role (mail carrier? cook?) if there are conflicts. Help children find or make the needed props. Refrain from asking children what they have painted or drawn. Instead, make a comment about the colors they used or the way the lines look or how much the child seemed to enjoy painting.*

## Language Development

At St. Mark’s Nursery School we consider every child already a reader and writer at some level of development. Confident use of language for needs, desires and enjoyment is necessary in today’s world. A love of books developed early will last a lifetime.

In the area of LISTENING AND SPEAKING you will notice that our classrooms hum with conversation. Teachers look for appropriate opportunities to engage children in dialogues, ask questions that encourage more than single word answers and listen carefully when children are speaking. They explore sounds that rhyme, words that begin with the same sound and wonderful sounding words --- like “befuddled” or “flabbergasted”.

*You can do the same. And, with your own children, use time in the car for conversation. Ask them what they think about something. Make up preposterous stories. Laugh together. Play with rhyming words. Make up songs. Include children in family-related conversation.*

Our classrooms bubble with READING AND WRITING. Each classroom’s ever-changing library of books is supplemented by our own library and the public library. The teachers model a love of books by taking time to read to any child who is interested and by encouraging the use of written notes to our custodian, directors, parents and to each other. Lists are made of materials needed for a project. Signs written by the children protect block structures, growing plants, wet paint, etc. Children are asked to sign in daily as they arrive in the classroom. A scribble, a single mark or carefully printed letters are all equally acceptable. As children are ready, teachers will encourage further development. The letters of the alphabet are displayed at children’s eye level. As books are read, the teachers ask for input about the pictures, the words, the story or the characters. Reference books are always available and frequently used. You will hear teachers say, “I really don’t know. Let’s see what this book says about it.” The computer in the nursery school office is used as a reference tool as well.

*As a participating parent in the classroom, you may find yourself on the couch reading a book over and over again. This is just fine. The teachers will tell you if they need you to do something else. Allow your child’s writing to develop at its own speed. When you write, use lower case printing with capitals in their appropriate places. Children who learn to print in all upper case will probably need to unlearn that in kindergarten. Putting their name in the upper left hand corner of a paper helps them direct their eyes to where a page of print begins. Notice words and letters. Give your child a shopping list with items to look for at the grocery. •*

*“Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child’s soul.”*  
– Brian Cambourne





*Continued from page 7*

*“Teaching in the key of life can take many forms, but it always means that one’s heart and mind are fully engaged with the hearts and minds of children.”*

*– Mimi Brodsky Chenfield*

become upset, they hold their breath and act on their fears, which means they want to fight or flee. We help children control this impulse by getting them to breathe, often by having them count to ten, blow on a pinwheel or blow bubbles. We provide a safe place for them to Stop, Take a deep breath And Relax (a STAR place). Once the child is calm and thinking more clearly we can discuss solutions to the problem.

- When there is a conflict, go to the victim first. A conversation may sound like this:

**Teacher:** *Did you like it when he chased you and made monster noises?*

**Child:** *No. (The teacher’s job is to listen. If the child says yes we realize there isn’t a problem at all.)*

**Teacher:** *Go tell Kelly, “I don’t like it when you chase me. Stop.” Our teachers observe the interaction and help the timid child who is unwilling to do this step on her own.*

- Assign positive intent to the behaviors of the aggressor, or view misbehavior as a type of communication. The child is trying to get his way using the limited skills that he has developed. After the victim and aggressor have talked, you may want to go to the victim and say, “You wanted to play with Bobby, but you may not chase him and act like a monster. That’s scary.” Then suggest an alternative. “When you want to play, say, ‘May I play with you?’”

- Seek solutions, not blame. When teachers encounter a problem that they didn’t observe, they may say, “Something happened.” After listening as the children share their stories, the teacher says, “We have a problem. You both want that toy but we have only one. Do you have any ideas of how to solve the problem?” Then all solutions are considered and one is decided upon. If the children are unable to come to an agreement, the teacher makes a decision for them, but only if there is a stalemate.

- Communicate with the intention of love, not fear. Our goal is to teach self-respect, self-worth and self-guidance as well as empathy and understanding of the thoughts and feelings of others.

- Sometimes a child needs a less stimulating environment; or a place where they can have one on one attention without other children around. The director’s office is one place of refuge and comfort.

### **Our Teachers**

Each of our preschool classes is staffed by a team of two teachers, and our kindergarten class is staffed by a teacher and a teacher’s aide. Teachers are trained in CPR and pediatric first aid, and receive training in the use of Dr. Becky Bailey’s Conscious Discipline. Our teachers are encouraged to attend workshops and conferences each year and are compensated for their attendance.

We are pleased to provide classes with a high ratio of adults to children, exceeding the NAEYC recommendations. In our classrooms you will find:

- Infants/Toddlers  
2 teachers – max. 5-6 children
- Two year olds  
2 teachers/1 parent – max. 8-10 children
- Preschoolers  
2 teachers, 1 parent – max. 15-16 children

- Kindergarten  
1 teacher, 1 TA – max. 14 children

The school year begins with a two-day planning retreat for all staff members. Monthly staff meetings are mandatory and a monthly lunch for staff members is well attended. Our teachers regularly discuss research, trends, practices and issues related to early childhood education. Through thoughtful discussion and self-assessment, they work continually to provide the best care for the children.

We use a list of substitute teachers when our teachers are unavailable. Many of those on the list are parents from our program. Anyone interested in being placed on our substitute list should stop by the office to register. Substitutes receive training and must have a TB test.

### **Lunch Bunch**

Lunch Bunch is an optional program in which children remain at school through the lunch hour. For an additional fee the children play and eat lunch together with children and teachers other than those in their classroom experience. Parent participation is not required. Lunch Bunch begins after the school year has begun.

### **Enrichment Classes**

Occasionally our teachers or parents offer opportunities for enrichment after the school day. In the past these have included language, music and creative movement classes. Information regarding these classes will be found in mailboxes and in newsletters.

### **Parenting Classes**

Parenting classes are offered throughout the school year on a variety of topics. These classes usually meet during the school day with an occasional night class offering. Topics include “10 Steps to Positive Discipline,” “Siblings without Rivalry,” “Nutrition and Well Being,” “Children and Early Literacy” and “How to Unplug the Christmas Machine.” These classes are free; childcare is provided for a fee.

### **Working with Indiana University Programs**

Each spring several Indiana University Early Childhood Education students participate in our infant and toddler classes. As part of their field experience they spend up-to-eight weeks working and learning in our classrooms.

Occasionally we are asked to participate in research projects conducted by Indiana University. These projects

are screened prior to being accepted. If your child qualifies for the study a permission slip signed by the parent or guardian is necessary for the child to participate. Teachers and staff personnel help with the process, and respect a child’s decision should he decline to participate at any time. Our school is given books and a small stipend for participating.

### **Field Trips**

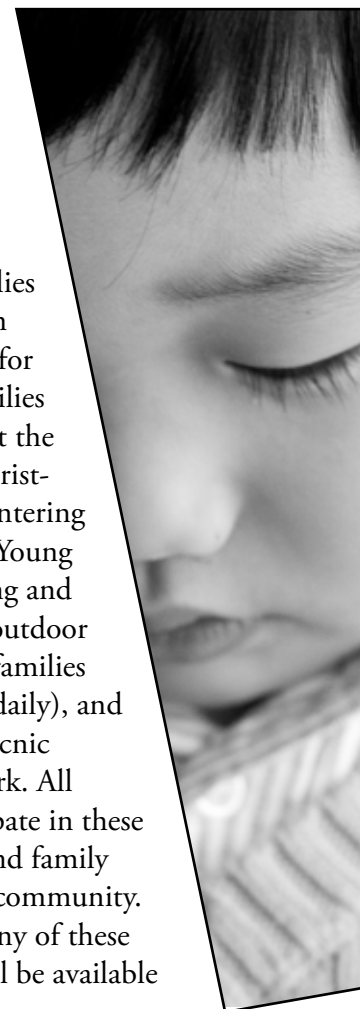
Older children will have opportunities to go on field trips. We need one adult for every two children when we leave the church grounds (except for kindergarten trips). Parents will be asked to give written permission in advance and may volunteer to accompany the children. Volunteer drivers must provide a copy of their valid driver’s license and proof of auto insurance.

According to state law, children more than 40 lbs. must ride in a federally approved booster seat. Parents will be asked to provide seats for field trips and will be responsible for installing these seats into the necessary cars. Teachers always have cell phones and first aid kits with them.

Arrangements should be made for the care of siblings.

### **Special Events and Programs**

Each year we offer several special events at no charge which are offered to our families and often to the Bloomington community. Events designed for young children and their families include a Fall Family Picnic at the school, Getting Ready for Christmas (activities for children centering around the winter holidays), Young at Art (an art festival for young and old), Here Comes Summer (outdoor event designed to encourage families to include outdoor activities daily), and the End of the Year Family Picnic Celebration at Karst Farm Park. All families are invited to participate in these events and to invite friends and family to those that are open to the community. Volunteers are needed for many of these events, and sign-up sheets will be available prior to the activities.



## Summer Camps

Usually in June, we offer summer camp experiences for children. Held outside (we only come in if the weather is inclement), we take our indoor classroom activities outside to fill our play yards with the same stimulating environment—with the addition of a LOT of water. For one week our alumni camp meets; developed for children completing Kindergarten – third grade, children are able to revisit their St. Mark's home but with a more grown-up twist. We offer three separate weeks of summer camp for children who have completed our two-five-year-old classes. Meeting four mornings a week, children bring lunches so that our day includes a picnic lunch respite during the day's busy activities.

## Family Nights Out

Family Nights Out are a fundraising opportunity in which we provide time to build community and fun without spending extra money. Area restaurants agree to donate up to 20% of the money spent by our families to our school. Held approximately once a month, these fundraising evenings give families a reason to stay out of the kitchen, spend more time together, gather with friends and family for a night out, and help our school all at the same time.

## NAEYC Accreditation

Since 1990 St. Mark's Nursery School has earned and maintained accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. This accreditation is renewed every five years and involves a complex process including self-study, evaluation and site visits from NAEYC validators. Parents play an active role in the accreditation process.



You may be asked to help with the process during the time that your family is involved at St. Mark's.

NAEYC has set a high standard of quality for early childhood education programs. NAEYC examines and evaluates programs by dividing criteria into ten standards:

- **Relationships:** the promotion of positive relationships between teachers and families, teachers and children, children within the classrooms, and the school community as a whole;

- **Curriculum:** teachers plan and provide developmentally appropriate curriculum accommodating the needs and diversity of the children in their care, while planning for physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development;
- **Teaching:** the skills and knowledge of the teachers as they implement meaningful, appropriate learning activities and experiences;
- **Assessment of children's progress:** the evaluation and assessment of the children's progress and growth;
- **Health:** the promotion of positive nutrition and health practices, protecting children and staff from illness and injury;
- **Teachers:** staff qualifications that include education, knowledge, professional commitment and an understanding of families' diverse needs and interests;
- **Families:** looking for a collaborative relationship between the program and the families regarding the progress of the children, and the diverse cultural needs of the families;
- **Community Relationships:** a supportive relationship between the program and its greater community;
- **Physical Environment:** a safe, healthy indoor and outdoor environment that is well maintained and appropriate for the staff and children;
- **Leadership and Management:** effective leadership that promotes a stable, fiscally responsible, high quality experience for staff, children and families.

For more information on the accreditation process and the goals and visions of NAEYC, stop by to inquire about it at the nursery school office, or visit the NAEYC website at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

# Section 3: Health and Safety

## Arrival and Departure

1. Emergency information forms must be on file in the classroom before a child is left in our care. Copies of these forms are in the office. Please update these forms whenever changes occur.

2. Parking is available in the south and north parking lots and along the east driveway. Please reserve the handicapped spaces for those with handicapped stickers. The “special needs” spaces are for those with the youngest children. Parents are asked to park on the east side of the East driveway to create better visibility. Be very careful when backing out of all parking spaces.

3. Please help your children learn that the wheelchair accessible buttons at the East entry are only for those in wheelchairs to use. The other button is a doorbell that rings in the church office for times when the doors are locked.

4. Children should NEVER be left in cars unattended!!

5. Always accompany your child to the classroom and make sure a teacher notes his/her arrival on the check-in list. As children get older they like to go to a classroom by themselves, but we ask that you stay with them as our teachers may have important information for you, and there may be information for you in your classroom mailbox.

6. Before departing, ALWAYS be sure to make contact with one of your teachers who will check your child out. Teachers like to tell you a little about your child’s day at

this time. If there are any concerns on the teacher’s or parent’s part, contact should be made later in the day to discuss this, as pick-up time can be busy and confidentiality is a concern.

7. Always stay close to your child as he/she walks to the parking area, using extra caution to ensure that he/she stops before reaching the blacktop. Try to find a routine that works for you and your child.

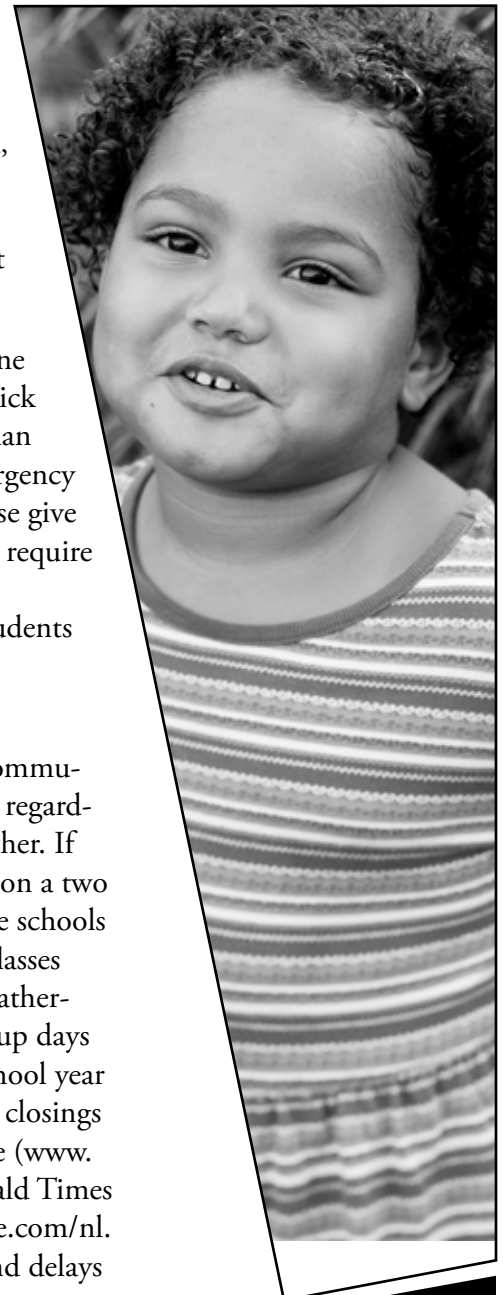
8. Be sure to tell teachers if someone other than the parent is going to pick up your child. If someone other than those you have listed on your emergency form is to pick up your child, please give us this information in writing. We require a photo identification card of any unfamiliar individual retrieving students from school.

## Weather-related School Closings

We follow the Monroe County Community School Corporation decisions regarding closings due to inclement weather. If the MCCSC schools are closed or on a two hour delay, we will be closed. If the schools are closing early, we will end our classes at 11:30 AM. If the amount of weather-related closings is excessive, make-up days may be added to the end of the school year at our discretion. Weather -related closings are posted on the MCCSC website ([www.mccsc.edu](http://www.mccsc.edu)) and found on the Herald Times website at <http://heraldtimesonline.com/nl>. MCCSC announces its closings and delays on local radio and television stations.

## Section 3

- Arrival/Departure Info
- Weather Closings
- Emergency Procedures
- Universal Precautions
- Medical Records
- In Case of Illness
- Immunizations
- Allergies
- Medications
- Child Abuse and Neglect Policy





## Emergency Procedures

During the school day, two entry doors remain unlocked for church and school use—the south doors off the parking lot and the east doors off the driveway. Classroom doors to the outdoors are also unlocked. Hallways are closely monitored by church and school staff and contact is made if an unfamiliar person enters the building.

Emergency exit routes and procedures are posted in each classroom near exits. Weather-alert radios are located in the church office complex. We practice fire drills monthly and tornado drills in the fall and spring. In the event of an emergency, church staff in the building will assist teachers and children.

If total evacuation of the building is necessary, we have arranged to take the children to Staples (2813 E. Third Street) as a meeting place. We will walk children there to be picked up by their parents.

First Aid Kits are located near each classroom; ask your teachers where the closest first aid kit is located. A large, complete first aid kit is in the nursery school office.

Fire extinguishers and fire alarms are located throughout the building as required by Indiana State Fire Code.

## Universal Precautions

Universal Precaution guidelines were developed to decrease the spread of illness or infection through contact with bodily fluids. Universal precaution guidelines are posted near every diaper changing area. Latex gloves required by the guidelines are provided in each classroom and at diaper changing stations. For those with latex allergies, alternative gloves are available in the school office. Please use the gloves and follow the guidelines as posted with any situation involving bodily fluids. Wash hands even after using the gloves, and use the appropriate bleach water solution to clean surfaces affected.

## Medical Records

All children must submit a health form and immunization record filled out by a parent and the family physician. These are kept in the office in a locked cabinet. Allergy and special needs information will be shared with staff and

volunteers if it may affect the care of the child while at St. Mark's Nursery School.

## In Case of Illness

It is the responsibility of all our families to keep children safe and healthy. Children should stay home when they are visibly ill or contagious and should remain at home until they have been fever-free and symptom-free without fever-reducing medications for 24 hours. When checking temperatures, keep in mind that temperatures are lower in the morning and may return later in the day. Keep your child home:

- If your child is vomiting and/or has diarrhea;
- If your child has had a fever within the last 24 hours;
- If your child has been on an antibiotic for less than 24 hours;
- If your child's nasal drainage is yellow or green for more than 3 days;
- If your child's chicken pox scabs are not dried;
- If your child's eye is pink or has mucus running out, until you receive a definite diagnosis from your doctor;
- If your child has a rash, until a firm diagnosis is made about contagiousness.
- If your child has non-specific symptoms but is obviously not feeling well.

You can help us discourage the spread of illness by teaching your child good hand-washing habits. If your child contracts a contagious disease, please report this information to the office so that we may inform other families of the symptoms and possible concerns for their children. Notify the school when your child will be absent.

## Immunizations

A copy of each child's immunization record is kept on file and must be updated every year. Children must meet the minimum immunization requirements as required by the Indiana State Department of Health, or show evidence that they are working towards meeting those requirements under the guidance of a medical doctor. Permissible exemptions must be documented. Additional information will be provided to those filing exemption letters. More information is available at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/default/htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/default/htm), [www.aap.org/healthtopics/immunizations.cfm](http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/immunizations.cfm), and [www.aafp.org/online/en/home/clinical/immunizationres.html](http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/clinical/immunizationres.html).

## Allergies

Parents are asked to share information with teachers, staff members and other classroom parents regarding their child's allergies. Parents understand that allergy information is shared in order to provide a safe environment for all children. Parents sign a form acknowledging that their child's allergy and special physical needs information will be shared with other adults involved in the care of children.

Because of the increasing number of young children with severe allergies to peanuts and tree nut products, we are a NUT FREE environment. In addition, we ask parents to refer to the specific classroom allergy lists and dietary restrictions when bringing foods from home.

## Medications

Medications are safest and best for children when administered at home. All prescribed medications require a consent and information form signed by parents/guardians. Medications are kept in child-resistant containers.



*“Children teach us how to reach them if we tune in to what delights them, intrigues them, makes them laugh. What we need to learn above all is to ‘hang out’ with children.”*

*– Mimi Brodsky Chenfield*

## Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

St. Mark's Nursery School is concerned with the physical and mental well-being of the children of this school and will cooperate in the identification and reporting of cases of child abuse and neglect in accordance with the law.

Indiana state law specifies that child care personnel or any person who has “reasonable cause to believe” that a child is being abused or neglected must report that suspicion to Child Protective Service or the police. The law presumes the person making the report is acting in good faith; failure

to report suspected abuse is a punishable crime. Teachers and volunteers must inform the director prior to making an official report.

Physical abuse is defined as the nonaccidental physical injury of a child. Physical neglect is the failure to provide proper parental care or support medical attention. Sexual abuse is any indecent activity in the family involving the child. Emotional maltreatment is failure to provide warmth, attention, supervision and/or normal living experiences for a child. Additional information on possible signs of abuse is available in the director's office.



## Section 4: Policies and Procedures

### **Registration and Enrollment**

Registration begins in late January/early February for the upcoming school year beginning in August. Registration forms ask for a first and second choice and can be downloaded on the website or picked up at the school office. A registration fee is due at the time of registration. While this fee is non-refundable, a portion will be credited to the account when it is paid in full for an entire year's tuition.

When registering after the school year has begun, a registration form and the registration fee will be collected at the time of registration. The first month's tuition will be due on or before the first day a child begins attending class. A tuition payment will be made for the month of May.

### **Tuition and Early Withdrawal**

Tuition is a yearly fee set for each class. We have divided the total amount into nine payments which may be made on a monthly basis due the first of each month, but you may choose to pay once or twice a year or bi-monthly. The first payment is due August 1st and the final payment will be due April 1st. (Late entrants to the program will have a May payment as well.) Payment can be made by check or cash to the school office, and can be placed in the basket marked "Tuition." When a family chooses to withdraw a child before the school year is over, two weeks' written notice should be made to the office. Families will be responsible for the next month's tuition if notification is not made to the office. Children are not considered withdrawn unless the office staff has been contacted.

### **Financial Information**

#### *Budget*

St. Mark's Nursery School is a not-for-profit ministry of St. Mark's United Methodist Church. Our school budget covers salaries, supplies, equipment and a monthly donation to the church's operating budget. In addition, funds support continuing education opportunities for our teaching staff and capital improvements to our facility and play yards. The church provides space, maintenance, utilities, insurance, as well as support and assistance from the church staff.

The annual budget is funded through tuition, fundraisers, and grants. Every attempt is made to keep tuition as affordable as possible. Scholarships are available if needed and can cover up to one-third of the full tuition. Requests may be made in writing to the nursery school office and will be kept confidential.

#### *Tax Information*

The St. Mark's tax ID number is 35-1066653. To receive monthly receipts, please attach a note with your tuition check and a receipt will be emailed and/or placed in your mailbox. At least twice a year an invoice with the year's financial activity will be placed in your mailbox for your records.

#### *Grocery Certificate Fundraiser and Tuition Reducer*

In an effort to raise money without asking any more from our families, we have become involved with a grocery certificate fundraising event. Families choose to buy Kroger, Marsh or Bloomingfoods gift

## Section 4

- Registration and Enrollment
- Tuition and Early Withdrawal
- Financial Information
- Family Information
- Parent Helper Days
- Nutrition and Lunch Bunch Guidelines
- Communication

certificates from the nursery school office. These certificates function just like cash at the grocery stores, but 5% of the total spent goes directly for scholarships and capital improvement. Families choosing to participate in this program will have the option of having 1% of their purchases credited to their final payment. In this way, every family has an opportunity to reduce their tuition while helping us help others afford our program. For more information, stop by the school office.

### **Buckets**

In our two-year-old and preschool classrooms, children are loaned a bucket for use throughout the school year. Use these buckets to hold a change of clothing, winter outdoor clothing and diapering necessities. Buckets are also a useful place to leave toys that made it out of the car and into the building, or special comfort items or pictures from home. Artwork and school information can be carried home in the bucket. Buckets are returned at the end of the school year; please wash them before returning them.

### **Family Information**

Parent involvement is integral to the success of our school. Through active parent participation and open communication we can meet the needs of our/your children. The following pages include information on family and parent obligations, school and classroom participation, communication techniques and tools, as well as general information on our school family.

To help families monitor the necessary forms and the expected obligations to our school, we have supplied a checklist at the back of this handbook. We suggest that you read and check off the forms as they are

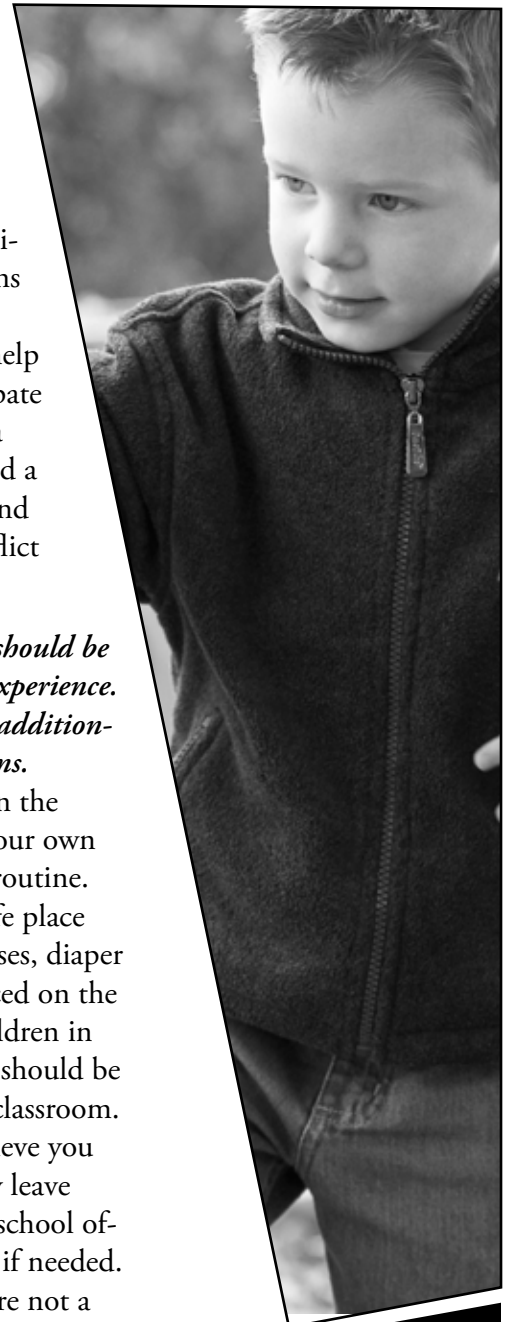
returned to the office, and the obligations as they are completed. Many of the forms can be downloaded from our website at [www.stmarksbloomingtonnurseryschool.org](http://www.stmarksbloomingtonnurseryschool.org). All of the forms are available in the church office.

### **Parent Helper Days**

One of the greatest strengths of our program is the presence of parent helpers in our classrooms. Our parent helpers provide children with a variety of added experiences as well as positive interactions with trustworthy adults. Parent helpers provide snack for all and help us for the day. Adults who participate in the classrooms must complete a volunteer information form, attend a volunteer training meeting, and find a substitute parent helper if a conflict arises on the scheduled day.

*The following general description should be reviewed prior to each classroom experience. In addition, teachers may request additional specific duties for their classrooms.*

- Arrive ten minutes early to learn the plans for the day and to help your own child settle into the classroom routine.
- Put personal belongings in a safe place designated by the teachers. Purses, diaper bags, etc., should NOT be placed on the floor or within the reach of children in the classroom. Food and drink should be discarded upon entry into the classroom.
- Turn off cell phones. If you believe you may get an urgent call you may leave your cell phone in the nursery school office and we will bring it to you if needed. Adults talking on cell phones are not a part of the classroom experience. Your





time in the classroom is your gift to your child and her classmates. Please remember that by limiting distractions (food, drink, cell phones, siblings) you will be more fully present with all the children.

- Wash your hands. Help your child wash his/her hands.
- Join in the classroom activities. Read the handbook pages about curriculum to find specific ways to interact with the children.
- Follow the child's lead as much as possible. Refrain from making creative models for children to follow (art, music, etc.). Do model proper social behaviors.
- Take cues from the teachers. Ask questions about activities, classroom guidance techniques, etc. This is a time

when you can learn more about our early childhood classrooms, our philosophies and practices. We are happy to share our reasoning and knowledge with you. However, remember that our teachers' attention is first and foremost on the children and their activities, so be patient if they are unable to answer during class.

- Enjoy yourself!

Teachers will tell you when it is time to prepare the classroom snack. If your child would like to help you, that is fine.

- Wash your hands and have your child wash their hands.
- Spray snack tables with diluted bleach solution found in the cabinet.
- Wipe tables with paper towels.
- Fill water pitchers only--children will fill their own cups from these pitchers (a way we help children learn self-help skills). Cold water is found in larger pitchers in refrigerators in Rooms 21 and 26.
- Set a place for each child and adult.
- Help children wash hands before sitting down.
- Join children and teachers for snack.
- After snack, clean the tables with bleach solution and paper towels again.

When children go outdoors, please help with outdoor clothing and then help the teachers supervise the play equipment. Stand where you have a wide area of visibility. Remain a few minutes after other children have left to finish any cleaning up that is necessary.

### **Nutrition and Lunch Bunch Guidelines**

We want to help children develop positive attitudes toward healthy foods by providing many nutritious taste experiences. On your parent helper day, bring a nutritious food—enough to serve each child, the teachers and yourself. You may want to check with the teachers to see if a particular food would help meet the learning objectives of the day.

### ***Allergy Information***

Because of the increasing number of young children with severe allergies to peanut and tree nut products, we are a NUT-FREE environment. Do not bring or send any kind of nuts, nut butters, or any product containing nuts or nut oils. Just being near these products can cause severe reactions in an allergic child. Prewash bowls and utensils when preparing snacks at home, and be extremely cautious to avoid cross-contamination. For example, children with se-

vere allergies can react if a knife used to cut cheese for our snack was first used to spread peanut butter at home.

Children's food allergy information will be shared with all families sharing a classroom. This information will be posted in the room. Note these food allergies and dietary restrictions when planning snack for your participation day. If you are bringing a packaged snack, bring the box along so that we can check the ingredient list if necessary.

### *Snack Ideas and Observations*

Ask your classroom teacher what is the most effective way to set out the classroom snacks. For some, it is easiest to set the snack out prior to the children sitting down, and for others it is best to wait until after the children are seated.

Remember that this is a snack and not a meal. We suggest that parents bring two foods for the children to have; that way if a child doesn't like one choice, he may like the other. Give each child a little of each food item; if they ask for seconds, the teacher will indicate if this is okay. If the time for snack has ended, tell the child snack is over.

Classroom snack ideas include:

- Fresh, canned or dried fruits, e.g. applesauce, grapes (cut in half for children under three), bananas, baked apples, kiwi, oranges
- Fresh or cooked vegetables, e.g. tomatoes, edamame, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes
- Cheese and whole wheat crackers, bagels with cream cheese, flour tortillas with cheese, rice cakes, pretzels
- Yogurt with fresh fruit, smoothies, rice pudding, yogurt pops
- Hummus and pita, mini-pizzas, salsa and chips, beans and tortillas

If you need snack ideas, check the St. Mark's Nursery School Cookbook. There is one in each classroom, and we have copies for sale in the school office.

We are always so pleased with how careful and thoughtful our parents are about bringing healthy snacks to share. Many parents help us provide a nutritious experience by providing organic snacks without preservatives and food dyes. Children younger than four may not have whole grapes, hot dogs, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels or chunks of raw carrots. Please cut hard vegetables into long, thin pieces. We ask parents to leave the following snack options at home: nut products, fruit roll-ups and gushers, cookies, candy, sugary snacks.

### *Cooking with Children at School and at Home*

We encourage you to involve children in the preparation of snack whenever you can. If you choose to do a cooking activity with the children, check with the teachers a day or so ahead so they can provide time and space. The school provides cups, napkins and plastic utensils. If you need other supplies check with the teachers.

Many families choose to prepare homemade, healthy baked goods at home. We encourage this as an opportunity to share family customs and traditions, and as a family activ-

*"From the garden, and the kitchen,  
and the table, you learn empathy—  
for each other and for all of creation;  
you learn compassion; and  
you learn patience and self-discipline.  
A curriculum that teaches these lessons gives  
children an orientation to the future—  
it can give hope."  
— Alice Waters*

ity that provides children with a sense of pride and accomplishment. We ask you to take extra sanitation precautions when preparing foods at home. Wash utensils, bowls, and cookware prior to use to ensure the health of our children and to avoid contamination in regards to food allergies.



### *Birthday Celebrations*

But what about your child's special birthday? We don't want to take the fun out of living, and so we do allow birthday cupcakes to be brought in for birthday celebrations. We ask parents to try their best to choose healthy recipes with a minimum of sugary icing and food dye. We also ask par-

ents to bring a healthy snack choice along, such as a fruit, cheese or yogurt.

### *Lunch Bunch*

When packing your child's lunch for Lunch Bunch, the same considerations listed above apply. Be careful to check the sandwich bread for hidden nut products—so many of the healthy breads contain nut pieces. Children do not tend to eat a lot at school so send small portions of a well balanced meal. Avoid sending candies and sugary cookies because those often become the first thing a preschooler will choose to eat!

Please label all lunch boxes, containers and napkins. We encourage the use of recyclable packaging products. Water will be provided for children to drink, or you may wish to send a drink with your child.

### **Communication**

Each day parents and teachers should make contact with one another. When parents bring their children into the classroom they are encouraged to inform teachers of any circumstances that may affect their child that day—a visit-

ing grandparent, a sleepless night, a new tooth. At the end of the day, teachers try to speak briefly to parents about the day's activities. If they are unable to do so because they are working with the children in their care, parents who wish to receive additional information should phone or email teachers. Teachers' home phone and email information are provided to our families because teachers want you to contact them with concerns and questions.

Parents and teachers should not talk about a child in the child's presence unless the child is included in the conversation. Parents and teachers should do their best to focus their conversations on positive activities and behaviors of a child's day. Any other information should be shared later by phone or email.

In many classes teachers send classroom newsletters and send email classroom updates. Twice a year they provide written information regarding their observations and assessments of your child's progress.

### *Parent-Teacher Conferences*

In October each class has a group conversation during class time for teachers and parents to share information about the children, classroom procedures and topics of interest specific to the group. Because parents are volunteer teachers in the classroom on a monthly basis, it is important for everyone to share in this discussion. Substitute teachers are with the children during the conference so that every parent and teacher can be involved.

At the end of January individual parent-teacher conversations are held for a brief discussion of the child's progress and development. Teachers and parents meet to talk about their assessment of the child's social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language development.

Although we schedule these two opportunities for conversations, teachers are always available for additional conferences throughout the year at the parents' request.

### *Sharing Concerns*

Parents with concerns about their child should discuss these with the classroom teachers and/or the school directors. Occasionally teachers have concerns about a child for which they will ask parental permission to seek advice and expertise from outside resource people. Resource people who may observe children at St. Mark's include those from Indiana's First Steps, a state agency that provides early intervention for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or who

*"There is, I believe, something primal and deeply important about being outside. It doesn't make any difference to a child whether it is hot or cold, windy or rainy – the outdoors beckons to them."  
– Bev Bos*

show signs of being at risk to have certain delays in the future ([www.state.in.us/fssa/firststep](http://www.state.in.us/fssa/firststep)) or from the child's local school system (MCCSC or Richland-Bean Blossom). Resource people include but are not limited to speech, occupational, and physical therapists; psychologists; and program administrators.

### *An Open Door*

The directors are available for conversation at any time. Feel free to stop in the nursery school office to share a joy or concern. Occasionally you may feel the need to share a fear or feeling of inadequacy that is part of the process of being a preschool parent. We will try to help any way that we can—sharing a resource book from our library, giving a hug or a word of encouragement, or giving a referral to an agency or support group that can help you along your way.

If you have a concern about something you have seen in the classroom, please stop by the office. We value the opportunity to describe the thinking behind our practices, which are rooted in research on early childhood education. It may be that we share your concern and can find a way to work together to address and improve the situation.

### *Parent Committee Involvement*

We invite all interested parents to participate in our nursery school committee, an advisory body consisting of parent representatives from each class, which meets approximately once a month. The committee consults with the directors regarding the business and policies of the school, offering advice and consideration on areas ranging from financial to philosophical. Most changes and decisions made about school business are decided with input from the committee. Working on the committee is an excellent way to have your voice heard and to influence the growth and development of the school.

The committee members work as liaisons between parents and the school, and are available to parents with concerns or questions who wish to share their concerns with the staff while remaining anonymous. Concerns are addressed at committee meetings. Minutes from the committee meetings are available to all parents wishing to receive copies, and a report on committee meetings is made in the monthly newsletters. Committee members help with special events and fundraising activities.

Parents wishing to become involved in the committee should contact the school office. We like to have at least one representative for each classroom. All are welcomed.

### *Family Mailboxes*

Each family has a “mailbox” outside the classroom door. Please check it at arrival and departure each day! You will find monthly newsletters, printed articles of interest, reports on research, letters from the teachers and directors, notes from your child, Scholastic book orders, Parent and Child magazines, fliers about upcoming events and your child's artwork. If you have more than one child in our program we will try to give you only one copy of most things, but check both mailboxes for information specific to each class. Please use these mailboxes for school or personal events. Information about a pet project or community event may be posted outside the office with permission from the directors.

### *Directory Lists*

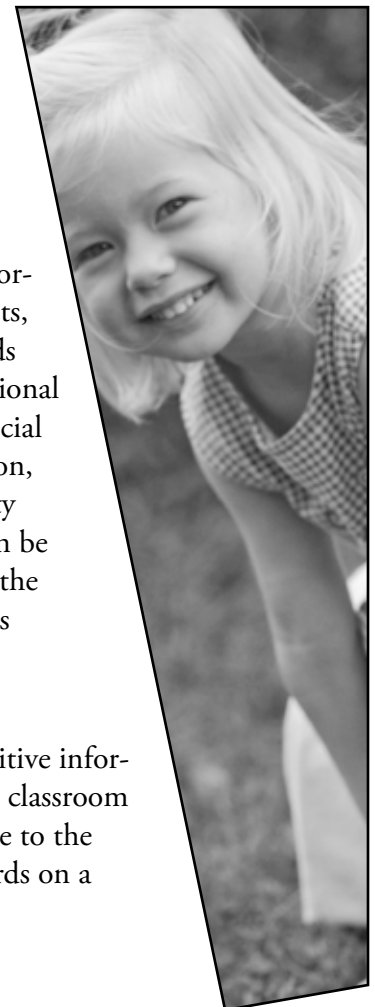
Family contact information, including phone and email, is shared among the members of the class. We provide this information for families' use when participation conflicts arise and for other school business. Please respect one another's privacy and time and use these for personal and school needs only, refraining from solicitation (even for good causes) and business purposes.

### *Office Hallway Information Center*

In the hallway outside of the school office you will find information about upcoming events, recent photographs, clipboards with sign-up sheets and additional information pertaining to special events and projects. In addition, information about community events and support groups can be found on the wall in front of the school office. Please check this area frequently.

### *Classroom Bulletin Boards*

Teachers often post time-sensitive information and sign-up sheets on classroom bulletin boards at the entrance to the room. Please check these boards on a daily basis.





## Section 5: Forms Checklist

- o **Registration form** must be completed and returned with a registration fee prior to being placed on class or waiting lists. Registration forms are available beginning in early February for returning families, and in late February or early March for new families.
- o **Signed contract** with a list of all programs in which your child(ren) are enrolled. Changes to this agreement may require a two-week written notification, particularly in regards to withdrawing from the program.
- o **Health form** must be completed by a family member and the child's physician prior to a child's entry into the program. Each child must have a record of a current well-child check-up. Parents agree to allow the sharing of information regarding food or environmental allergies and special physical needs as it may affect the child while at school.
- o **Immunization record** showing that the child is up to date with the following vaccines as required by Indiana State law: DTap, IPV (Polio), Hib, MMR, Varicella (chicken pox); or a permissible exemption letter. Parents who submit a permissible exemption letter will be required to sign additional papers. See "Health and Safety" for more information.
- o **Emergency information form** must be completed and copied prior to leaving a child in the school's care. This form includes information regarding the individuals to whom a child may be released from school. Update these forms with changes throughout the school year.
- o **Photo permission form** provides permission for children's photos to be used for several purposes. Children's names will never be published with the photographs. This form is kept on file and need only be submitted once.
- o **Volunteer form** must be submitted by all adults volunteering in classrooms. These are kept on file and need only be submitted once.
- o **Family information form** provides teachers and school administration with valuable information on family background and beliefs and is used for planning activities and curriculum, and for assessing and individualizing instruction.
- o **"Get Acquainted" form** provides teachers and school administration with specific information about each child in their care. Information regarding the child's skills, interests and needs helps teachers create a safe, nurturing environment in which children feel valued and affirmed. Teachers will use this information when planning classroom interactions and activities.
- o **Handbook form** states that parents have read the parent handbook and are aware of the information provided within.

## Section 5

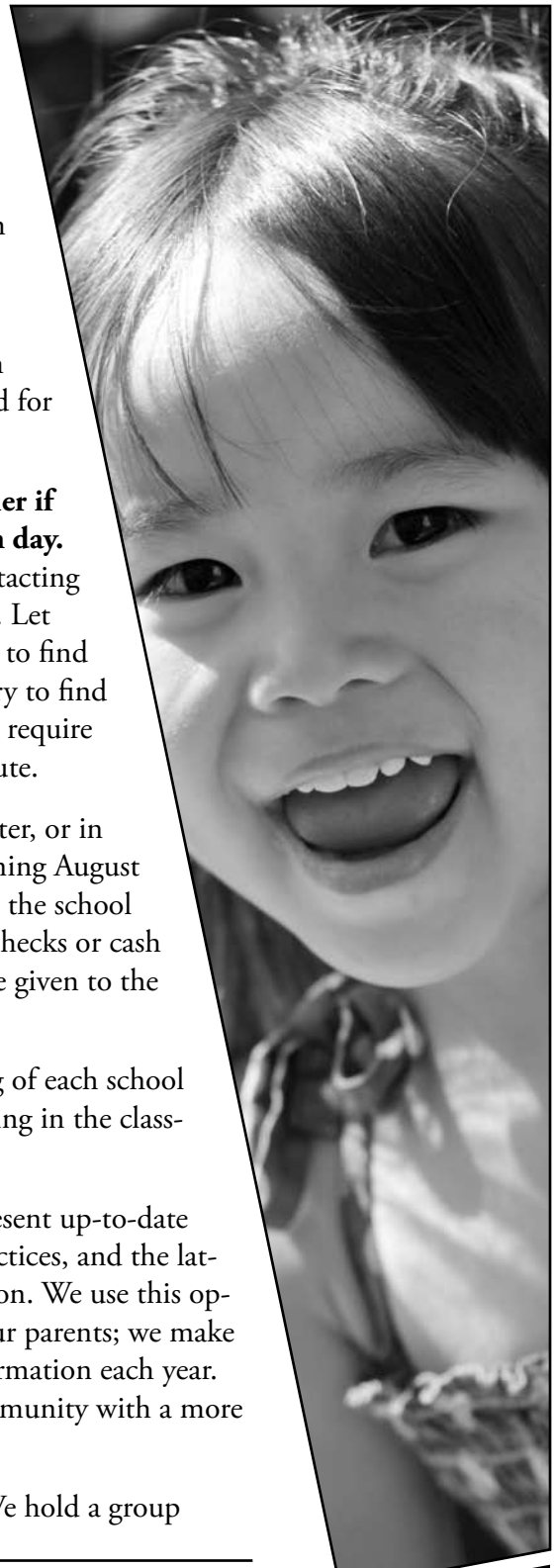
- Forms Checklist
- Obligations Checklist


# Obligations Checklist

- o **A non-refundable registration fee** is due prior to being placed on class or waiting lists. A portion of this fee will be applied to the final (ninth) monthly payment, or when tuition is paid in full for the entire school year.
- o Parents **sign up for parent participation days**. An adult from each family must participate in the child's classroom approximately once a month. Participation is not required for our infants, onesies or kindergarten classes.
- o You are responsible for **finding a substitute parent teacher if you are unable to meet your commitment on any given day**. A class list will be provided to you for the purpose of contacting other parents in the class who may be able to switch days. Let teachers know if a trade has been made. If you are unable to find a substitute parent teacher, notify the office and we will try to find one of our substitute teachers to fill the position; this will require an additional fee payment to cover the cost of the substitute.
- o **Tuition payments** may be paid once a year, once a semester, or in nine monthly payments due the first of the month beginning August 1st and ending April 1st. (Late registrants beginning after the school year has begun will have a final payment due May 1st.) Checks or cash payments may be made in the school office. These may be given to the office manager or placed in the box labeled "Tuition."
- o **Volunteer training meetings** are offered at the beginning of each school year and throughout the school year. All adults volunteering in the classroom more than once must attend a volunteer training.
- o **Attend our annual orientation meeting** at which we present up-to-date information about the school's philosophies, policies, practices, and the latest research and developments in early childhood education. We use this opportunity to share our enthusiasm and our beliefs with our parents; we make certain that the information shared will include new information each year. Our annual orientation is an opportunity to create a community with a more clear understanding of our goals and objectives.
- o **Participate in our two parent-teacher conversations**. We hold a group

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*Text continues on page 28*





parent-teacher conversation in October and an individual parent-teacher meeting in January. Parent participation is required for both these important meetings. One allows parents to share and receive information specific to the group of children that make up their child's learning community, and the other allows parents and teachers to discuss their assessment of the child's progress during the school year.

- o Each family must have one adult participate in **ONE Saturday room cleaning /work day**; these are scheduled throughout the school year. Adults spend two hours deep cleaning our classrooms or our play yards in an effort to keep our school clean and safe. Sign up at the beginning of the school year or upon registration.
- o **Check mailboxes DAILY.** Outside classrooms one will find mailboxes with the family surname(s) bearing information regarding special events, research, articles, letters from the director or teachers, Scholastic Book Orders, "Parent and Child" magazines, etc.
- o **Participate in NAEYC accreditation procedures and school evaluations.** Parents will be asked to answer questionnaires and return evaluations meant to improve and assess the mission of the school.
- o Provide for the health and safety of all children by reading the "Health and Safety" portion of the handbook, and by keeping sick children home.
- o **Read the Parent Handbook** at the beginning of the school year, and refer to it often when seeking answers to questions. Reread the section on Parent Helper Days prior to participating in the classroom. Let us know of any information you would like to see in our handbook that may have been omitted.
- o **Contact the school office in writing two weeks prior to making changes to your child's schedule.** This is especially important in regards to withdrawing from our program. You may be charged an extra month's tuition if you do not let us know prior to your departure.