Parent Handbook



St. James United Methodist Preschool
A Ministry of St. James United Methodist Church
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NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS

St. James United Methodist Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs, and other School administered programs.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide an environment where each child can develop age appropriate skills in the areas of spiritual, emotional, cognitive, physical and social development.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Discipline means guiding and directing children toward acceptable behavior.
Our staff provides an environment that encourages self discipline using positive methods. We also encourage each child to understand and express their feelings in acceptable ways. Inappropriate behavior in a child is often due to a misunderstanding of expectations or lack of communication skills in handling a stressful situation. Our staff will demonstrate their competence in guiding children's behavior by:

* Discussing and exploring problems with the children
* Using logical consequences to help children learn responsibility for their actions
* Redirect children to acceptable activities
* Prepare children for changes
* Plan child-initiated activities
* Use simple positive reminders to restate rules
* Model acceptable ways to express negative behaviors

There are times when a child may need "time with" a teacher, to calm down after inappropriate actions. Our staff will use this time to help the child grow in understanding the problem on an individual basis and to choose the route to appropriate behavior. The length of time to be spent in "time with" may vary as the patterns of behavior are modified and is also determined by the child's age. The "time with" only begins after a child is calm and understands the reason for being separated from the group. Children are individuals and a plan will be made to meet their needs. If classroom "time with" is not successful, the child will be brought to the Director's office for reinforcement. If a child does not respond to these methods of discipline, the Director and teacher will meet with the parents to gain understanding and work together in finding solutions that will fit the child's needs. Under certain circumstances, a child may require more individualized attention that the school may not be able to offer. With the child's best interest at heart, we may be required to refer you to seek specialized services elsewhere.

CURRICULUM

The way we plan activities for our children, organize the environment, select the toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with our children are all designed to give your child a successful start in school. In order to make choices clear, we create distinct interest areas that we call centers. Some examples of our centers include blocks, home living, table toys, art, sand and water play, cooking, library, music and movement, and outdoor activities. We select a wide variety of learning materials for each area with our curriculum goals in mind so that wherever the children choose to play, they are learning. Materials are placed on low shelves so children can get them independently. Similar materials are grouped together to teach children to sort and classify, which are skills needed to understand and solve math problems. We label materials so children know where materials belong and learn to relate words to objects. We offer the concept of "layered curriculum." This allows each child to utilize all their senses while learning. The children develop the necessary skills to successfully work in large and small groups, as well as independently. Children are encouraged to discover and experiment. Our program encourages children to be creative, to solve problems and to think for themselves. Our daily objectives are derived from the Florida State Early Childhood guidelines.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

REGISTRATION

Registration will be held at the end of February for the following school year. Currently enrolled students and siblings will be registered on the first two days. St. James church members and past enrolled families will register on the third day. Open registration for the community is on the fourth day through a lottery system. Registration forms must be completed, first months tuition and a nonrefundable registration fee will be collected at registration. For new students, we will schedule a tour of our school and you can provide their birth certificate , registration forms, and fist month tuition. After all class spaces have been filled, waiting lists are started and maintained. Please provide St. James Preschool with a current email address. Emails are sent out from the school office periodically.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Our age requirements for students entering our school are as follows:

2 year old class - must be 2 years old on or before September 1st
3 year old class - must be 3 years old on or before September 1st

4 year old class - must be 4 years old on or before September 1st

All children in preschool ages 3 and 4 must be potty trained to enter school. Children in the 2 year old classes may wear diapers or pull-ups if potty training.

ENROLLMENT

The following forms must be completed and returned to the school office prior to a child's admission:

* Enrollment Application (includes personal, medical and emergency release information; alternate nutrition plan agreement; tuition agreement, and playground agreement)
* Current immunization record signed and dated by the child's physician
* Current physical health form signed and dated by the child's physician

TUITION

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month. There are 10 tuition payments with payment #1 due at registration and payment #10 due on May 1st of the following year. Tuition checks should reference the child's name. Place payments in the grey "Tuition Drop" box outside the Preschool Office. **If payment is not made by the 10th of each month, a $10.00 late fee will be due.** You made also pay through Tuition Express which will directly come out of your checking account on the first Monday of each month. The office will send you a link to sign up for Tuition Express. If there are special situations that make it difficult to pay on the 1st, please see Director to make payment arrangements. Scholarship applications are available in the school office and are reviewed on an individual basis. There is no reduction in tuition for holidays.

WITHDRAWALS

A two week written notice of intent must be given to the Director for a child's withdrawal from our program. Payment of tuition will continue for the two weeks following receipt of the notice. This procedure enables the next child on the waiting list to be properly notified and enrolled. Also, if a family chooses to withdraw before the school year ends due to relocation and resides with-in a 20 mile radius of the school, they are responsible for the full remaining tuition unless the director approves the prior arrangements.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The St. James Preschool school year runs from the end of August through mid-May. Holidays will follow the Hillsborough County schools calendar. If Hillsborough County schools are closed due to inclement weather, classes at St. James Preschool will be cancelled. Please listen to local news reports on the radio or TV. We are closed for major holidays and a few teacher in-service days.

ARRIVAL

2 YEAR OLDS: Arrival time is 8:55am. Prior to this time, teachers are busy setting up their classrooms and unable to supervise children.

A. If your child is toilet trained, please have them try to use the bathroom when arriving at school to avoid a potty break immediately after class begins.

B. Please bring the following items daily: one water bottle labeled with child's 1st and last name, a nut free snack and 2 labeled diapers (if applicable). Also please provide a full change of clothes which includes socks and shoes. We will also need you to provide one package of sensitive wipes. Everything should be clearly labeled with your child's name.

C. If your child is being potty trained, but still having accidents, please send them to school in a pull-up. We will work with your child on potty training, but for sanitary and health reasons, we ask that you comply with this request.

3 YEAR OLDS: Arrival time is 8:55a.m. Prior to this time, teachers are busy setting up their classrooms and unable to supervise children.

4 YEAR OLDS: Arrival time is 8:25a.m. Prior to this time, teachers are busy setting up their classrooms and unable to supervise children.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal time for our 2's and 3's is 12:00p.m. and for our VPK 12:30p.m.
Parents should arrive promptly at dismissal time to pick up their children. Children who are kept waiting often become upset, resulting in a negative end to an otherwise successful day. **Please never leave younger children in the car unattended for any reason**. Safety comes first for all of our children. If a parent is delayed, please notify the office immediately. The child will be kept inside the classroom with an adult until the parent arrives.

There may be a fee imposed if the parent is habitually late.

For children's protection, we permit only persons authorized by the parent to take the child from the school. Authorized names must be listed on ProCare and updated regularly. A valid picture ID will be required until staff members become familiar with the individual.

PARKING

Please use caution when driving through our parking lot.

SCHOOL ATTIRE

Please dress children comfortably for active, sometimes messy days. Sneakers are the shoe of choice. **Backless shoes and crocs are not acceptable footwear at school.**
Everyone learns through play and accidents do happen. For this reason a complete change of clothing, appropriate for the season, needs to be marked clearly with the child's name and placed in a zip-lock bag for storage in the classroom.

ITEMS NOT TO BE BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

*Expensive Jewelry
* Balloons
* Toys
* Money
* Backpacks-due to lack of space
* Real or toy Weapons
* Glass bottles, jars, etc.
*Candy or gum

Individual teachers will designate a specific day if needed, when items may be brought into the classroom. Teachers and staff may use their discretion and confiscate (until the close of the school day) any items they consider inappropriate. Teachers are not responsible for any lost, damaged, or misplaced toys brought into the classroom.

No pets are admitted into the buildings due to Health Regulations & allergies.

SNACKS

St. James Preschool is a nut free school. The family is responsible for providing a nutritional snack daily.

BIRTHDAYS / INVITATIONS

Birthdays are very special days and will be recognized in the classroom. **There will be no individual birthday celebrations in the classroom. No Goodie Bags are permitted!**
If you choose to host a private birthday party outside of school, birthday invitations should be sent through the mail and not distributed in the classroom unless every child is to receive one.

CLASSROOM PARTIES

Teachers and volunteer parents will plan seasonal parties. The parties will be fun and festive, but **cannot include balloons** due to choking hazards. State Health Department guidelines require all food brought into the school must be store bought. **No Goodie Bags are permitted!** Volunteer responsibilities include set up, activities and clean up. Therefore, **it is necessary to make alternative arrangements for younger siblings to ensure safety and organization to all.**

The No Goodie Bags and Special Treats Policy is due to allergies and possible choking hazards. If brought to school they will be returned .

SCHOOL PICTURES

Children's pictures will be taken by a professional photographer in the Fall and Spring of each school year. Advance notice will be given and optional packages will be offered.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A safe and secure environment for each child is our top priority. The school has a central fire alarm and sprinkler system. Fire drills are practiced each month to ensure that both staff and children understand the evacuation procedures. If an inclement weather situation should arise, children and their teachers will report to a designated area until the weather subsides.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

If emergency medical attention is needed, 911 will be called as well as calling the parent. Staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid.

MEDICAL POLICIES

In accordance with Florida Child Care Licensing Regulations, the program is not allowed to keep actively sick children ie., runny nose, sore throat, fever, vomiting, diarrhea and a chronic cough in the classroom. If symptoms of illness are observed, the parent will be called. A child must be free from fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school. Head lice, pink eye and ringworm must be treated properly before returning to school. Medication will not be dispensed to any child unless prior arrangements have been made with the parent, teacher and director. If your child will not be attending school for a day due to illness or time off, please notify the office. If your child does contract a contagious condition, please inform

the Director. Information about the illness will be relayed to other parents as necessary. Parental assistance is needed to keep the program healthy!

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Staff members are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. If such cases arise, the Director will be notified and the concern will be directed to the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services for investigation.

PLAYGROUND POLICY BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL From 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm

Parents must be in **DIRECT SUPERVISION AT ALL TIMES.** We want to encourage Socialization, but **safety comes first.**

COMMUNICATION

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents are always welcome at St. James. We do, however, encourage advance notice to keep consistent schedules for the children.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

All parents are encouraged to "help out" whenever schedules permit or assistance is needed. Parents with special talents or knowledge of resources in an area are invited to contact the child's teacher.

The following will give you a brief overview of volunteer opportunities available throughout the school year:

A. Party Parents - We have various celebrations and parties throughout the school year. We need parents to volunteer to take on the responsibility of organizing, setting up, and cleaning up for their particular party. **When choosing these times to volunteer, it is necessary to make alternative arrangements for siblings to ensure safety and organization for all.**

B. Story Parents - We love to have parents read in the classrooms (times to be determined by teachers). Just let your child's teacher know when you can come in. There are a lot of opportunities for you to become involved in your child's school. Let us know what you would like to help with. We would love to have you and so would your child!

COMMUNICATION

Each classroom will have their own Band App. The Band app will highlight classroom activities, picture of the children and general information, about upcoming events and special dates. The office will send emails. Please make sure we have the correct email address.

PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES

There will be at least one scheduled conference with each parent during the school year to discuss their child's progress. These dates will be listed on the school calendar. Unscheduled conferences may be arranged with the teacher at any needed time throughout the year.

Thank you for sharing your child's early education with the staff of St. James Preschool.