

PARENT HANDBOOK

Early Childhood Center



A preschool and childcare ministry of Church at the Crossing.

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WELCOME

Welcome to the Early Childhood Center! We are a preschool and child care ministry of Church at the Crossing. We've been serving young families across the Northside of Indianapolis and Hamilton County since 1983.

Our MISSION is to honor God by:

- providing Excellence in early childhood education
- providing Exceptional Care in a Nurturing Learning Environment
- providing an Opportunity for Every Child who enters our doors to learn about Jesus
- building Bridges between Our Community and the Church at the Crossing

Learning Philosophy

As adults, we often say "I learn best by doing." Educational research shows this to be exactly the case for young children. They are very "concrete learners" who learn best in active environments. They flourish when they are engaged in a hands-on approach, which energizes all of their senses as they investigate learning materials and the world around them. Children bring with them a God-given sense of curiosity everywhere they go. And it's our belief that a good preschool is a place in which children can explore relationships, investigate the world of nature around them, and participate in a variety of opportunities to build learning skills, which will serve them for years to come.

We base our curriculum upon child's play as their primary means of learning. We seek to promote language development, stimulate critical thinking skills, and nurture the child's own creative self through a variety of mediums including art, music and movement. There are milestones for development, which we will help you watch for, but we know each child is unique. And as such they each have their own developmental time clock for progressing through stages of cutting teeth, talking, walking, learning and expression. We want to help each child progress and mature at their pace. We understand that some things can't be rushed.

You are your child's first and primary teacher. As we begin to work with your children, the impact for your child is multiplied exponentially as we partner together and share the things we each are learning about your little one. AND, Children are not the only learners in the classroom. The teachers are active participants in the learning process. We all have a lot to learn from each other. And the exploration, the process for discovery, means we all can grow from each day's adventure.



PROGRAM GOALS

Through our program goals, we want to promote the growth of the whole child in all areas of their development: Socially, Emotionally, Cognitively, Physically, and Spiritually.

SOCIALLY

- to help children feel comfortable in a new environment
- to establish a sense of trust here
- to make new friendships
- to feel a sense of belonging
- to be able to communicate one's ideas to others

EMOTIONALLY

- to help children experience pride and self-confidence
- to develop healthy independence /interdependence
- to grow in self-control and discipline
- to have a positive attitude toward life
- to enjoy the learning process

COGNITIVELY

- to build enthusiasm for trying their own ideas
- to experience success and learn from failure
- to facilitate problem solving skills
- to encourage questioning
- to use words to describe their ideas, observations and feelings
- to develop good working/learning habits

PHYSICALLY

- to promote large muscle skills and coordination
- to develop finer motor skills as bodies mature
- to foster a growing awareness of what their bodies can do

SPIRITUALLY

- to help children see themselves as loved children of God
- to be aware of the wonder of God's world
- to sense the love of God especially through those who teach and care for them
- to practice Godly character in relationships
- to hear and learn Bible stories as they teach us about God's love for us especially through the life of His son, Jesus

PROGRAMS & CLASS INFORMATION

PART DAY PROGRAMMING

Hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Ages: 2 -5 years old

These classrooms offer younger learners a safe, caring, Christian environment where many children will be having their first times away from parents. Teachers plan fun and engaging, age-appropriate learning experiences in bigger blocks of time both in their classroom and outside or in the gym. Teachers plan for creative activities with art materials, songs & movement, and stories that are geared to engage each child. They balance the day with big motor times in our gym or on the playground. Teachers plan around weekly themes of interest to their age groups and through these themes guide their play & learning in the areas of art, role playing, science and math fun, letters and sounds, with social skills, and critical thinking. All Preschool Classes use Orange curriculum for our Faith guidelines which focus on overarching themes that God created the World around us, God loves us, and Jesus wants to be our friend forever. In addition, our Pre-K classes also use Handwriting Without Tears curriculum for introducing and practicing letter formation.

Class	Age (as of Sept. 1st)	Days	Class Size
Part Day 2's	2	M, T, and/or Th	12 children/2 teachers
Part Day 3's	3 years and Potty trained	M, T, and/or Th	18 children/2 teachers
Pre K 3 Day	4	M, T, and Th	18 children/2 teachers
Pre K 4 Day	4	M, T, W, and Th	18 children/2 teachers

PROGRAMS & CLASS INFORMATION

ALL DAY PROGRAMMING

Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Ages: 3 months to 5 years by September 1st

Our All Day Program offers a curriculum based childcare for families in need of full-time care. Children are offered a caring, safe, nurturing and Christian Environment for young learners. Both morning and afternoon activities include a circle time, guided learning activities that focus on arts and crafts, reading and writing, math and science, socialization and critical thinking, in addition to extended playtimes.

Class	Age	Days	Class Size
Infant	3 months -15 months by 9/1	Full Time Only 8:00am - 4:00pm	8 children/2 teachers
Young 2's	16 months by 9/1 Walking / Eating Finger Foods	M, T, W, Th, and/or F	9 children/2 teachers
Older 2's	24 months by 9/1	M, T, W, Th, and/or F	12 children/2 teachers
Young 3's	3 by 12/31	M, T, W, Th, and/or F	15 children/2 teachers
Older 3's	3 by 9/1 100% Potty Trained	M, T, W, Th, and/or F	18 children/2 teachers
Pre K	4 by 9/1	M, T, W, Th, and/or F	18 children/2 teachers
Pre K	4 by 2/1	M, T, W, Th, and/or F	18 children/2 teachers

BRIGHTWHEEL

Here at the ECC, we use an app called Brightwheel for communication and tuition payments. You will see us reference this app throughout the rest of the handbook. Below are the most used items on the app and how we use them for our preschool.

TUITION PAYMENTS: We will set up a bill plan for each family under the youngest child enrolled. Brightwheel allows you set up your bank account or add a credit card to pay for tuition. There is a credit card fee that is not covered by the school. You can set your account to automatically pay your invoices on their due date or go in and pay directly yourself on each due date. The app also allows you to add a payment over your upcoming invoice amount and will list it as a credit on your account. Your invoices will pull from the credit on your account before charging you for the invoice due.

CHECK IN AND OUT: You are required to check your child in and out of their classroom each day using the Brightwheel app. When you log into your app you will see a button that says 'check in/out'. Click on that button and then scan one of our barcodes posted on each classroom door, office door and main entrance. Once you scan the barcode you will be asked to enter your BRIGHTWHEEL 4 digit code (different than your door code) and then it will request a signature. This process allows us to keep track of attendance and head counts in the room.

MESSAGES: There are two kinds of messages on the app. 'Staff and Admin' which goes to your child's teachers and to the office staff or 'Admins Only' which will only come to the office staff. Any absences, late drop offs or early pick ups should go to your teachers and admin. Any sensitive subjects can be sent to just 'Admins Only'.

DOCUMENTS: This section of the app is where you can find our school calendar, handbook, doctor medication order, food allergy action plan, health record and student profile. You can't print these from the app but if you log into Brightwheel from your desktop you can print them from there.

PROFILE - On the app you will be able to update your child(ren)'s information as needed. The most common thing we ask for you to update is approve pick-ups. We can easily check the app when someone new is picking up to confirm the name on their ID matches to the name on Brightwheel. You can also update your address, allergies, etc.



TUITION & FEES



PART DAY PRESCHOOL - Tuition for our Part Day Program is billed monthly and is due by the 10th of each month. After the 11th, your payment is considered late and will have a \$10 LATE FEE assessed for that month.

ALL DAY PROGRAMMING - Tuition is billed weekly and is due by Wednesday of each week. After Wednesdays, your payment is considered late and will have a \$10 LATE FEE assessed for that week.

PAYMENTS - Tuition is payable through Brightwheel or by check, cash, or money order. Checks and money orders should be made payable to: The Early Childhood Center. Write the month or week(s) which you are paying for in the memo line. If your payment is in cash, please deliver to Ashley or Christa who will write you a receipt. Brightwheel does have an auto-pay option which can make paying tuition even easier.

NEVER LEAVE CASH without getting a receipt. Leave check or money orders in the black mailbox on the Office door. In the event of School Closings due to the Weather, no tuition adjustment is made for days missed.

RETURNED CHECK FEE - There will be a charge of \$20 for any returned checks from the bank or online payments. If 2 checks are returned within a school year, we will require money orders or cash payments for the rest of the school year.

PROMPT PAYMENT - Because supplies are purchased each month and staff salaries are paid exclusively from parent tuition monies, prompt payment is important. Failure to maintain a timely payment schedule could be cause for dismissal. Questions concerning your account should be addressed to Ashley Deal, 317.575.6508 ext. 19 or adeal@golove.org

HEALTH, IMMUNIZATIONS & MEDICATION



RECORDS - All enrollees must have the following on file with the office before being admitted to a classroom:

- Registration Form
- Child Profile Sheet
- Parent Release Form
- Emergency Medical Form
- Fire Marshall Letter
- Health Record with Immunizations

ILLNESS AND KNOWING WHEN TO STAY HOME - Children enrolling in school will be exposed to a variety of illness and viruses. Children who attend daily must be in good health and free of communicable diseases. Sending a message via Brightwheel that your child is sick is greatly appreciated. Your notice will help us alert the others in your room so they can watch for symptoms in their own child.

Do not send children to school with any of the following:

- A fever of 100° or more
- Excessively runny nose
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Pinkeye
- Persistent cough

Any child who develops these symptoms will be isolated in the ECC office area until a parent or emergency contact can pick the child up. Any ill child must be picked up within 30 minutes of parent contact.

When can your child return to school?

- Children must be fever free and symptom free for 24 hours without aid of medication
- In some cases, a note of "non-contagion" from a doctor will be required

Parents will abide by the Office's judgement if the Director or Assistant feels the child should be kept at home or sent home because of suspected illness. The good health of ALL our students is taken very seriously.

MEDICATIONS - A doctor's order must be on file for ALL OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS. (i.e. Tylenol, Benadryl, etc.) before we administer. The office will contact the guardian before administering medication.

HEALTH, IMMUNIZATIONS & MEDICATION



NO MEDICATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM Under no circumstance should medications (even cough drops) be present in your child's classroom, pockets, backpack or lunch box. Should your child require administered medication, the parent must record the information on the **MEDICATION RECORD** located in the office. All medications will be kept in the Office or Staff Refrigerator, and administered by the office staff. We record all medication given. Medication questions should be directed to Ashley or Christa in the office.

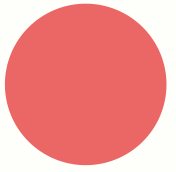
MEDICAL EMERGENCY In the event of a medical emergency, the office staff will attempt to reach the parents or emergency contacts. If parents or emergency contacts cannot be reached, the Director, or a person acting on his/her behalf, will call 911 and accompany the child to the hospital. Parents are responsible for all medical costs incurred.

ALLERGIES REQUIRING EPIPENS All children with severe allergic reactions requiring Epipens will be required to have one at school. A conversation between Parent, the child's teachers, and the Director must take place before your child begins. A written "Plan of Action" is also required on file **BEFORE** your child starts at school. Our staff receives annual training on the use of epipens. Please list any allergy information on your Child Profile Sheet and discuss them with your child's teachers. Make the Director aware of any life threatening allergies and the need to have medication at school. **ANY ALLERGIES**, life-threatening or not, should be listed on your child's Health Record.

IMMUNIZATIONS All enrolled children should be fully up to date on their vaccinations. The State of Indiana states that children may be exempt from compliance with the government immunization standards IF: the parent provides a signed affidavit stating that the vaccinations are in direct conflict with the parent's religious beliefs and reliance on God. Or, if your physician provides a statement of a medical contradiction that has delayed having received the full immunizations for this age. In the case of unimmunized students, if an illness would occur at school for any disease/illness that has a developed vaccination, we will alert all of the situation and those not immunized will be asked to stay home for a period of up to 3 weeks while the illness runs its course.

HEAD LICE While head lice do not pose a significant health hazard, they are readily spread to other children and adults in home or school. If your child has been identified as having lice, you will be called and asked to pick up your child immediately. The child may return to school once the family and home has been treated thoroughly and no live lice present in the child's hair. Upon returning to school, your child will be rechecked before joining the other children and rechecked periodically over the next 7-10 days later (the incubation period).

SAFETY & SECURITY



CONFIDENTIALITY Our staff maintains a professional confidence with information about children in our care. All forms and information about children are kept secure. Conversations you have with your child's teacher will not be shared with other parents, nor would we want to discuss sensitive issues about your child with other parents present. Longer conversations can be scheduled in person or over the phone. Be aware that a class list for your child's room with phone numbers and email addresses is distributed at the start of the year to the classroom Room Parent so they can share information and ask for help with events. If you do not wish for your information to appear on the published Class Roster, please notify the office the first week of school.

ILLNESS AND ACCIDENT REPORTS We do all we can to keep your child safe at school, but sometimes accidents occur. Should your child be injured, you will be notified via Brightwheel with details describing the injury, how it occurred, and the steps taken to comfort your child.

PARENTAL RELEASE Each family is required to fill out the Parental Release form, indicating exactly who may drop off and pick up their child. If someone other than the parent is dropping off or picking up, the school must be notified by the parent in writing listing their name, and relationship. That person's name **MUST** be present on the Parental Release Form or listed as an Approved Pickup on Brightwheel. Anyone other than a parent will be ID'd upon arrival. If the person picking up is suspected to be impaired in anyway, the other parent/guardian will immediately be notified, and the child will not be released into their care until the other parent/guardian arrives for pick up.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES A Child Protection class is mandatory for all staff. Indiana law mandates that Child Protective Services be contacted if there is any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. This includes situations observed through social media, by conversation or in person. We are required by law to report and document all suspicions.

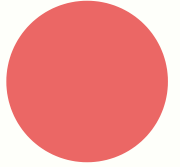
FIRE, TORNADO PROCEDURES Emergency procedures are posted in all classrooms and reviewed regularly by ECC staff. Fire Drills are conducted monthly and Sever Weather Emergency Drills in Fall and Spring. We suggest you have these discussions at your home as well and run periodic drills so all can know what to do.

INTRUDER DRILL Our staff goes through our intruder drills the start of each school year but we **DO NOT** go through the intruder drill with the children.

SECURITY PROCEDURES Church at the Crossing is a busy place. We secure our exterior doors with mag locks controlled by our Buildings and Grounds Manager. Each Family will receive its own 4-digit security code which allows access at Main door #2. Door #1 is "Exit Only". If needed, we can initiate a lock down of all exterior doors anytime from the preschool office.



SCHOOL CLOSINGS



CLOSINGS DUE TO WEATHER - Should the ECC need to close or delay opening due to weather, you will receive an alert via Brightwheel and our status will be posted on WTHR (13) or wthr.com. We will be listed as "Church at the Crossing Preschool" to avoid confusion. A two hour delay or one hour delay may also result from an unusually heavy snow fall if our snow removal company is overwhelmed and that delays their getting to us. Same procedures as above. Watch Brightwheel, Channel 13 or wthr.com. If the All Day Programs are on a delay, no breakfast will be prepared that morning. Please eat before arriving at school. Note that we do not give credits for school closures as we still have to pay all our overhead cost whether we are closed or not.

HOLIDAY CLOSERS - Here at the ECC we have a list of holidays that we are closed, which are listed on our school calendar. We do not give credits for the following holidays Martin Luther King Jr Day, Presidents Day, Good Friday, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Break (which includes the day before, day of and day after).

SCHEDULED WEEKS OFF - We have three weeks that we are closed throughout the school year. These weeks are so our teachers can prep and prepare for the semester. We DO NOT request payment from you for these weeks. Those weeks are the week of Memorial Day, the 1st week of August and the week of Christmas and New Years. The exact dates will be listed on the school calendar.

PART-DAY FAMILIES - Your monthly tuition will not change month to month. We take in account all the scheduled days/weeks off into the monthly rate.



CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

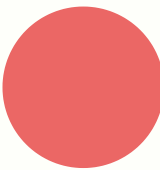


The goal of all discipline is to have it internalized. The origin of the word suggests “teaching so as to make disciples”. For the different ages we take different approaches. For Toddler aged children redirection: offering choices or alternatives when possible often works best. We realize for some things, there are no choices. For older children it’s important that they understand the common expectations, so you’ll often hear our teachers voicing things such as “We walk in the hallways”, “Keep your hands to yourself”, “Sand-toys stay in the sandbox” as they voice common school rules especially at the start of each year. In time, if children choose not to follow these, they may lose a turn with a toy or be asked to choose another space to play as a natural consequence to their choices. If warranted they’ll be asked to take some time away to consider what’s going on. After this time, teachers will help them process what took place before they go off to rejoin their friends. These situations are all opportunities to learn.

DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR In more extreme cases some children may display patterns of repetitive bullying, abusive language, or harming others. Our teachers will be charting these incidents to share with the parent and the director to seek our input. If the behavior continues, the teacher or director will schedule a time to conference with the parent, with the goal of coming up with a formalized plan including steps to be taken at school and home so your child may continue at this school. If the child’s behavior does not improve, they will be asked to leave the program. A child who continues to harm others will have parents called and be sent home for the day. Their continuation at school will be under consideration by the Director.

BITING Biting is difficult for all parties. No parent wants their child to be bitten or have their child be the one biting. Certainly, no teacher wants their children to be hurt. However, biting does happen and most often during the Toddler/Two’s stage when verbal skills are still developing and they have no other way to express themselves in the heat of the moment. Toddlers may bite to defend their toy/or space. They may bite because they are overstimulated and excited. They may bite when they don’t feel well or are overly fatigued. At school we address the space and toy issue by designing our rooms with multiple centers or areas so not all children have to gravitate to one space to play. We try to have multiples of favorite toys so it’s easier for others to get a turn. We keep our toys and equipment clean and safe. We trust that Parents are working on good bedtimes and sleep habits and that you will share with your child’s teachers when your child may not be feeling well. The safety and well being of all our students is very important. That being said, if your child is bitten, you will receive an Incident Report of their injury (as will the child’s family who bit). It is our policy not to disclose the name of the biter on these reports. Should any child bite more than twice on any given day, the office will call parents to come pick up their child to go home and give all a break and respite. Repetitive days of this and the Director will call to discuss a plan of action for the child which could result in the child withdrawing from the ECC and possibly rejoining later when they are a little older.

BASIC CLASSROOM GUIDELINES



LABEL Your child's first and last name should be marked on EVERYTHING brought to school, including backpacks, jackets, lunches, cups, extra clothes, nap items, and pacifiers.

LUNCH BOXES Children in all programs bring their lunch from home. Lunches are taken to the walk-in refrigerator and brought back out at lunchtime. Lunch is eaten in the classroom. Teachers will assist your child in opening any packaging. Please send food that your child can self manage. In our younger rooms, spoon feeding is not really possible (this does not include the infant room). Cut foods in smaller pieces so children can easily pick up and to avoid choking hazards. Also note that depending on the allergies in your child's class we may ask you not to pack certain food items to keep the children with allergies safe. Teachers will notify you at the start of the school year if this is something that is necessary in your child's classroom.

SCHOOL CLOTHES Comfortable play clothes are recommended since we will have messy projects, sand or water activities and active outdoor play. Teachers take care to use smocks for painting and similar activities, but accidents still occur. Your child will feel free to participate if they don't need to worry about soiling special clothing.

SHOES Gym shoes are best as they fit snugly and enable easy running, climbing and jumping with less sliding. Sandals that fasten securely with top and back straps are permitted. Do not send your child in crocs, clogs, flip flops, or oversized boots that can easily cause an accident during playtime.

DRESS FOR THE WEATHER Please take note of the weather forecast and see that your child is adequately dressed for outdoor play in hot or cold weather. Classes are permitted to go out down to temperatures of 32 degrees. Classes will be on the playground unless the weather is rainy or extremely cold. Warm jackets, hats, mittens and boots, etc will allow your child to enjoy their time outside. If girls wear dresses in cold weather they should also have pants to protect their bare legs.

EXTRA CLOTHES Each child needs to have a change of clothing for emergency use. Again, please label each article of clothing.

PULL-UPS AND DIAPERS Students in the younger classes will need to keep a supply at school where they will be used for your child only. We will provide wipes and creams as needed. We purchase A&D creams and use generic, unscented wipes. Please label and send an alternative for these items if your child has a sensitivity to them.

TOYS AND ITEMS FROM HOME Unless the teacher has designated a "Show-n-Tell" day, please do not allow your child to bring items to school. Personal items can be lost or broken. It is also more difficult to "share" a personal item with others and that works against classroom goals. If you have something to share that goes along with the "Theme" your class is learning about, please talk with your teacher about possibly bringing it in. **TEACHERS MAY ALSO HAVE CLASSROOM SPECIFIC REQUESTS THEY WILL MAKE.**

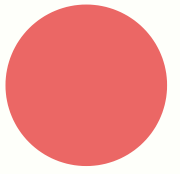
FOOD IN THE CLASSROOMS

SNACKS Classroom snacks are provided as a part of your fees and parents do not need to send snacks.

BIRTHDAY SNACKS Everyone loves to celebrate birthdays and we want your child to feel special on their day. If you plan to send in birthday treats, please arrange this ahead of time with your child's teacher so they can plan it into the day's schedule. Your child's teachers will give suggestions for foods that work better than others. Birthday celebrations will be limited to snack time only and may not include party items such as treat or gift bags, clowns or other visitors, as the class of students will still have to finish their day. If there are children with food allergies in any given classroom, the teachers will convey this to their parents. Typically, dairy or nut allergies are the most common, and we would ask all parents to keep this in mind if sending a snack. Parents of children with extreme allergies will be asked to send in a reserve of approved snack items from home. These will be labeled and used for your child only. Peanut Butter or other food restrictions will be made each year on a classroom by classroom basis. Your child's teachers will inform you if your room will be a peanut butter or other items FREE ZONE.

SNACKS AND TREATS MUST BE STORE-BOUGHT AND SENT IN ITS ORIGINAL PACKAGING. State law prohibits us from serving homemade snacks for class times. This is a State Board of Health regulation.

PARKING, ARRIVAL, & DEPARTURES



Park in any of the parking spaces out front that are available. DO NOT PARK IN THE FIRE LANES!

PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY Coming and going! Other cars are loading and unloading small children who do not realize the dangers of darting out from behind cars. Please keep your children with you when walking across the parking lot.

ENTRANCE Enter the Early Childhood Center at Door #2. Door #1 is an EXIT ONLY door. Parents should escort their children to their classrooms. Please be certain the teachers acknowledge your presence before leaving. Children should never be “let off” at the curb or expected to enter a classroom unescorted. Please be certain your child(ren) are with you at all times in the hallways. Do not let them run ahead and potentially exit the building without you.

CARPOOLING If the typical driver is not picking up after class, please inform the teacher in the morning so they know of your plans. A note on Brightwheel to Staff and Admins is best. At the beginning of the year, teachers are getting to know everyone who may pick your child up, they will ask for a picture ID and check to see if that escort’s name appears on your child’s Parent Release Consent form or on Brightwheel profile. If someone arrives whose name does not appear on your list, your child will not be released to them and we will attempt to contact you by phone. If you get stuck and must send someone who does not appear on your list, you may call the ECC Office to inform us of the person who is coming. An ID will be checked when the person arrives.



OUR STAFF



BACKGROUNDS Our staff lives out a lifestyle of love and caring that is consistent with the Christian faith. Although they come from a variety of church traditions, all are active participants in their own congregations. As a staff, we want to relate to each child as a person of great worth, created by God in his own image to love and be loved. Our teachings and conversations naturally include prayer, Bible stories, songs and references to God's love for us especially as it is seen in the wondrous design of nature and in caring relationships.

PREPAREDNESS Although there is a variety of professional preparedness in our staff's background, you will find our lead preschool teachers have degrees in Education, related fields, or several years of experience working with young children. Our preschool assistants may or may not be degreed teachers but have demonstrated a great aptitude for working with children in prior experiences as a requirement for their employment. It is not required that our Parent's Day Out teachers have degrees, though most of ours do. All must possess a love for children and an ability to care for daily needs, and must demonstrate the ability to plan for and manage a small classroom of students.

TRAINING & CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS All staff receives training in First Aid, CPR/w/AED, Child Abuse Prevention, Universal Precautions and use of EpiPen's. Before employment, work and church references are completed by the director and a National Criminal History check with fingerprinting is ran.