

Parent Handbook



Grace United Methodist Preschool
65 Needle Blvd.

Merritt Island, Florida 32953

Phone - 452-4484

Lic# C18BR0111

Welcome to Grace United Methodist Preschool

Thank you for allowing us to share in the development of your child. Our program here at Grace United Methodist Preschool will have a strong Christian foundation and present a conscious awareness of God, His creation and constant love. A well-rounded and balanced program of physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual activities will be provided. The Preschool Advisory Board is tasked with monitoring that mission and continuing to improve available services. It is within this context that all areas of learning will be expressed.

Our Promise To You...

We Promise -----

- To honor your role as a parent and to partner with you in the care and development of your child.
- You will feel completely confident and reassured when you leave your child with us.
- You will know that we value your child as a unique individual to be nurtured, protected and respected at all times.
- You will know that committed, dedicated educators are caring for your child.
- You will watch your child develop a love of learning and a rich imagination.
- You will see your child develop strong bonds with our teachers and other children.
- You will share in the joy of your child's experiences in our preschool through regular communication.
- You will be treated as an important member of our family.
- You can expect us to listen carefully and respond quickly to any questions or concerns.
- You will know that it is our privilege to serve your family.

Philosophy Statement

At Grace United Methodist Preschool, it is our desire to provide a safe and nurturing environment that will promote the physical, spiritual, social, emotional and cognitive development of the children in our care. Our intent is to facilitate a program that is developmentally appropriate for each child.

Our classrooms are designed to provide educational learning experiences that are at the age and stage of your child's development. Incorporated into the daily schedule and curriculum are weekly themes. While being introduced to various topics, children explore by hands-on experiences within the classroom during center and circle times.

The learning opportunities for young children are endless. It may seem as though they are just playing, but in reality they are developing and polishing many skills needed for formal education. The teacher's role is to scaffold each child's learning experiences. We continuously provide curriculum that fits each individual child's current level of performance, while encouraging developmental achievements. Both child and teacher-directed PLAY are essential components of our curriculum. It is through this vehicle that mental growth, creativity and social skills are stimulated.

We encourage children to develop a strong, positive attitude and self-esteem. By enabling children and providing age-appropriate learning opportunities, our environment allows children the freedom they need to move throughout the classroom and focus on their area of interest. Centers provide manipulatives that challenge their abilities and previously -learned knowledge. Throughout the year, we observe children organizing and making connections.

In conclusion, one of the most vital and necessary skills that preschool-age children should be developing is his/her ability to function with their peers and other adults. It is within this accomplishment, that the child can grow as a whole person.

Incorporated into all lessons are the basic fundamentals of learning:

- ◆ Language and Cognitive Thinking, Skills and Concepts
- ◆ Perception
- ◆ Gross and fine motor skills
- ◆ Auditory, visual and kinesthetic senses
- ◆ Christian education
- ◆ Art and music
- ◆ Science
- ◆ Pre-math
- ◆ Self-help skills
- ◆ Social and emotional development

These concepts will be taught through the following methods:

- ◆ Problem solving
- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Logic
- ◆ Investigating
- ◆ Exploring

Our observation clearly indicates that children absorb information, process and organize this information, and then have a unique ability to convey their learning back to us in a way that makes sense to them.

Social and Emotional Development

One of the ways that we show respect for children is by enhancing their development opportunities. By investing in their development, we are signaling that we believe in them and see them as capable and competent. It is tempting to focus on easily-recognized academic skills, but the importance of social and emotional development cannot be underestimated.

Play

By playing, children learn and develop as individuals. Some children prefer to spend most of their time with creative play, some with imaginative play and others with active play. A balanced diet of play is best for development. It is good for your child to play in lots of different ways.

Our Program

Twos - Two-year olds are terrific learners. They are beginning to understand group play and become better at communicating their thoughts. With our twos, we emphasize language development to help children turn their ideas into words and sentences. Children will also have plenty of group activities in which to practice social skills, such as cooperation, sharing and taking turns.

Threes - A preschooler's world opens up in new ways as children improve coordination, learn complex games, and begin to interact more with their peers. In our three-year-old program, we will introduce language, math, science, and social skills in a logical, natural sequence to encourage learning one step at a time. Our teachers also provide plenty of individual attention to support your child's unique needs. Our programs provide a rich classroom environment where children are encouraged to explore and are challenged to learn, while making friends and developing self-confidence. We all know that children learn best by doing. So we provide opportunities for hands-on experiences, such as making collages, which combines creative expression and a tactile experience.

VPK - VPK is a critical time for children as they begin the adventure of a lifetime of learning. Our VPK program promotes independence while preparing your child for the next exciting phase - KINDERGARTEN!!! We make the transition smoother by helping children become more familiar with an organized environment. We focus on group play to develop social skills such as listening, sharing and cooperation. Our teachers have a passion for what they do, and consider it a privilege to partner with you during this special time in your child's life.

Dedicated Staff

Grace United Methodist Preschool has high standards, in which we carefully screen and select candidates who will teach your children. All teachers comply with the Grace United Methodist Preschool Child Protection and Safety Policy. We have assembled a staff of sensitive, loving and caring professionals that encourage continued growth and development for your children.

Each member of our staff, including substitutes, are mandated by the state to finish 40 hours of childcare classes which include Rules and Regulations, Child Abuse and Neglect, the Ages and Stages of Child Development and Health/Nutrition. In addition, they are certified in First Aid and Infant/Child CPR. In addition to meeting these requirements, it is mandatory that our teachers do 24 hours of in-service each year. This ensures they have proper up-to-date training and the ability to implement age-appropriate curriculum within the classroom.

Families

Grace United Methodist Preschool encourages parent participation. It is an important aspect of a child's educational experience and provides them with the knowledge and understanding of others' unique abilities.

Through our "OPEN DOOR" policy, parents are invited to join and participate daily. This is a great way to promote educational and enriching opportunities within our classrooms. Sharing a cultural tradition, favorite childhood story or demonstrating a cooking activity will provide wonderful educational learning experiences for our children. We invite you to use your talents and be involved in your child's early development. After all, we are a community working together to provide and instill life experiences in our children.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Grace United Methodist Preschool does not discriminate in providing services to children and their families, qualified applicants, or its employees on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, sex, age or marital status. Our employment practices and school policies are consistent with the American's With Disabilities Act. Grace enrolls children of any race, color, national and ethnic origin with all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students of this program.

Discipline

Prevention, redirection and positive encouragement are key when dealing with children in behavioral situations.

- ❖ We encourage children to use their words and work out conflict situations among themselves.
- ❖ When needed, teachers, or the Director, will step in and help resolve conflict.
- ❖ "Quiet Time" or "Safe Place" is used only after the above is attempted.

Teachers have a unique ability to observe children and will do their best to ensure their safety. No child will be allowed to harm another in any way. Discipline will be respectful and within appropriate, developmental expectations.

Our policy will consist of gentle reminders, redirection and quiet time, if needed. If your child's behavior makes it impossible for teaching and learning to continue, you will be notified. If appropriate, a conference will be scheduled and a behavior strategy will be implemented. Suspension or expulsion could occur if any harmful behavior happens consistently.

In accordance with state rules, the following WILL NOT be used:

- ❖ Severe humiliating or frightening discipline
- ❖ Discipline associated with food
- ❖ Spanking or any other form of physical punishment

VPK Requirements

As you may know, VPK is funded by the state and has very strict guidelines that we must follow in order to comply with their regulations. Please read these requirements carefully and comply with them closely.

* Attendance requirements for VPK are 80/20. Which means your child needs to attend class 80% of the month and 80% of the total school year which is 540 hours. Grace preschool reserves the right to dismiss a child from VPK due to excessive absences within a month's time. If your child is in VPK, please call the office to let us know when they are home sick. That number is 452-4484

Tuition Policy

Our Tuition Fees are calculated on a 10 month payment schedule and are due for each child at the beginning of the month. Written or verbal notice will be given if payment is not received by the 10th of the month. If tuition is not received by the 10th of each month there will be an additional late fee charged.

Since our costs remain consistent for salaries and operational expenses, no deductions in tuition can be made for days a child does not attend school, whether for illness, vacation or school holidays.

Grace United Methodist Church offers a Scholarship program on an as-need basis. If you need further information on this program, please contact the Director.

School Calendar

We follow the Brevard County Public School calendar closely. Due to unexpected changes in the public school calendar, our calendar is also subject to change throughout the school year. Please note, for any natural emergencies, such as hurricanes or climatic weather, we ask you listen to the local news and if Brevard County closes the public schools, we will be closed as well. We will follow that same schedule as they do for openings and closings...

Hours of Operation

Our Preschool hours of operation will be as follows:

- ❖ Before - Care Hours: 7:30 am - 9:00 am (check registration and fee schedule)
- ❖ Preschool Hours: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon (check registration and fee schedule)
- ❖ Lunch Bunch: 12:00 noon - 2:00pm (check registration and fee schedule)

Please pick up your child each day, on time, to ensure that our schedule each day is not disrupted and our classrooms run smoothly. There is a late fee of \$5.00 for every 5 minutes that you are late picking up your child.

Wrap Around Service: Before care and Lunch Bunch are provided by Grace to help with extended care times that you might need for your child (ren). The before care hours and Lunch Bunch hours are noted above. There is a nominal fee for both of these services. For Before care and Lunch Bunch you will need to buy a card from the office. The Director will put your child's name on the card and you will give them to your child's teacher. At drop off you will tell the teacher that your child is staying for Lunch Bunch. Your cards will be displayed so that you are able to check how many Lunch Bunch Days you have left to use.

We love to see your children playing, however, we ask that you remember the following rules:

- 1) Your child is in "parents care" and they need to be watched at all times
- 2) Please, No rough housing in the grass, mean tackling or wrestling
- 3) Please, No climbing the trees, and benches, or flag monument around the Fellowship Hall. We would hate to have your child fall
- 4) Please, No playing around the shed
- 5) Please, No jumping from the picnic tables
- 6) Please, NO PLAYING IN THE BUSHES
- 7) Please do Not let your child climb the fence
- 8) If your child needs to use the restroom or get a drink, they MUST have a parent bring them back into the building.

Thank you for helping us with this. We would hate for anything to happen to your child/children. We want them to be safe while they are here on the church/preschool campus.

Confidentiality Policy

Due to confidentiality, teachers and parents will discuss student progress or daily behavior privately. Therefore, hallway and/or classroom discussions during preschool hours will not be allowed unless a time and private location is established between the parent and teacher. Please contact your child's teacher to set up a conference time and location.

Illness

Please do not send your child to school if they are not well enough to fully participate. A sick child risks exposing others to illness. No child can come to school that has had signs of illness within 24 hours before their class day. Please note: preschool staff does not dispense any medication or non-prescription medication.

We will not accept a child with:

- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Vomiting
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ White, yellow or green runny nose
- ◆ Cough
- ◆ Strep-throat (They are still contagious until they have been on antibiotics for 48 hours!)
- ◆ Impetigo (skin infection)
- ◆ Rashes with fever
- ◆ Head lice
- ◆ Thrush
- ◆ Inflamed eyes
- ◆ Chicken Pox
- ◆ Earache

- ◆ A change of clothing must be available for each child and must be provided by the parent. Please make sure all clothing is properly labeled with your child's name.

Toilet Training:

- ◆ Children are toilet trained in accordance with the request of their parents and in a manner consistent with their physical and emotional abilities.
- ◆ Children will not be punished for soiling or wetting their diaper or for not using the toilet, nor will they be coerced into toilet training.
- ◆ Children will be supervised during toilet training.
- ◆ Children and TEACHERS MUST WASH HANDS AFTER TOILETING. Soap and running water must be used, as well as paper towels.
- ◆ Soiled clothing and diapers must be taken care of as described above.
- ◆ Change of clothing, or school-owned clothing, must be available and laundered if used.

3 year olds need to be potty trained before the beginning of the school year.
No pull ups or diapers for 3 year olds.

Celebrations

Holidays will be celebrated throughout the year. Parents are invited to come and participate in the fun. Sign-up sheets will be posted in your child's class for party donations. We ask you send nutritious drinks and snacks, as well as "treats" too! (Please No Red Drinks) We encourage you to celebrate with your child's class in honor of their birthday.

Note: If your child is having a Birthday party outside of the school, and you wish to pass out invitations, please make sure there are enough for the entire classroom. If not inviting the entire class, please mail invitations to each home.

Please note that food is brought in from outside the center for Birthday Parties that may be celebrated in your child's classroom. Also, there are times that we will order Pizza for the children, or have a special treat and these foods will not be prepared here at school.

Field Trip Policies

- Each parent will be given a permission slip for each field trip. It must be signed and sent to the child's teacher by the due date.
- Each Parent will drive his/her own child to the field trip location. If the parent is unable to drive, it is his/her responsibility to arrange transportation to and from the field trip for the child. Please let the child's teacher know with whom the child will be riding.
- If a parent is unable to stay for the field trip, the parent may still drive the child to the location and leave the child in the teacher's supervision. * Then the parent will pick the child up at the end. Please let the teacher know in advance if this is what you will be doing.
- In the event of a car accident, while on a preschool field trip, the parent's personal insurance will be primary and the church's insurance will be secondary.

- No Teacher will transport a child in his/her personal vehicle, due to the church's insurance policy.
- If your child is unable to attend the fieldtrip and will need to say at Preschool, please let us know in advance, so we can make the necessary arrangements for your child.

*Policies may vary for certain field trips. We will let you know far in advance as to what we will be doing for each field trip.

Severe Weather and Drills

As part of our Emergency Preparedness, we practice fire and severe weather, drills on a monthly basis, so that your child will react in a calm and safe manner. In case of a hurricane alert, tornado warning or any emergency situation, listen to your radio. If for any reason Brevard County Schools are closed because of severe weather, Grace Preschool will also be closed. If severe weather occurs during preschool hours, the children will be kept safely in the Education and Administration building until it is safe for them to return to their classrooms.

Miscellaneous

1. **Pets:** There are times that there may be family pets at the preschool. Students love to share their pets with us and we love to have well-behaved and immunized (if applicable) animal (s) here at school. On days of "special celebration" of your pets, you will have ample notice given by your child's teacher. If your child has allergies to any pets or animals, please make sure you tell your child's teacher and the office so that can be noted in your child's official file. If your pet has immunization records that are current and you are bringing them to school, make sure to provide a copy to your child(s) teacher or to the office.
2. **Smoking:** Pursuant to Chapter 386, F.S., Smoking is **PROHIBITED** within the child-care facility, all outdoor areas, during field trips, and in vehicles being used to transport children.
3. **Changing/ Switching Classes:** It is our policy not to change or switch children from one classroom to another AFTER our school year has started. It sounds like a very simple thing to do, however, it is very disruptive to the student getting moved and to the classroom they are moving into. The classrooms are all unique and the children within them form a very tight bond, and when change happens it can affect the learning process to slow down or stop. For VPK, once the year has started, **NO CHANGING WILL TAKE PLACE**. For the 2's and 3's, there may be a need based on developmental achievement by a student, and if so, both parent and teacher, along with the Center Director, will be involved in this process.
4. **Termination /Withdrawal:** If at any time you want to terminate or withdraw your child from our care, we will ask that you fill out an exit form that can be obtained in the office. It will need to be filled out completely and then will be kept in your child's file.
5. **Special Requests:** Any special requests, such as teacher assignments, or friend requests, must be submitted in writing before the next school year starts. There is a form in the office available for this request. Please make sure this form is filled out and returned to the office. All requests must be in writing, and we will do our best to make sure your request is granted.
6. **Parking:** The preschool parking is located in the main parking lot. Please drive slowly in and out of the parking lot area. There will be children coming and going from this area and our main goal is for everyone to be safe.