



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
Church of Nashville

EARLY PRESCHOOL

FPC EARLY PRESCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK

Revised 9/2025

Early Preschool Family Handbook

Welcome to the Early Preschool (EP), an outreach ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Nashville.

VISION

First Presbyterian Church Early Preschool values all people as unique children of God. We endeavor to be a community of life-long learners where children, families, and relationships are respected, nurtured, and highly esteemed.

CURRICULUM

The *Reggio Philosophy* is the foundation of our program. Our daily planning is guided by observation, children's interests, Educators' interests, wondering questions, conversation, and spontaneous discoveries. As interests emerge, and projects develop, we are prepared to provide children with materials and activities that allow them to explore, research and discover. This cultivates an environment where curiosity thrives, and children develop a love of learning.

The Guiding Principles of The Reggio Philosophy

100 Languages

Children express themselves, learn, and connect to the world around them by not 1 but 100 languages. These languages are not just about words; they encompass drawing, painting, sculpting, construction, pretend play, music, dance, and more. Children are given the time and space to explore these languages.

Connection

Each child is a contributing member of our community. We foster connection and community by building relationships between educators, families, and children, in turn, instilling a sense of belonging in the classroom and our school community.

Documentation

The learning process is documented in a variety of ways to make the classroom experience visible. Documentation allows the educators and children the opportunity to revisit, reflect upon, and extend their knowledge, encouraging the children to become central to their own learning.

Emergent Learning Process

Daily planning is guided by observation, ideas are shared and explored through 3 types of discussions: peer to peer, 1 on 1, and whole group. These ideas are extended and built upon through provocations and inquiry such as children's interests, educators' interests, wondering questions, conversation or unexpected events. In this collaborative way of learning, inquiry journeys could last days, weeks, or months. This collaborative approach nurtures a culture where curiosity is valued, learning is shared, and our community grows together as lifelong learners.

The Image of the Child

Children are viewed as capable, competent, active learners who are curious, full of knowledge, potential, and interested in connecting to the world around them.

Partnering with Families

Parents are viewed as partners, collaborators, and advocates for their child. Educators respect parents as each child's first Educator and recognize their active participation is fundamental in their child's educational experience.

Role of the Environment

The environment, known as the third Educator, is intentionally designed, and set up with the emphasis on the use of space, color, light, and open-ended materials to encourage encounters, investigations, exploration, and discovery.

Educators as Co-Learners

Educators are seen as co-learners alongside the children. They actively engage in learning experiences, plan activities based on the children's interests, and ask questions to deepen their understanding. This collaborative approach fosters a lifelong love of learning.

We are always mindful that our practices are Developmentally Appropriate and that we are meeting the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (TN ELDS), NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Standards, and Teaching Strategies Gold Objectives of Development and Learning.

* NAEYC Quality Standards

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has created ten research-based Quality Standards that define what high-quality early childhood education looks like. These standards guide programs areas such as, teaching practices, relationships, curriculum, family partnerships, child assessment, health and safety, and leadership.

At the Early Preschool, these standards are more than a list. They help us reflect on what we're doing each day and remind us why it matters. They support the way we build meaningful relationships with children and families, create thoughtful learning environments, and plan experiences that help each child grow.

Our NAEYC accreditation sets us apart. It means we've taken time to examine our work, invite feedback, and commit to high standards across our entire program. Families can feel confident knowing their child is in a place that values best practices and a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

These standards help us stay grounded in what we believe about children, that they are capable, curious, and full of potential. They help us make decisions that support every child, every day.

*Tennessee Early Learning Standards (TN ELDS)

The TN ELDs were developed by the state of Tennessee. As part of a quality rated program, we utilize these standards to inform our assessment of each child's progress on developmental objectives and plan activities that will scaffold and build skills along a developmental continuum.

(<https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/early-learning-development-standards.html>)

***Chapel**

We have Chapel each week with Pastor Mal and our children's ministry staff. Through joyful music, Scripture memorization with movement, and simple yet meaningful Bible stories, our preschoolers learn that God created them, loves them, and invites them into His forever family. The children of the Early Preschool are discovering that God's mighty work is all around them and that they are His beloved children. After Chapel, Educators carry these songs, verses, and stories back into the classroom so that the Educators and children can revisit them.

*** THE ATELIER**

Visual art, music and movement are fundamental ways that children express themselves, develop and learn. In the Studio, children explore a variety of ways to experience the world of the arts.

Each week, children are offered choices (both traditional and non-conventional) to experiment with materials that enable them to paint, draw, sculpt, build, glue, weave, etc. as they wish. At times a "finished" product emerges, but often the experience of the process without a particular outcome is sufficient to satisfy a child.

The Atelier also provides children with opportunities to explore musical and dramatic arts, at times interwoven with visual arts and storytelling. Listening to and producing music from an assortment of genres offers children exposure to music and instruments they might not typically encounter in other settings.

Ultimately, the focus of the Studio is to give children opportunities to explore, discover, feel confident and experience joy in what they are doing.

EARLY PRESCHOOL COMMITTEE

The EP functions under the direction of the Early Preschool Committee. This committee consists of two elder or deacon representatives, parent representatives, Educator representatives, and church member representatives. The EP committee passes recommendations to the Christian Education

Council and then to the FPC Session for final approval.

LICENSING and ACCREDITATION

The EP is licensed by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The EP received NAEYC accreditation in September 2014 and has remained dedicated to maintaining this prestigious accreditation, last reaccredited in 2024. The EP is one of only eleven NAEYC Accredited programs in Nashville. Health and safety standards are of utmost importance to the Early Preschool. The EP is regularly inspected by the State Fire Marshal, Metro Public Health Department, and The Department of Human Services. Copies of the most recent inspections are always available for you to read in the EP office.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The Admissions process begins the last week of November for Current Families. An application must be completed and submitted along with the non-refundable application fee. Every effort will be made to honor your first choice of class days. In the event that your first choice is unavailable, you will be offered your second choice or what we have available. Children are assigned to a class in August for the entire school year. We offer a summer program, Curiosity Camp, with a separate admissions process.

PRE-ENTRANCE PAPERWORK

The following forms must be submitted electronically to the EP before the child can begin school:

1. TN state immunization form
2. *Application
3. *Family Information and Cultures, and Agreements & Permissions
4. *Child Health & History
5. DHS's Influenza Information Notification Form
6. Food Allergy Action Plan (if necessary)
7. Asthma Action Plan (if necessary)
8. Medication Permission (if necessary)

*These forms will be accessed online via link sent by Early Preschool Director/Assistant Director. Contact the Early Preschool for the link for electronic submission. These forms will be kept in children's files and kept in the locked preschool office. They are considered confidential and only available with proper permissions to staff, legal guardians, and regulatory authorities.

IMMUNIZATION

All children must have a Tennessee Department of Health Certificate of Immunization form completed by their physician.

Please request a new immunization record for the EP records each time your child has a well-child visit to the doctor that requires an immunization.

We understand and respect that each family makes individual health decisions for their child. As part of our responsibility to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children, we want to share important information regarding our procedures in the event of a vaccine-preventable illness within our program.

If a vaccine-preventable disease is reported, extra care and caution will be taken for children who are not fully immunized. This may include temporarily excluding your child from school to minimize their risk of exposure. The length of exclusion will depend on guidance from health authorities and the nature of the illness.

Should this situation arise, the Early Preschool Director will work closely with your family and classroom educators to determine the best course of action, prioritizing your child's health and well-being while also considering the safety of the wider community.

Please reach out if you have any questions or would like to discuss your child's specific health plan.

TUITION AND FEES

A non-refundable deposit (one month's tuition plus supply fee) must be paid, and a current immunization form must be received upon accepting a spot to secure your child's space in the EP. The tuition portion of the deposit is applied to the September tuition payment of the school year enrolled.

Tuition payments will be automatically drafted from your checking account through Brightwheel's autopay feature. This payment will be drafted on the 7th of each month, October-May of the school year enrolled. The 15th of the month can be an alternative pay date. Those who wish for a mid-month draft must notify, in writing (email) the preschool office. Exceptions to this policy may be discussed with the preschool director. Fees for auto draft and credit card use are assumed by families.

FINANCIAL NEED

It is the Early Preschool Committee's wish that no child be excluded from the program because of financial hardship. The Early Preschool Committee reviews all applications for financial assistance. All requests for financial assistance should be submitted to the EP Director. Each request is confidentially considered by the Early Preschool Committee, with assistance determined by need and availability of funds. Requests for assistance must be resubmitted each year and will go through a review process as stated above. Financial Assistance is also dependent upon availability of funds.

EP DESIGNATED FUND

The FPC Session has designated a specific fund to assist the EP families' financial needs and to satisfy other unbudgeted needs of the EP. The fund offers an opportunity for donations of monetary gifts to the Early Preschool in honor of a child's birthday, to honor the Educators, or as a way to give back to the preschool in a way that will directly benefit the program. For more information on giving to the EP Designated Fund, contact the EP Director or the Church Finance Office.

WITHDRAWAL

There are many reasons that a child may need to leave our program after the school year has started. Written notice must be received by the EP Director at least 30 days in advance of the child's withdrawal from the program.

ATTENDANCE

When your child is not here, your child's presence is missed by their classroom community. If your

child will be late or absent, please contact us via Brightwheel before 9:30 am.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Program Drop Off begins at 9:00 am and Pick Up begins at 2:00 pm. Children should not arrive at school past 10:30 am unless previously approved by the Director. All children should be picked up no later than 2:30 pm. Arrival later than 9:15 am disrupts the flow of the day and requires that your child enters a space where children are already actively engaged. This may result in a challenging transition from home to school. While we understand there will be times that your child has appointments or life happens, our hope is that all children are at school by 9:15 am and actively engaged.

Please accompany your child directly to his/her classroom and pick them up at their classroom. Be sure to sign your child in and out using our Brightwheel QR code posted by classroom doors.

For the safety of all, please make sure your vehicle is turned off when the driver leaves the vehicle. Also, never leave a child unattended in a vehicle. Do not park under or drive through the portico.

In the event that any person picking up a child is deemed impaired in any way or exhibits risky behavior, the EP staff will:

1. Ask the driver to come to the EP office until such time as he/she is determined to be in a suitable condition to drive.
2. Require the driver to contact another approved person, as noted on the child's enrollment form, to transport the child.
3. Notify proper authorities if met with resistance.

LATE PICK-UP FEES

Please be respectful of our teaching staff by arriving to pick up your child no later than **2:30** for the regular school day, and **3:30** for After Care.

*Late fees are as follows: **A flat rate of \$5 when you are up to 5 minutes late and \$2.00 per minute after.***

BRIGHTWHEEL FOR SIGN IN AND OUT

Each classroom will post a QR code for signing-in and signing-out of children, through the Brightwheel app. You will need to have your smart phone for this. This app allows an easy digital check-in and out with personal passcodes for each caregiver. Parents must add all approved caregivers to their Brightwheel account. Brightwheel will email passcodes to these designated caregivers. If staff are unfamiliar with the person picking up a child, we will request identification and check this against the child's approved pickup contacts. If the person picking up is not listed as an approved pick-up a phone call will be made to the parents to obtain permission for the pickup.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/ EMERGENCY AND DISASTER PROCEDURES

The Early Preschool follows the Oak Hill School inclement weather closings. Snow days are not made up and no tuition credit is given. An all-school Brightwheel message will be sent to families to alert them of school closings. If OHS opens on a delay or closes early, the EP will open or close at the same time. ***There may be instances where the EP cannot mirror OHS in all instances, ex: Staffing not sufficient to meet DHS ratios.***

We have regular Emergency Drills for the staff and children. Evacuation and Emergency Shelter plans are on file in the EP Director's office. The First Presbyterian Church staff participates in all the EP drills and is prepared to assist in leading the children to the safest place quickly in the event of emergency. If there were to be an emergency that dictated that we must leave our campus, our school would evacuate to Judson Baptist or Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. This information would be communicated to parents via the Brightwheel app.

CALENDAR

The EP school year begins in August and ends in May. A yearly calendar (subject to change) is issued annually listing all closings and early dismissals. You can find an up-to-date calendar on the EP website as well as your Brightwheel Calendar.

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

As part of our commitment to reflective teaching and lifelong learning, our program includes scheduled closures throughout the school year for Professional Development and Staff Training.

These days are thoughtfully planned in advance and are noted on the school calendar to help families prepare accordingly.

Professional Development is not only required for licensing and accreditation, it is a vital part of our identity as a learning community. These dedicated days give educators the time and space to come together, reflect on their practice, collaborate as a team, and engage with current topics in early childhood education. Topics may include child development, growth in the Reggio Philosophy, inclusive practices, the environment as the third teacher, health and safety, and pedagogical documentation.

We view educators as researchers constantly observing, listening, and learning alongside children. By investing in the growth of our educators, we strengthen the foundation of our classroom communities and enrich the experiences we offer each child.

CLASSES

The EP program serves children who are 18 months to 5 years of age. Children are most often placed in classes based on their chronological age. To keep children on track for entrance into kindergarten, August 15 is used as the birthday cut-off date. Class assignments are made in August. Children will stay in the same class for the entire school year.

STAFF: CHILD RATIOS

The EP maintains the following Educator to student ratios:

Toddlers 1:5 2-year-olds 1:6 3-year-olds 1:8 Pre-K 1:10

Exceptions to our Educator/student ratios may occur when class sizes are low, unexpected events or high Educator absences occur. We then use minimum ratios allowed by DHS and do so only until substitutes can be located.

TRANSITIONING CHILDREN TO THE NEXT CLASSROOM

Children transition to next age classrooms at the beginning of each new school year in August. A child's placement is determined after collaboration with administrators, Educators, and

parents/guardians. It is our goal to ensure that placement is in the best interests of each child and one that will allow the child the best opportunity to grow and learn.

ILLNESS AND INJURY POLICY

Expect your child's Educators to ask you about the health of your child every day. The more information they have about your child, the better equipped they will be to care for your child. Educators are also interested in how your child slept, ate, and what his/her disposition was before arriving at school. It is important that Educators know if your child has taken medication before arriving at school.

The EP requires you to pick up your child for the following symptoms (including, but not limited to):

1. Diarrhea - more than one (1) abnormally loose stool
2. Severe coughing - red or blue in the face or makes a high-pitched croupy or whooping sound after coughing
3. Discolored mucus
4. Unusual rashes or spots
5. Difficult or rapid breathing
6. Yellowish skin or eyes
7. Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
8. Fever (temperature of 100 degrees or higher)
9. Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
10. Stiff neck and headache
11. Sore throat
12. Vomiting
13. Lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestation
14. Headache
15. Unexplained listlessness, sluggishness or other behavior suggestive of illness

WHEN A CHILD APPEARS SICK

The EP is not prepared to accommodate sick children. Please do not send your child to school with a communicable illness. Before bringing your child back to school after an illness, he/she must be fever-free (without medication) and free of any vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours. In some cases, we will require a doctor's note stating the child is cleared to return to school.

If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you so arrangements can be made for your child to be picked up. If a parent/guardian cannot be contacted, a call will be made to the emergency contacts on the child's student data form. Children must be picked up within one half hour of our

notification to you.

Please report all illnesses to the EP Office. We do everything possible to alert families of their child's exposure to any illness that may be present in the EP. The EP Director or classroom Educators will inform you through the Brightwheel App of any possible exposure to a contagious illness.

SERIOUS INJURIES

If your child is seriously injured, we will call 911 and then a parent/guardian. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact listed on your child's emergency form will be contacted. If a child goes to the hospital for care, he/she may return to school with a doctor's note of approval. **It is important that the contact number in Brightwheel is current. It is the number that we will call first in an emergency.**

MEDICATION POLICY

We administer medication for emergency cases only. If a child needs medication for an emergency situation (such as an allergic reaction), a medical action plan must be completed and signed by the child's physician along with a medication permission form signed by the director and parent. The action plan and medication permission form will direct the staff on how and when to administer the medication. The action plan and medication permission form are kept with the child's medication and a second copy is kept in the child's file. In the event that emergency medication is administered, we will contact a parent/guardian immediately.

ALLERGY AWARE

We are an "Allergy Aware" facility, keeping our facility as safe as possible for all of our children.

- No peanuts, peanut butter, tree nuts or nut spreads should be sent to school.
- No products that "may contain" peanuts or tree nuts should be sent to school.
- If a soy or sun butter product is used in a sandwich it must be labeled each time it is sent to school. Because these products are so similar in looks to peanut butter, we will not serve it to the child if it is not labeled.

- There may be children with other life-threatening allergies in your child’s class, if this is the case you will be notified of any other classroom safety precautions.

LUNCH

We ask that you provide nutritious foods and a beverage (protein, vegetable, fresh fruit, milk) in well-labeled, non-breakable containers. (Preferably a hard container that can be easily sanitized)

We cannot provide refrigeration or heating for lunches. TN state rules require that food is never used as punishment and cannot be “withheld” for any reason. We will present the child with their entire lunch. We will not withhold a dessert until the rest of the lunch is eaten.

In addition, we must be highly alert for choking hazards. Grapes and hotdog slices must be cut in quarters. Other choking hazards like popcorn and marshmallows should not be sent in lunches. Also, please remember not to send anything with peanuts or tree nuts in accordance with our Allergy Aware policy.

REST TIME

Rest is important for each child’s development. At the Early Preschool, rest time is provided in each classroom. Children are never required to sleep. After 45 minutes of rest, a non-sleeping child will be given a quiet activity. You will need to supply a blanket and clean crib sheet weekly to cover cots, and if necessary, bring a special item for sleep. As part of our daily routines children assist with gathering rest items, making their cots and putting these items away. Please be sure all rest time items can fit in their rest basket to set them up for success.

POTTY TRAINING

Children are not required to be potty trained to attend the EP. When you are ready to begin working on potty training at home, notify your classroom Educators and they will gladly partner with you. If your child is still in diapers, we ask that you provide enough disposable diapers for each week. If you use cloth diapers, we will gladly use them too. Our health standards require that we send all soiled diapers and clothing home, without rinsing, in a plastic bag.

OUTDOOR PLAY AND EXTRA CLOTHING

Outdoor play is part of our daily schedule. Children will play on the playground and various places around the church campus. Please send your child with appropriate outerwear. At least one change of clothing should be kept at school. Send your child in comfortable, casual clothing and sneakers. If your child is sensitive to temperature change, it is suggested that a sweater be kept at school for occasional use. We also ask that you provide a raincoat, waterproof suspender pants and rain boots to be kept at school so that when the weather permits, rain walks, and puddle stomping can occur! *Please label all changes of clothing and also those items such as raincoats, etc., with your child's name.*

SUNSCREEN AND INSECT REPELLANTS

It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to determine their child's need for sunscreen and/or insect repellent. These should be applied by the parent or guardian before the child enters the school. **Sunscreen and insect repellent should never be kept in a child's bag or cubby.** If a parent/guardian believes there is a need for reapplication of these products during the school day, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to come in and reapply.

TOYS FROM HOME

To support an environment rich in exploration and shared learning, we kindly ask that children leave personal toys at home unless invited by their classroom educators. When materials from home are welcomed as part of the learning experience, educators will communicate this invitation through Brightwheel. This thoughtful approach helps ensure that every item brought to school has a meaningful purpose in the life of the classroom.

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES

Classrooms will celebrate with age-appropriate activities at various times throughout the year. These celebrations may include Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, and Memorial Day. Families will be invited to share in many of our celebrations and are occasionally asked to contribute items for special activities. Each

celebration is unique and appropriate to the age group. If at any time you have a question or concern about how a holiday is celebrated, please talk to the EP Director.

BIRTHDAYS

We like to celebrate birthdays in special ways, making sure the child knows that we are happy he/she was born. The birthday celebration is a tool for building pro-social skills that promote a sense of classroom community. Each child will have the opportunity to celebrate his/her birthday.

We encourage families to give a “gift of time” to their child on his/her birthday. Parents are welcome to visit the classroom to read a favorite book, eat lunch, and/or share a family tradition.

We encourage families to reserve goodie bags and food treats for celebrations at home.

You are welcome to put invitations in cubbies, we do ask that if you choose to pass out invitations at school that all children are included.

To be mindful of all children, it is best to exchange gifts off site.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

At the Early Preschool, we believe families are children’s first and most important teachers. Your presence, voice, and contributions enrich our community and support children’s learning. We view family participation as a partnership where together we nurture curiosity, creativity, and a sense of belonging.

Family participation can take many forms, such as:

Sharing your talents and interests such as reading a favorite story, leading a nature walk, or bringing in a cultural tradition.

Joining classroom experiences by spending time in the classroom, helping on nature explorations, or collaborating on projects.

Supporting documentation by contributing family photos, stories, or reflections that connect home

life to school learning.

Participating in community events including family nights, celebrations, and learning workshops.

Collaborating in dialogue by offering feedback, engaging in conferences, or sharing perspectives that guide our program.

Signing up to be a Room Parent, Helping with set-up/breakdown of special events, signing up to do the Fika Cart, being a Parent Representative at group tours, etc.

We are open to exploring new opportunities for parents to be involved. If you have any ideas, please share them with the Director/Assistant Director.

Family involvement is not about doing more but about being present in ways that feel meaningful and possible for your family. Every contribution, big or small, builds connection, strengthens our community, and supports your child's journey as a capable and curious learner.

FAMILY REFLECTIONS

The Early Preschool distributes a family survey annually in the spring. We value families' feedback on their preschool experience. The results of the survey are shared with staff and the Early Preschool Committee. This helps in the continual evaluation and improvement of our program. Of course, it is not necessary to wait for the survey to give us feedback; we welcome your input at any time.

COMMUNICATION

Open and consistent communication is essential to the partnership between Families, Early Preschool Educators, and the Admin Team. To support this collaboration, we use a variety of tools, most importantly, Brightwheel. This platform allows us to streamline daily communication. In addition to Brightwheel, you will occasionally receive email communication from the Director or Assistant Director with important updates or reminders.

We also maintain a Family Information Board in the Early Preschool hallway, which is updated monthly with helpful information.

All communication regarding your child during the school day will be shared through Brightwheel. This includes daily updates, reminders, and any questions from the classroom educators.

In the event of an emergency, illness, or injury, we will contact you immediately via Brightwheel or by phone. It is essential that you have Brightwheel notifications turned on and remain responsive throughout the day. If we are unable to reach you, we will follow the emergency contact list provided during enrollment.

Additionally, family conferences are held in the Fall and Spring. Conferences may be held in-person, via phone, or Zoom.

The EP has an open-door policy. We can be reached by telephone Director (615-298-9580), Assistant Director (615-298-9508) email or through the Brightwheel messaging system. We encourage you to contact us at any time you have a question, concern or comment.

FAMILY CONCERNS

The EP is a community of children, families, and staff, all interacting and sharing lives together. We all work closely together and hope that our interactions are positive, helpful, kind and understanding. Sometimes differences occur. When a family member has a concern, it is best to speak directly to the person that is causing the concern. Educators need and want your input, suggestions, questions, and concerns. The EP Director and Assistant Director operate with an open-door policy. They are interested in your concerns and are always willing to talk with you. All staff are willing to schedule conferences whenever one is needed.

ASSESSMENT

At the Early Preschool, we believe that the better we know our children and their families, the more effective we will be in providing experiences that enrich each child's learning and build skills that develop lifelong learners.

Assessment is an ongoing process that includes collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information about students, the classroom and their instruction. Educators thoughtfully observe and document children's growth throughout the year by paying close attention to their play, interactions, artwork, and emerging mark-making. These forms of expression offer valuable

insights into each child’s development, interests, and thinking. These ongoing assessments are done in large groups, small groups as well as individually. Knowledge gained through assessment enables Educators to meet both the individual needs and interests of each child and the classroom community.

[The Objectives for Development and Learning - Teaching Strategies](#)

The Early Preschool utilizes Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment tool to assess children’s development throughout the school year. All children are assessed in the following developmental areas: Social Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy and Math.

We believe that children’s learning is influenced by their environment both in school and outside of school, their temperament, and their experiences. We integrate information from the Family Information Form, Child Health & History Form, and conversations with families (email, phone, written notes and face to face), with our ongoing classroom assessments, to inform our planning for children.

PARENT/EDUCATOR CONFERENCES

Formal conferences are scheduled in the Fall and Spring of each school year. Results of all assessment tools will be shared with families at Parent/Educator conferences. Information shared with families is always kept confidential. Written assessments are kept in the child’s file in a locked filing cabinet in the preschool office.

If at any time an additional conference is needed, Educators, Parents, or the Director can schedule one.

REFERRALS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT

If an Early Preschool Educator or the director feels that a child would benefit from a developmental assessment, the child’s parents will be contacted and a conference by phone or in person will be arranged. When a child is under 3 years old, Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) provides a free assessment. After the child is 3 years old, the county school district in which the child is zoned provides the free assessment. A parent always has the choice of an independent assessment. The EP director has more information about these programs in the EP office.

The EP recognizes the benefits of working in partnership with families when educational decisions are being made for the child. In addition to referring children for more in-depth assessments, we are also willing to participate in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

We often find that with early intervention and some minor supports at the EP, a child with special needs can successfully and fully participate in the Early Preschool Program. When it is in the child's best interest to move to a program that is better equipped to provide the special services that the child needs, the EP will assist the family in any way possible to make a smooth transition for the child and family.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

Often, we are the first to observe that there may be a need for intervention on behalf of a child. Educators and administration will always be willing to partner with families to determine a plan of action that will support the education of each child.

The EP's primary goal is the healthy development and success of each child. The EP may not have the resources necessary to accommodate the required additional supports of a child. In the event that the EP cannot serve the needs of a child, the EP will refer the family to other programs or agencies that may better meet the child's needs. Families, Educators, and the EP Director are always involved in this decision. We are dedicated to assisting in creating a positive transition plan.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT /SOCIAL EMOTION DEVELOPMENT

The philosophy of the EP reflects and promotes problem-solving and social skills in young children. The goals of this philosophy include; teaching children to evaluate and make choices, take responsibility for their own actions, recognize and express their feelings appropriately, and be considerate and fair in solving their problems with others.

Positive Educator attitudes and expectations encourage cooperation and prevent most behavior problems. In each classroom, we seek to establish a climate of trust, communicate positively and clearly, set clear and positive limits, offer choices whenever possible, prevent inappropriate behavior with redirection and gentle reminders, praise efforts and accomplishments, use natural

and logical consequences, and assist with verbal problem solving and conflict resolution. We will always communicate with families and ask for input about what works for them at home.

A child will not be purposely humiliated, isolated, or shamed. We will never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion.

The Early Preschool's approach to guiding behavior is rooted in ongoing reflection, current research, and the evolving needs of the children in our care. We place a strong emphasis on social and emotional development, recognizing that children need time, space, and support to build the skills necessary to navigate challenges and express themselves in healthy ways.

Rather than focusing on managing behavior, we seek to understand it, viewing it as communication. By nurturing emotional awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, we help children develop the tools they need to work through strong feelings and grow in relationship with others. This responsive, respectful approach honors each child's journey and supports a compassionate, connected classroom community.

PROGRAM WIDE EXPECTATIONS

Our program-wide expectations Take Care of Yourself, Take Care of Others, and Take Care of the Environment serve as the foundation for how we live, learn, and grow together as a community. These three simple and meaningful principles are posted in every classroom and throughout our shared spaces as daily reminders of the kind of environment we strive to create.

These expectations are more than just guidelines. They shape our interactions, support the development of empathy and responsibility, and provide a shared language for reflection, problem-solving, and positive decision-making. They help children understand how their actions affect others and the world around them.

Throughout the school year, we'll invite families to send in photos of their child demonstrating these expectations at home or in the community. These images will be added to our framed expectations displays as real-life examples of what it means to take care of yourself, others, and the environment. This connection between home and school helps children see these values in action and strengthens our shared learning culture.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND CRISIS RESPONSE

There may be times when children experience intense emotions that result in unsafe behaviors (such as property destruction, aggression, or elopement). When this happens, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Walkie or call for additional assistance as needed
2. Keep an eye on the child experiencing the emotion and make sure they stay safe
3. Move peers or other children as needed to keep them safe
4. Use de-escalation strategies to support the child experiencing crisis:
 - Remind them of coping strategies
 - Validate their feelings
 - Offer positive physical support (e.g., hugs, handholding)
5. Once everyone is regulated, facilitate a restorative re-entry for the child who experienced the emotions.
6. Document the incident and follow the steps below to seek a behavior support plan or additional accommodations for the child as needed.

Sometimes a behavior management issue is the result of an undiscovered special need. If this is the determination of the teachers or parents, the Early Preschool will work with the family to support them through assessments and possible diagnosis. We will then work together to determine the best place for the child to learn. It is always our desire to serve a child in our program but sometimes we are not equipped to provide the necessary supports. When this is the case, we will work with the family to connect them with programs that will fulfill their child's needs.

EXPULSION POLICY

In situations where a child's behavior is consistently challenging, and efforts to work with those behaviors at school have not been effective, we will try options such as reducing the number of hours or days the child is in attendance and offering resources to families to help address these behavior challenges. TEIS (Tennessee Early Intervention System) for children under 3 years of age, RIP (Regional Intervention Program), the county school district for which the child is zoned for children 3 years and older, CSEFEL (Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning), AIMHiTN (Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee) and Allied Behavioral Health Solutions are local resources that support families and children who may be experiencing behavior challenges.

It is our hope that families will partner with the Early Preschool staff by way of participating in regular communication, attending any called meetings, and seeking support from resources such as those listed above.

If after all resources and/or interventions have been ineffective and the situation has not been alleviated, the Early Preschool reserves the right to ask the family to withdraw their child from the program. The family will be given two weeks written notice in order to give them some time to look into other options for their child.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All assessment information, medical information, and family information will be kept in the child's file locked in the Early Preschool office. This information will be shared only with the child's Educators and will be treated with the utmost confidence and respect.

Allergy information will be posted in the child's classroom and the preschool office so that staff have this important information readily available. Student information will not be shared with agencies, schools, or individuals without written permission from the child's legal guardian, unless required by law.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE/KEEPING STAFF SAFE

First Presbyterian Church is committed to protecting the rights of children and adults who work with children. This can be seen in our building design. Classroom doors have large windows for observation. Entrance doors to the Children's Ministry wing are secured at all times with a keycard lock. Our Security Officer patrols our area while children are present. Background checks are required for all staff. Volunteers are never left alone with children. In the event that a staff member is accused of abusing or neglecting a child, the utmost care will be taken to protect the rights of all involved.

According to Tennessee law, all persons (including doctors, mental health professionals, educators, dentists, family members and friends) must report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Failure to report child abuse or neglect is a violation of the law. The Child Abuse Hotline number is 877-237-0004.

Children 3-5 years old may participate in the Keeping Kids Safe Curriculum annually. The curriculum is posted on our Family Communication Board in the preschool hallway. Parent/guardian permission will be required for children to participate in the curriculum.

SUPERVISION

Children will never be left unattended at the Early Preschool. Staff will supervise children by sight and sound at all times. Children are closely supervised by EP staff on the playground, during transitions from one space to another, as well as in the classroom and during rest time. Children who desire privacy while using the bathroom will be able to use the bathroom privately, but an Educator will be close by to assist and check in on children often.

Should you have any questions about the policies in this handbook, or need translation services for this handbook, school forms or conferences, please contact the director.

The Early Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, age, national origin, citizenship, veteran status, marital status, genetic information, pregnancy or any other bias prohibited by applicable state, federal or local laws.

Thank you for partnering with us in your child's early learning journey. We are honored to be a part of these foundational years and are committed to creating a nurturing, joyful, and inspiring environment for every child. We look forward to a year filled with meaningful connections, growth, and discovery together with your family.