



The Early Education Center
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
2013-2014
Parent Handbook

Dear Parents,

Thank you for choosing The Early Education Center (EEC) of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. It is our hope, our prayer and our cherished task to provide you and your children with a safe, loving and nurturing environment where your children thrive, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually. Community with you, the parents, is an essential aspect of our program, we are eager to know you and hope the EEC becomes an extension of your family.

Preschool Philosophy

The mission of the Early Education Center at St. Paul's Episcopal Church is to provide children with a safe, loving and nurturing environment where they can grow spiritually, emotionally, physically and academically. Our hope is that our young students will find great joy in coming to school and that they will develop social skills that will help them to form meaningful friendships. Our focus is to instill a love of God, of people and of learning in each child. We believe that children who are enthusiastic about learning, feel loved and known within their school and are skilled at collaborating with their peers will thrive in a school environment for years to come.

Educational Programs

The EEC currently serves families of children ranging in age from 2-4 years old. Generally speaking, children in the two year old program turn two on or before September 1st of their school year and children in the three year old program turn three by the same date.

Two Year Olds

Our two year old program is led by Mindy West. Mindy holds a bachelor's degree in Special Education and comes to the EEC with many years of preschool experience. The 2k curriculum is geared toward helping our youngest friends gain exposure to the alphabet, counting, colors and shapes. We also focus on fine and gross motor development as well as basic manners and self care. In circle time and throughout the day the children will review various Bible stories, nursery rhymes, finger plays, and songs. As you will notice in our Special Subjects section, the children will have a kindermusik class focused on early literacy and language. They also have a Motor Movement class taught by an Occupational Therapist and a Drama class taught by a seasoned drama instructor. The children will go to our dramatic playroom and outdoor classroom routinely.

Three Year Olds

Our 3k program has a fabulous team of certified teachers with active teacher's certificates. Our curriculum for the 3k is called [Get Set for School](#) which was created by the founders of Handwriting Without Tears. It is a fabulous hands on, play based program that is grounded in research on cognitive, social and physical development of preschool age children. The broad areas of focus are Readiness and Writing, Language and Numbers and Math. Each of those

focus areas are broken down into small attainable goals that once achieved lay an excellent foundation for future education. The three year olds attend a Special Subject every day which include art, kindermusik, Motor Movement (PE), library, drama, and Catechises of the Good Shepherd.

Special Subjects

Special Subjects at The Early Education Center were established to enrich our students by providing them with a variety of creative classes led by teachers who have specific training in each area of study.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Our three year old children attend Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Taught by certified educator, Anne Gill, CGS is a sensory rich approach to the religious formation of children. Based on the Montessori principles of Maria Montessori, CGS respects the child's need to "play out" the things they are learning. Children in our three year old class will be given the opportunity to hear a lesson and then to interact with figures and other elements from that lesson in their own meaningful way.

Music

Taught by certified music educator Lori Betha, our kindermusik class will follow the [ABC Music and Me](#) program. ABC Music and Me is a researched based program developed to enhance language, listening and social skills.

Motor Movement

Our Motor Movement Class will fill the role of PE for the children. Taught by Occupational Therapist Jill Boulo, the goal of Motor Movement will be to provide both two and three year old children with an additional outlet for physical activity that specifically targets both fine and gross motor development. Jill will also collaborate with our teachers to establish target areas for each child.

Drama

Drama will be taught weekly by Janet Bridges, a drama major who has over twenty years of experience teaching children. During drama the children will dress up, experiment with different roles, play out both new and familiar stories and gain confidence as they have the opportunity to explore their creativity in new ways. Janet will reinforce the units of study the children are exploring in the classroom by giving the children an additional outlet for self expression and

learning.

Art

Art is an everyday activity at the Early Education Center and art as a special subject focuses specifically on exploring the creative process used in the masterpieces of famous artists. Children will have hands on opportunities to explore the techniques of Wayne Thiebaud, Mondrain, Van Gogh, Monet, Klee, and Seurat.

Library

In library, children will be given an introduction to the environment of the library and taught the basic literary elements of books. During library time the children will also be taught social skills and reinforce the themes that are currently being taught in the classroom. They will also be given the opportunity to act out parts of various books, recite nursery rhymes and develop a love of classic fairy tales.

Spiritual Development

A common goal of believers is to integrate their spiritual life into their everyday, not just to worship or seek God on Sundays in church but in all that we do and at all times. An additional goal for us is to model that to your little ones while they are with us at the EEC. There will be countless teachable moments that arise during the day, to pray for a friend, to celebrate God's goodness, to ask Him for help and to delight in His creation. Below are some of the planned ways we hope to enrich your children spiritually.

School Prayer

Thank you Lord for play and rest
For all the things that I love best
In the wonder of each day
bless my work and bless my play.
Keep me gentle, keep me strong
Be with me all day long.
Give me joy in all I do
and be with those who love me too.
Amen

Daily and Weekly Chapel

Chapel services will be held daily. As the children adjust in the first few weeks of school helping them to feel secure and to develop a sense of ownership and belonging is one of our top priorities. Therefore, chapel will initially be held in the classrooms. Once the children are confident at the EEC and demonstrate a readiness to explore other areas we will hold chapel in

the Children's Chapel. Beginning Tuesday, September 10th we will have our first Big Church service which will be held (ironically) in the Little Church. Families are welcome to attend this service which begins at 8am.

Environment

The Early Education Center seeks to provide children and their families with a welcoming and loving environment that stimulates learning and helps young children to develop a love of school. Our classrooms, both inside and out, are set up to enhance our multi sensory approach to learning.

Indoor classrooms

Our indoor classrooms are each equipped with science centers, reading nooks, dramatic play areas, art stations and sensory tables. The 3k classrooms each have interactive whiteboards, Promethean boards, which are used to digitally connect the classroom and provide the students with additional hands on learning opportunities.

Outdoor classroom

Designed by an award winning outdoor classroom specialist and implemented by a horticulturist who has worked at zoos across the country our outdoor classroom is one of the highlights of our school. When dreaming up our space we chose to include some of our favorite Gulf Coast landmarks. The Outdoor Classroom has a Mobile Bay area complete with a fishing boat and fossil dig sand area. Our water table represents Five Rivers and our Delta area is the home of a nest of box turtles who will soon become the newest youngsters at the EEC. Springhill is represented by a tall grassy mound with embedded slides and the Avenue of the Oaks will be represented by a "hiking" trail through the woods. A trip to Mobile isn't complete without traveling through one of our tunnels so we were sure to include a tunnel, too. The Outdoor Classroom gives children the opportunity be immersed in stimulating learning experiences and to engage with delight in God's creation.

Staff and Faculty

The Faculty of the EEC includes a director, teachers, co-teachers and specialists. Our director holds a master's degree and all of our teachers hold a bachelor's degree in education, many have special training in early childhood education or special education. Our co-teachers both have bachelor's degrees in child development. Throughout the week specialists in various fields such as music, drama, occupational therapy, speech therapy and religious education engage in our programs in order to enrich the experiences of our children.

In hiring all faculty and staff members we look for people with an understanding of child development, an interest in the uniqueness of each child and an ability to provide a warm and caring environment while these precious little individuals grow and flourish.

Class ratio:

2 year olds: 1 adult : 8 children

3 year olds: 1 adult : 11 children

Parents as Partners

Parents are the first and primary teachers in a young child's life and your collaboration is vital to helping us ensure the best preschool experience possible for your child. We encourage parents, grandparents and caregivers to drop in anytime either to observe or to share in activities for or with their children. During Parent Preview we will provide parents with specific information on how to be involved in our programs. We will be asking for parents with a cheerful willingness to serve as room parents. We look forward to getting to know you and your gifts and to including you in the EEC.

Communication is very important to both parents and teachers. Parents will receive weekly newsletters about what is happening in their children's classrooms and can log on to our website for frequent blog posts about life at the EEC. All of our teachers can be reached by email and will gladly set up teacher conferences as requested by parents. All parents will have the opportunity to come for planned conferences in the fall and spring semesters.

Our hope is that all of our communication with parents is positive but we know that is not always the case, especially with young children who are learning so much about the world around them. Because of this reality we have the following procedures in place:

Injuries

If your child has a mild injury at school such as a scratch or a minor fall you will find an Ouch Report in their daily folder. If for any reason your child experiences a more significant injury we will contact the parent as quickly as possible and follow the appropriate course of action to ensure your child receives the proper treatment. Please be sure to fill out an Emergency Contact form during Parent Preview and to discuss any allergies or special needs with your child's teacher.

Discipline

We acknowledge that it is developmentally appropriate for preschool children to struggle with sharing, expressions of anger and frustration and personal boundaries. We see it as one of our roles as teachers to help your child develop the social skills necessary to thrive with their peers. Our first approach to discipline is redirection. If redirection is unsuccessful we will seek to implement a logical consequence ie: you have chosen to throw the car so the car will be put away. Each classroom also has a designated "cozy corner" where children who are overstimulated or need a little space from their friends are invited to go to regroup. One of our biggest goals is to notice the many great behaviors your children display regularly and to reinforce those consistently.

If a child should cause harm to another child while at the EEC both families will be notified of the incident in writing. Neither child's name will be provided in the report. If the child who was harmed shows signs of significant pain or emotional distress their parent or guardian will be called. Should we have a child who is repeatedly causing harm to himself or others we will notify the parents and arrange for a conference. We will do everything in our power to work with families and to help our students develop appropriate classroom behaviors. However, if a child

is consistently unsuccessful in the classroom and/or is unable to relate to his or her peers safely the EEC reserves the right to dismiss the child from the program.

Billing

All billing and other financial inquiries should be directed to our Financial Administrator, Brenda Ferguson. Brenda can be reached by phone through the church office at 251-342-8521 or by email: brenda@stpmobile.com

Safety

Security Policy

Safety is our number one priority at The Early Education Center. Parents may drop off children in the mornings between 7:15 - 7:45 am. Our school day begins at 7:50. Morning carpool workers will be outside to assist children out of cars and into the buildings until 7:45 every morning. After 7:45 parents must park and walk their children into the building. To ensure the security of our building all doors will be locked at 8:00 am. Parents who would like to volunteer in the classrooms between the hours of 7:50am and 2:30pm will need to check in upstairs in the church office and obtain a visitors pass. Please do not let this safety procedure discourage you from feeling welcome at the EEC. We would be delighted to have an open door policy with parents but we must have a system in place that ensures your children are as safe as possible while in our care.

Allergy Awareness - Peanut/Tree Nut Free School Policy

The Early Education Center is built on a foundation of love that honors the goodness and unique gifts of every child. This school year we have a number of children with severe peanut allergies. As a school dedicated to the some of the youngest members of our community, we understand that many of our students are not old enough to make sound decisions when it comes to what should go into their mouths and are less able to manage their allergies. And while our staff will do all that we can to clean and wipe down playing surfaces, toys, and chairs, there are some children within our school who could have a serious allergic reaction from contact with even a microscopic amount of the offending foods. There are many instances where children use common space within our building and it is because of this that we have decided to make our school a Peanut/Tree Nut-Free School this year.

We ask that no peanuts or tree nuts be brought into our school. Foods sent in for snack, lunch, or any class event (including parties, birthdays, etc.) should be carefully checked to make sure they are peanut/tree nut-free. Families can help ensure that our school stays peanut/tree nut-free by reading packaging labels and reminding children not to share food with other children at school. We need to make sure that there is little opportunity for a child to be exposed to foods that could harm him/her.

We appreciate your cooperation with this policy—the sacrifice of not having nuts or nut products in the school is a small one to make compared to the consequences a child with severe allergies

could face. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Erin Schwant.

Unscented Supplies

In addition to eliminating peanut and tree nuts we ask that all cleaning items, baby wipes and soaps that are sent to school with your child are unscented. Some of the fragrances that are added to these items can cause allergic reactions in children.

Carpool

Morning carpool begins at 7:15 and will run until 7:45. Parents should pull into the lane closest to the EEC and stop at the sign just past the green awning covering our entrance. Maps will be provided during Parent Preview. In the first couple of weeks of school parents are welcome to walk their children into their classroom. However, we encourage you to use the carpool line as soon as you and your child feel comfortable. After Labor Day we ask that all children be dropped off in the carpool line. Teachers will walk the children to their class. Children may not walk into the building alone and are never to be left outside the building without an adult.

Afternoon carpool will run along the same carpool line as the morning. Half day carpool will begin at 12pm. Full day carpool will begin at 2:20pm. Our hope is that by the time the St. Paul's School bell rings at 2:35pm many of your children will be buckled into their carseats so that our line can merge into the SPS line and we can efficiently move cars off of Old Shell Road.

Teachers can not buckle children into their carseats, please step out of your car and buckle your child quickly before moving forward in the line. All half day children must be picked up by 12:10 and all full day children must be picked up by 2:45pm. Half day students who have not been picked up by 12:10 will be taken to Rest and Play and will be charged the Rest and Play fee of \$10. Full day children who have not been picked up by 2:45 will be taken to After School Care and charged accordingly. All carpool procedures will be reviewed during Parent Preview.

Late Drop Off, Early Pick Up and Visitors

Parents who arrive after 7:50 to bring their children to school should walk them into their classroom. The doors to the EEC will be locked at 7:50 and will reopen at 2:20. In order to bring your child to school, pick them up early or visit during school hours please come to the main office of the church. Visitors will need to leave their drivers license in exchange for a visitors pass to be worn while they are on campus. If you know ahead of time that you will be picking up your child early please send a note in their daily folder so that the teacher can have them ready when you arrive.

Snacks and Lunches

Snacks and Lunches can be ordered through MMI cafeteria or can be packed daily. If you choose to pack food for your child please ensure that their lunch box can keep food cold.

Uniforms

Uniforms should be ordered through The Ginger House and are required daily. Uniform shoes are a solid white tennis shoe such as a Ked. J-Ray Shoes has samples of a variety of white

shoes for your convenience but you are welcome to order shoes from the company of your choice. Children should wear solid white socks. Girls wearing the uniform dress should wear bloomers daily and are welcome to wear white tights or leggings on cold days. Sweaters, rain jackets, coats and sweatshirts are welcome when needed.

The Ginger House: 59 N Florida Street Mobile AL 36607 251-471-6900

J-Ray Shoes: 121 S. University Blvd Mobile AL 36608 251-342-6322

Birthdays

Birthdays are BIG when you are a preschooler! We would like to help celebrate your child's special day! Please coordinate with your child's teacher if you would like to bring a snack or come share in part of your child's birthday at the EEC.

If you would like to distribute birthday invitations to children at school please include the whole class. We are more than happy to send invitations home in children's Daily Folders.

Rest and Play

Children in the half day class are invited to stay for Rest and Play in the afternoons for the price of \$10 per day. 24 hour notice is required to register your child for Rest and Play. Please be sure to send a nap mat to school with your child on these occasions. Rest and Play will dismiss through the carpool line with the full day students.

After School Care

After School Care and After School Enrichment classes are offered through the Director of After School Enrichment, Candice Lewis. Candice can be reached at 251-680-0954 or by email at cdlewis315@gmail.com

Communication

The best way to reach both the director and/or your child's teacher is through email. All faculty and staff members at the EEC have email addresses that follow the format of firstname@stpmobile.com for example, Erin Schwant's email address is erin@stpmobile.com. If there is information you need to your child's teacher to have at the start of a school day please send a note in their daily folder. For example, the daily folder would be a good place to include a note saying you would be picking up your child early on that school day. Faculty and staff members will check their email at least every 24 hours during the school week but may not get an email during school hours because they will be busy with the children. If you need to reach your child's teacher or the director immediately by phone please call the church office at 251-342-8521

Thank you again for allowing us to be a part of your lives in such a meaningful way. As parents we know that you are trusting us with one of life's greatest gifts. We are tremendously honored and look forward to helping your little ones to grow in love, spirit and knowledge throughout this year.