

**The Children's Place Preschool  
Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church  
Family Handbook (10.B.02)  
2010-2011**

**"Jesus Christ calls each of us to reach out with God's Love,  
Hospitality, Hope, and Healing so that all may experience and share  
the Joy of belonging to Him."**

**PHILOSOPHY**

The Children's Place Preschool is a ministry of the Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church providing early learning experiences, preschool, and family educational opportunities. Our program is licensed by the State of Florida and registered with the Association of Christian Schools International. (10.A.01) The Children's Place emphasizes the modeling of Christian values through well-grounded principles of current child development research. Our approach is aligned with the guidelines set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for developmentally appropriate practice. We continually strive to use developmentally appropriate goals for young children as a framework for planning our educational program and assessing children's progress. We are guided by the use of the (2.A.01) Creative Curriculum®. The curriculum is based on the use of play in interest areas as a tool in learning basic concepts. We provide experiences that assist children in developing social skills and provide encouragement for the development of a healthy self concept. We plan for experiences to promote cognitive, language, and physical development. We further provide thematic studies and project based investigations in science and social studies. A weekly worship service with age appropriate stories and music is provided for preschoolers. We emphasize diversity throughout our program, and our individualized, developmental approach lends itself to meeting the unique needs of most children and we are inclusive of children with special needs. We invite the involvement of parents, grandparents, family members, and partners in the community to become actively involved partners in the program.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Children's Place Preschool has two locations. We have nine classrooms located at the Benson Children and Youth Building (Fairpoint campus) and five classrooms located at the Community Life Center (Soundside campus). We are a part-time early childhood program. Between our two campuses we serve children ages 6 months through six years. We are open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. The main portion of our program is from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and Early Play and Extended care are available for an additional fee.

## STAFF

The Children's Place is staffed by a Director, two assistant directors, one administrative assistant, thirty teachers, twelve substitute teachers, and two custodians. Each classroom is supervised by two classroom teachers, a lead teacher and a teacher assistant. These teachers are highly qualified. The majority of our teachers have either a Bachelor's or an Associate's degree in Education, or a related field. Some of our teachers have advanced degrees and others have a Florida Child Care Professional Certification (F.C.C.P.C.) All Children's Place employees have been screened by the Florida Dept. of Children and Families, along with local and federal agencies. Our teachers have professional development training in the Creative Curriculum® and in communication and collaboration skills that prepare them to participate as a member of a team. All teachers are current in CPR and First Aid. Children's Place employees are hired and managed according to the Human Resources policies of Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church and Landrum Staffing. (10.E.)

## THE DIRECTOR

The director, Renee Cobb, has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Florida State University with many years experience directing early childhood programs (10.A.02). She and her family are active members of Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church. She believes in advocating for the highest quality early learning environment and requires the staff to participate in professional continuing education in the areas which most greatly impact the quality of programming for young children and their families.

## INTERACTION GUIDELINES (7.A.01)

Children's Place staff members follow the ethical principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (6.A.01). We share the following core values as guides for interactions among staff members, between staff and children, between staff and parents.

\*We strive to respect each individual and work to create a positive emotional climate for all learners with sensitivity to differences in age, ability, background, language, culture, religion, and family structure.

\*We use direct eye contact, smiles, warm tones of voice, positive touch, social conversations, and joint laughter to support the development of effective working relationships.

\*Our partnership in learning is supported by regular, reciprocal communication, affirming recognition of effort and accomplishment, predictable, developmentally appropriate responsiveness to initiative, emotion, and concerns, and proactive conflict resolution.

\*We are committed to reaching out to people of different races, genders, ethnicity, ability and ages. We strive to create an environment of inclusion that celebrates our differences and highlights our commonalities (3.F.03). Our program accepts children with special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child consistent with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (9.C.03)

### PARENTS AS PARTNERS (7.A.)

The Children's Place Preschool offers adult family members and other caregivers a variety of ways to become involved in the child's school community, to participate in family activities, and to confer with the staff to build a strong bond between home and school (7.A.09). At the beginning of the school year the teachers meet the child with the parents in their home. These home visits help parents to share information about the child's home life and teachers to share what the child's school experience will be like. Regular communication is encouraged among families, caregivers, and the school staff so that multiple perspectives on the child's development and interest can be used to enhance the child's school experience. In addition to the detailed family handbook and our preschool web site, we have newsletters, and frequent spontaneous interaction (7.B.01). A family bulletin board in the hallway outside of each classroom and in the lobby provides duplicate information, extra copies of forms, interesting articles, flyers about local family events and resources, and other parent resources (7.C.05, 8.B.03). Each spring, we offer information about local elementary schools to help families prepare for and manage their children's transitions between programs. We also offer information on the elementary school orientations. (7.C.05-07).

If any parents would benefit from translation services at home visits, or for key documents, we can contact the International Student Office at UWF or GBUMC's minister of missions for assistance in finding a translator who is fluent in relevant language (7.A.02, 7.B.02).

Adult family members can use the windows or schedule a classroom visit to observe their child in the program (7.A.11). If you want to talk with a teacher, please schedule a time before or after school. All parents can observe their children in the outdoor classroom from the teacher's rooms at the Fairpoint and Soundside campuses or from the upstairs meeting room at the Soundside campus.

The popular family events, including Open House, Family Fun Day, and the Celebration Picnic, offer the whole family a chance to participate in the child's school. In addition, many adult family members extend their involvement by volunteering in the child's school. In addition, many adult family members extend their involvement by volunteering in school wide and/or classroom activities. We ask that you complete the attached family involvement opportunities form and return it to the office by September 10<sup>th</sup>. We will use this information to arrange meetings, compose committees, and schedule activities according to parent preferences as much as possible. Committees support the school by managing our annual book-fair, coordinating the parent clubs, coordinating the family social events, repairing broken toys and equipment, organizing school pictures and planning the year-end celebration picnic (7.A.12-14). Adult family members who are willing to volunteer in the classroom after the children have adjusted to the new routine, please make arrangements with your child's teacher. Some times the infants, toddlers, and two year olds have a harder time with a parent present in their classroom.

If you have questions or have experienced a problem at home or school, please approach the child's primary teacher or one of the administrators directly (7.C.). Recent potty training efforts, changes in care-giving arrangements, the death of a pet, an extended absence of a parent, etc. can all cause changes in a child's demeanor and behavior at school, so timely communication helps the staff respond most effectively to the child. We make every effort to dialogue with children and families in a positive manner to plan strategies, resolve issues, and provide assistance in a timely and effective manner (3.F.03). Please also feel free to suggest ways that we can strengthen our partnership with you as together we seek to provide a high-quality learning environment for everyone in our school community.

All adult family members are invited to participate in the Children's Place Preschool annual program evaluation via a survey conducted in May (10.F.04), as well as to contribute to our continuous quality improvement via committees and fundraising efforts. Evaluation results, plans and opportunities are highlighted in the parent meeting held prior to the school year (10.F.02) and updated as necessary.

#### DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES (2.A.01)

Our learning goals for the pre-kindergarten children:

**Social/Emotional:** to help children develop independence, self-confidence, and self-control, follow rules and routines, make friends, and learn what it means to be part of a group.

**Physical:** To increase children's large muscle skills-balancing, running, jumping, throwing and catching-and to use the small muscles in their hands to do tasks like buttoning, stringing beads, cutting, drawing, and writing.

**Cognitive** to acquire thinking skills such as the ability to solve problems, to ask questions, and to think logically-counting, and making patterns-and to use materials and their imagination to show what they have learned.

**Language:** to use words to communicate with others, listen to and participate in conversations with others, understand the purpose of print, recognize letters and words, and begin writing for a purpose.

Infants, toddlers, and two year olds have unique individual learning goals. They include:

#### **To learn about self and others:**

1. Trusts known, caring adults
2. Regulates own behavior
3. Manages own feelings
4. Responds to others' feelings with growing empathy
5. Plays with other children
6. Learns to be a member of a group
7. Uses personal care skills

**To learn about moving:**

8. Demonstrates basic gross motor skills
9. Demonstrates basic fine motor skills

**To learn about the world:**

10. Sustains attention
11. Understands how objects can be used
12. Shows a beginning understanding of cause and effect
13. Shows a beginning understanding that things can be grouped
14. Uses problem solving strategies
15. Engages in pretend play

**To learn about communication:**

16. Develops receptive language
17. Develops expressive language
18. Participates in conversations
19. Enjoys books and being read to
20. Shows an awareness of pictures and print
21. Experiments with drawing and writing

**CURRICULUM (2.A.02-06)**

The staff uses the Creative Curriculum for Preschool as a blueprint for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. Its effectiveness in helping children acquire social competence and the skills they need to succeed as learners is well documented. Each teaching team incorporates their own interests and teaching styles, as well as information about the children and their families. They develop plans to provide children with a variety of opportunities for learning and encourage broad exploration. Teachers also prepare an engaging learning environment for exploring different themes, such as birds, boxes, transportation, artists and authors. They choose a rich range of materials, to entice each of the children to engage in the thematic study sometimes creating special interest areas to support the study. Teachers support children in doing as much for themselves as possible, given the constraints of a part-day, part-year program. Staff members serve as coaches as children practice social skills involved in peer interactions, friendship formation, and conflict resolution. Throughout the day, we engage children in conversation, with extra support for peer conversation at snack and lunchtime. Teachers relate to children in positive ways and help them do the same with one another. The positive social climate helps children feel good about school and learn to the best of their ability.

The physical space of the classroom is organized into interest areas-Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys and Games, Art, Library, Discovery, Sand and Water, Music and Movement, Cooking, Technology, and Outdoors. Interest areas offer multiple opportunities for children to explore, discover, and grow. In each, the arrangement of furniture and the materials involves children not only in learning but also in caring for the classroom and what is in it.

The daily routines and schedules create a sense of order and they let children know what to expect, and they understand what is expected of them. With the assurance that their environment is predictable and familiar, they can settle into learning and function as part of a group. The order around them creates a sense of order inside them.

#### ASSESSMENT PLAN (4.A.01-03)

Assessment is naturally integrated into the course of every day as ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development is used to adjust the program to better support group and individual progress. At the beginning of the school year teachers ask parents to fill out an “Ages and Stages” (ASQ) questionnaire screening tool as one measure of assessment (4.C.01). After the children have settled in, teaching teams meet weekly to identify the group’s current interests and needs and then plan accordingly for the next week’s explorations (4.D.02) At times, these reflections indicate the need for altering the classroom environment, shifting the unit focus, trying new teaching strategies, etc. If concerns about individual children’s development arise and are not readily remedied via classroom adaptations, teachers initiate a dialogue with colleagues and parents to plan approaches to try at both home and school (7.C.).

Teaching teams work together to conduct assessments, though the child’s primary teacher takes the lead in summarizing the findings. Assessments obtain information on all areas of children’s development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development (including self-help skills) (4.B.02). Twice per year, the teachers combine informal assessment techniques with more systematic assessment of each child by documenting information on the Creative Curriculum’s developmental continuum assessment tool and writing up narrative descriptions of the children’s progress. The information gathered along with pictures, selected work, antidotal notes, and other collections are put together into an individual portfolio. These descriptions and representations are shared with parents, both in writing and via personal conferences. Preschool children have conferences in the fall and again in the Spring. Younger children have conferences with parents only in the Spring, although assessment and communication with parents happens all year long for all classes.

#### ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES (4.B.01)

Most Children’s Place assessment is informal, with direct observation by staff members as the primary method. Teachers document observations in their own unique ways, though most record anecdotes, take photographs of constructions and interactions, and collect samples of the children’s artwork, journal entries, and other projects. Information gathered during the home visit helps the teachers to be informed about family culture, experiences, children’s abilities and disabilities, and home language so that they can use a variety of assessment methods that are meaningful, accurate and sensitive to each child (4.B.01).

Data from both informal and formal assessments are incorporated into a narrative

section and include a checklist portion. The assessments are then shared with parents during conferences with the child's primary teacher in both the fall and in the spring for preschool children and once in the spring for infants, toddlers and two's (4.E.02-03).

Norm-referenced and standardized tests are used primarily when seeking information on eligibility for special services and are not used for comparison purposes (4.B.03).

Teachers regularly evaluate information from the publisher of our curriculum to make sure that the results obtained with the instruments are valid for the program's purposes (4.B.04).

#### Uses of Assessment Results (4.B.05)

Results of Children's Place assessments are primarily used to shape the current year's program planning and to discuss individual children's developmental progress with parents so that we can work together to best support each child's growth (4.B.05). In addition, the group results impact the school's quality improvement process via each teaching team's annual evaluation and the whole school annual evaluation, both of which are conducted in May in preparation for enhancements implemented for the next school year (10.B.07, 10.F.01).

#### Confidentiality (4.E.07)

Because the staff at the Children's Place work as a team, each adult knows and interacts at times with every child. Therefore, all observations and other assessment data may be shared with all staff members. Information about family situations, special needs, and other sensitive issues is shared on an as needed basis. Student workers, volunteers, and other adults working within the school are only informed of such sensitive issues when they are a part of keeping the child safe, supporting the child's inclusion, or when the information might impact their coursework. All adults working in the Children's Place sign the following confidentiality agreement.

"As an adult working, observing, conducting research, and/or regularly volunteering at the Children's Place, I may become privy to confidential information regarding children and families. It is of the utmost importance that I realize that all such information is strictly personal and confidential and can only be shared within the confines of the Children's Place. I will discuss children's behavior out of the hearing distance of the children, and I will discuss the families, children, and staff for professional purposes only. When I encounter families, children or staff outside the school, I will be courteous but use discretion. I understand that written authorization is required before disclosing any information regarding a child to an outside agency or individual. I know that confidentiality is an ethical obligation and that it is a requirement for my continued involvement at the Children's Place. By signing this statement I agree to understand and practice the Children's Place confidentiality policy at all times."

In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, official written records for each child are kept in files in a locked in the Children's Place office or in a locked classroom closet, and released only to the individuals working with a child, as described above, or those for whom parents sign a written release (7.C.08). These files include enrollment forms, final conference reports, health assessments provided by physicians, results of health screenings conducted at school after parent authorization, reports of diagnostic assessments released to the school by parents, individual education plans, etc. Staff documentation of children's behavior and development, including specialized records for children whose special circumstances require extra classroom documentation are kept in classroom locations accessible to teachers but out of the reach of children and out of sight of classroom visitors. In addition, researchers follow ethical standards with respect to confidentiality of individual data as described above.

### School Hours:

#### EARLY PLAY (7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.)

Transitional activities are planned to help your child prepare to be at Children's Place for the day. We will have books, play dough, puzzles and other individual activities available to help your child make the change from being with you to being with a group. At this time of day, children will be in multi-age groups. One group will be for infants and toddlers and another for preschool. If the group is very small we may combine for various times.

#### STAY AND PLAY (1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.)

This time of day we will go outside if the weather permits. If your child still takes a nap you need to let us know your preference. We may also read books, listen to music, watch child appropriate videos and other activities. Your child will be well supervised while in our care.

#### THE MAIN PART OF OUR DAY (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

Please see attached calendar for the school year schedule.

### ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN (10.B.08)

The entry process is carefully planned to make the children's first days of school as reassuring as possible. The child's first school experience for the year is a visit from the teachers to the child's home. After that, the scheduled phasing-in days involve only half of the class at a time for the first week, with the teachers focusing on helping the children get to know each other, become familiar with the space, and learn the classroom routines. Parents should plan to be available during these days in case the child is not yet ready to separate. Even if the child separates quickly, we suggest that parents observe from the booth or get a cup of coffee in the lobby or close by so that we can update you on the child's adjustment. The regular school schedule, including Extended Day programming, begins during the second week of school except for our VPK students. For most children, this means attending during the regularly scheduled hours and following the regular greeting and dismissal process. Parents and teachers

may collaborate on alternate plans for children whose separation requires a more individualized approach. For children who start school at other points during the year, we develop a unique phasing in program.

Once the regular schedule begins and throughout the year, it is important for the children to arrive promptly so that they can participate fully in the day's activities. The start of the day often affects the child's whole experience. Being picked up on time is equally important. Young children need the security of knowing that they, too, will be picked up when the other children are going home. For this and reasons related to staffing, picking up your child on time is essential. If you should arrive early to pick up your child, please park in a remote parking space and ask the teacher if there is an alternate entry and exit route. Please send a written note with your child to inform the teacher of changes in your dismissal arrangements. For your convenience, we have supplied "Parent-to-Teacher" notepads outside of each classroom. Children will not be allowed to leave the school with unauthorized adults.

### ROUTINES and TRANSITIONS (3.D.01)

The Infant, Toddler and Two year old day:

#### Step 1: Infants

Children ages six months through age one will be in our infant nursery. Generally, children will be in this room until after they are walking with proficiency. You will be asked to provide your child's daily schedule for eating and resting. Parents will provide all food and pre-mixed bottles. We will plan activities for infant stimulation. For example, we play music and do activities for language and muscular development. Most importantly, we will hold, cuddle and talk to your baby! Babies go outside each day for bye-bye buggy rides where the teachers talk to them and sing with them. As they grow we begin to provide more outdoor experiences. We provide more challenging art experiences, music and movement experiences, puzzles and manipulative toys for sorting, stacking and arranging as they mature and master skills.

#### Step 2: TODDLERS

Toddlers are proficient in walking and have become curious about their surroundings. We will provide a room with interesting objects to explore. This room will have many soft components i.e. foam blocks, bean bag chairs, carpeting and vinyl mats. We have many duplicates of favorite toys as most toddlers are not prepared to share. We begin developing play in a simple housekeeping center so that children can act out the routines like "cooking" and "sweeping" with which they have become familiar in the home. We introduce art activities which include gluing, scribbling and painting. Beginning manipulatives are used for stacking and matching shapes, etc. Language development is emphasized by using words to describe our actions and feelings. Our teachers provide active music activities and read books to the children each day.

#### Step 3 & Step 4: YOUNG TWOS & OLDER TWOS

The two year old has become much more determined as an individual and needs a safe place to assert his/her self. We provide several more learning areas including an area

with large cardboard, foam and sometimes wooden blocks for building, and manipulatives (duplo blocks, bristle blocks, etc.) trucks and cars, dress-up clothes, a dramatic play area, an art & writing exploration area, a science exploration area, and a library area. Music and movement activities become more advanced. We provide enough materials so that children are not continually required to share. We begin to encourage turn taking, making friends by playing together, and other important social skills. Our art creations are child centered, meaning that the process of making something has been the learning activity.

### PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE:

*Greeting:* Teachers greet each child at the classroom door.

*Free Choice:* After following the arrival routine, children choose from a variety of activity centers and play areas in their classrooms.

*Circle Time:* Children meet as a classroom community with their teacher to discuss the school day and learn about key concepts related to the current study topic.

*Activity Time:* Children choose from a range of independent and/or teacher-directed activities from a variety of areas such as: arts, blocks, computers, cooking, dramatic play, games, writing center, puzzles and other manipulatives, and sensory tables.

*Group Time:* Children meet with their teachers for bathroom, snack, and story time (5.B.16). Each teacher also plans music, movement, and other skill building activities to target specific developmental needs of the group.

*Outdoor Time:* Children go outside every day except in extreme weather conditions. Children choose from a wide variety of activities including sand play, tricycle riding, dramatic play, nature exploration, climbing, sliding, and other large motor games.

*Dismissal:* Teachers escort the children to the dismissal area and help them into their cars or they offer a transitional activity while waiting for parents to pick them up from their classroom. Please ask your child's teacher about specific pick up routines as they vary from classroom to classroom.

NOTE: The schedule is adjusted slightly so that each group of children has an opportunity to attend chapel, have a cooking experience or visit the gym one day per week depending on which campus they attend and what is offered. Teachers will provide specific schedules at the home visit prior to the start of school each fall.

The children bring their own lunch to eat at school (5.B.16). Snack is typically prepared by our Teachers, unless a cooking activity is planned for the children. The snack menu is posted in the front office and on the parent bulletin board. (5.B.15). Naps are not a regular part of our preschool program, though children who are tired can be offered a cozy place to rest away from the group. Infants and toddlers are on individual nap schedules and the teachers will work with you to accommodate them.

We make every effort for all children to know and be known by all adults in our open school environment so that they are comfortable interacting with and seeking assistance from any adult. Substitute teachers work with all groups so that he or she is familiar with the children and routines for each group and can effectively substitute when a teacher is

absent (10.B.11,13). When absences are planned in advance, we recruit substitutes who have long-term familiarity with our program, often former teachers or others who have trained at the Children's Place. We invite these individuals to have regular contact with the children and to participate in some of our staff development events to maintain their familiarity over the years.

**\*\***Because our program runs on an academic calendar, children stay in the same class with the same staff from September through May (10.B.14). All children transition to a new primary teacher when they move to a new level of programming. At that time, we use the phasing in process described in the orientation section to ease the transition.

### THE CHILD'S BELONGINGS

For your child's safety, sneakers are required footwear; feel free to keep an extra pair at school (no flip-flops, crocs, or clogs). For your convenience, please choose washable clothes. Send an extra change of clothing for your child on the first day of school in case a child's clothes become wet or soiled. Please include tennis shoes, shirt, slacks, socks, and underwear and **label all clothes** with your child's name. Remember to update this extra set as the weather changes and as your child grows!

Provide adequate outer clothing for your child and label all items. We spend time outside every day, except in pouring rain or extreme weather conditions. Our outdoor classroom is shaded most of the morning and there is shade available under the play equipment, gazebos, and pavilions. Teachers will put outdoor umbrellas up during special activities if additional shade is needed. Please provide clothing appropriate for the weather. In the warm sunny months apply sunscreen. In the winter layer for warmth as here in Florida the day might start out cold and end up warm. (5.A.07). If it is cold, send coats, gloves, hats and gloves! Keep your extra clothing at school up to date for growing children and changing seasons.

We prefer that your child leave toys or things that are breakable at home. These often are mislaid and/or picked up by other children, causing upsets and disagreements that could have been avoided.

### FOOD BROUGHT FROM HOME (5.B.02)

Families provide lunches in labeled lunchboxes.. Please send balanced meals in appropriate quantities for your child. To facilitate meal planning, the USDA meal patterns for children and considerations for planning are included at the end of this document. The school does not have space for refrigerating children's lunches, so please use cold packs or a frozen juice box to keep items at appropriately safe temperatures until lunchtime. When necessary, the teachers will provide supplemental food from our nutritious snack items. Food brought from home for sharing among children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers. Because of these restrictions and the high frequency of food allergies, we typically prepare special snacks at school (see below). Families of children with special dietary restrictions should consult with administrators to develop an individualized plan.

## HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS

At the Children's Place, holidays are viewed as educational opportunities that give us the chance to learn about our diverse school community (3.F.03). As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we encourage children to talk about their family traditions, and we share stories related to the meaning of Christian holidays. We plan age-appropriate activities to involve the children in preparing for simple school celebrations and to help them contribute to family events (e.g., basic cooking, making gifts, and so forth). We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time (typically one day), attempt to maintain our regular school routine, and, as always, are ready to provide extra attention and comfort as needed. Because the children may prepare their own special snack related to holidays and because many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to candy and other sweets), **please do not send any food as gifts for children.** In all of these ways, we can create meaningful celebrations with the young children in our educational context.

Birthday celebrations for young children at school can be a special time for the child to share with friends at school and, when possible, for families to join the celebration. Please contact your child's teacher when your child's birthday is approaching, in order to plan the timing of the celebration to best fit your schedule. For birthdays during vacation time, we can celebrate at another time that is convenient for you and your family. Because of the NAEYC restrictions on foods brought from home for sharing with classmates, teachers will consult with the birthday child to choose a nutritious birthday snack that can either be prepared by a group of children in the class or be commercially prepared and packaged in factory sealed containers. We avoid foods with high sugar content, food additives or highly processed food, and we plan carefully around any food allergies that children in the group may have. Nutritious snack alternatives include bagels, muffins, pancakes, cheese, fruit, and frozen yogurt. Families are welcome to come and enjoy the treat. If you plan an additional birthday celebration outside of school time, please mail invitations from home unless the entire class is invited.

## FIELD TRIPS (8.B.02, 9.C.15)

Occasionally, we schedule field trips for our prekindergarten children that require walking or other transportation. Parents are required to sign a permission slip for each trip individually. At all times, we maintain a ratio of one adult to four children. Siblings are not invited to attend field trips. The children are all assigned in advance to specific adults and all wear nametags with the school name and phone number on them.

Adult family members are also recruited to drive for field trips because our teachers are not allowed to transport students in their vehicles (10.D.07). We are required to verify that all drivers have a valid license, as well as current car insurance. At all times when transporting children, all passengers are required to use approved child and adult safety-restraint devices in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions (9.C.15). For some trips, we occasionally use a hired bus, in which case adults and children are required to follow the bus company's safety procedures. Most field trips will occur during the regular school hours with regular greeting and pick up procedures.

Occasionally, because of time constraints, we may greet or dismiss children at the field trip destination. In all cases, plans and relevant maps are provided along with the field trip permission form.

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES (9.C.08, 10.D.01)

At all times, health and safety are top priorities at the Children's Place. Each individual's vigilance regarding health and safety issues contributes significantly to our effectiveness. Always assume that you are the only one who notices a problem or potential problem and bring it to the attention of a staff person.

#### Staff Responsibility

Staff members are responsible for maintaining a healthful environment (5.C.01-05). We begin with our own health by submitting annual health appraisals and following the same illness exclusions that are required for children. All full-time staff members submit criminal record and child abuse clearances as part of the employment process. We participate in an bi-annual pediatric first aid / CPR class (5.A.03), fire safety class, and review of our emergency procedures. Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit, as does the front office and outdoor shed (9.C.10). Each teacher has a first aid kit with basic first aid and emergency information that is taken with them outdoors and on all field trips.. We practice a variety of evacuation and lock-down drills specified in our Emergency Action Plan (10.D.08) in a serious but non-dramatic fashion with the children at a rate of one per month. The Assistant Director also conducts a monthly health and safety check of the entire facility and works with staff and maintenance personnel to rectify any hazards identified. Staff members are responsible for daily checks of their classrooms and shared spaces for hazards such as missing safety covers on outlets, elevated water temperature in the bathrooms, discarded cigarettes or food in the outdoor classroom, etc.

The Children's Place is a smoke-free environment (9.D.06) with a safe water supply from the City of Gulf Breeze (9.D.02) and heating, ventilation, and cooling systems maintained in accordance with national standards (9.D.05). The preschool classrooms and buildings are free from asbestos and we have periodic checks for other environmental hazards, as well as diligently monitoring the status of our safety equipment (9.D.01) and using an integrated pest management program (9.D.08).  
[Overall 10.D.02]

We follow NAEYC's frequency table for cleaning and sanitation throughout the school, including toys and water play areas (5.C.01,03,10). All staff members follow standard precautions to minimize spread of infectious disease (5.C.02) and store hazardous materials in locked cabinets. We follow parent and/or health professional recommendations regarding children who have allergies, and except for the occasional visit from a cat or dog, we limit classroom pets to birds, fish, amphibians, worms, and insects (5.C.05). Our outdoor classroom is partially shaded for most of the day, and there is always some shade available in the pavilions and play structures. During hot and sunny weather or when children are wearing bathing suits, we will apply sunblock with a minimum UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 if it is authorized in writing and



#### Illness and Injury (5.A.04)

Staff members greet children at the beginning of the day, being watchful of their appearance as they enter and throughout the day. Children who become sick at school are removed from the group and cared for until parents can be contacted to come for the child.

Young children often experience falls or bumps during the course of a day, especially in the outdoor classroom or in gym class. Usually, they do not result in injury and are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic bandaid or ice pack (i.e., not necessary but yet comforting). When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training (10.D.09). They will verbally report the injury to parents, guardians or caregivers, recommend treatment by a medical professional if appropriate, and complete an injury report within one day. Copies are kept in the child's file, and signed by the parent.

Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident and prompt action will be taken by contacting EMS personnel. If necessary, we will accompany the child to the hospital preferred by the family, by ambulance. In these cases, injury reports are supplemented by the EMS reports.

#### Family Responsibility

As part of the enrollment process, parents must complete an emergency information form and give permission for staff members to administer basic first aid to their child.. Review of this emergency information is required every semester, so we typically conduct it when parents are at school for their conferences. In addition, parents or guardians should contact the school any time there is a change in the emergency contact information. Additional consent forms for field trips, multimedia recording, wading pool use, and sunscreen application are also required.

Prior to the child's first day of school, parents are required to submit a current health assessment of the child (5.A.11), including either proof of the recommended immunizations or a medical exemption form indicating that the family has objections to immunization. Thereafter, parents must submit an updated form after the yearly well-child checkup (10.D.05). You will be notified when required immunizations are due and you will need to bring a copy of the updated immunization form to the preschool office. All health and safety information files are kept current by updating as needed, but at least quarterly. The content of the file is confidential, but is immediately available to administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records, the child's parents or legal guardian, and regulatory authorities, on request. The files are kept locked in the Children's Place office. Parents of children speaking English as a second language are asked to complete a form detailing the children's level of proficiency, and then invited to dialogue with teachers regarding strategies to assist the child's transition as necessary (7.A.02- 08). Parents of children with allergies must complete an additional form giving guidelines appropriate to the

child's needs, with detail regarding provision and storage of special foods (labeled with the child's name and date), necessary adaptations of activities or environment, responses staff should take in the event of an allergic reaction, and any necessary staff training (5.C.04, 9.D.07). Parents of children with other special needs should contact an administrator for guidance regarding necessary documentation and advance planning with the staff.

#### Sick Children (5.A.04)

The Children's Place community relies on the adult family members' thoughtful assessment of each child's health before sending him or her to school. Even if your child begs to come to school, please keep him or her at home if any of the following symptoms are evident. Any of these may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children.

- Oral temperature above 99 degrees within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea
- Rash, bump or other out-of-the-ordinary skin conditions
- Flushed face, "watery" or "glossy" eyes
- Excessive running nose
- Deep or dry cough
- Continuous sneezing
- Sore throat
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Unusual irritability, listlessness, fatigue

When your child will not be in school, please call the office to let your child's teacher know. Please let the main office know if your child has contracted a contagious condition or disease so that we can notify other families and staff members who might be affected (5.A.05).

In most cases in which medication is required, physicians recommend that the child be on medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school. In addition, please keep your child home until the child is well enough to participate fully in both indoor and outdoor activities because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors. Children's Place prefers not to administer medications at school. If medication needs to be given while the child is at school, please bring the medication in its original labeled container with written directions from the doctor to the office and complete a medication authorization form or make arrangements to administer the medication yourself (5.A.11, 10.D.10). Do not send medication in the child's lunchbox or backpack.

#### ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE, AND TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN (10.D.06)

Park in designated parking spaces. Please do not pull up under the overhang of the

building. We want to ensure safety for all of our children. Hold hands from the parking lot to the building and from the building to the parking lot. There are handicap spaces provided at both campuses to facilitate those with disabilities. Walk with your child to the classroom. Sign your child in with the time of arrival. Write down any special instructions for the day on the note pads outside of the classroom and give them to the child's teacher. A teacher will greet the children each morning at the door of the classroom. At the end of the day you will park in the designated parking spaces and pick your child up from their classroom, unless otherwise instructed by your child's teacher. (At the Fairpoint campus we presently have the VPK children who don't have younger siblings and who are not attending stay and play to walk over to the Sanctuary building and be loaded into the car by the child's teacher) Please sign your child out with the time, check your child's folder outside of the classroom and take any belongings that need to go home.

**PLEASE** do not bring children to school early, because teachers need time to prepare their classrooms. If you arrive early we will redirect you to the early care classroom. The extended care fees are \$3.00 for every 30 minutes used.

#### CAR SEATS (10.D.06)

So that teachers can focus their full attention on the children and keep their hands free for assisting them, we ask that adults who need to move car seats from one car to another (for example, when a parent brings the child but a nanny takes the child home) carry and install the car seats themselves. To make this a smooth process, families who need to make car seat switches should park in the Children's Place parking lot and walk the child and his/her car seat into or out of the school.

Injuries suffered while riding in cars are the number one preventable cause of death in young children. Here are guidelines to follow to keep your child safe in the car:

- The rear seat is the best seat for children 12 years or younger.
- All car passengers must wear a seat belt. Be sure that you wear a seat belt, because children learn by example.
- Children under 4 years of age are required to use a child restraint device. Children older than 4 but under 8 years of age are required to use a booster seat.
- Never hold a child in your arms or lap while traveling in the car.
- Please don't take children out of seatbelts/car seat while waiting in the greeting or dismissal line.

*Please note that Children's School Staff members are not permitted to violate these regulations by buckling a child into an improper position or device.*

#### CHILD RELEASE AND OBSERVATION (7.A.11)

A child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must provide a list of adults to whom the child can be released (10.D.06). Any of these adults may observe the child at school at any time during the program's regular hours of operation. We request that these adults follow the procedures listed below when observing at the Children's Place.

- Sign in at the Office upon arrival and out prior to departure so that we can contact you

in the event of an emergency, etc.

- Observe from the observation window whenever possible. Children's behavior is often significantly affected by a parent's presence. In addition, repeated reunions and separations can be difficult for young children, especially at the beginning of the year.
- When in the classrooms, remain as unobtrusive as possible, making every effort not to disrupt the activity in progress.
- **Please refrain from talking and turn off your cell phone while in the classrooms or when observing to avoid distracting the class.**
- If you want an opportunity to talk individually with a teacher, please make an appointment to do so during a time that the teacher can meet with you out of the classroom.

\*\*\* Parents can only be excluded when a court of competent jurisdiction has limited the parental right of access to the child and a copy of the order is on file at the facility and with appropriate legal department.

### BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES (1.E., 1.F.)

At the Children's School, our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective **interaction and cooperation**. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, "Let's keep the sand in the sand table so that we have a lot to pour." Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area that can spark renewed engagement and positive behavior.

### Basic Behavior Expectations at the Children's Place:

Knowing and meeting expectations encourages **independent** action and fosters **self-esteem**.

#### Signals:

**Lights Off** means Stop, Look and Listen, **Bell or Music** means Clean Up and Find the Teacher

#### School Rules:

Each classroom will develop school rules together depending on the age and developmental level of the children. Below is an example of the rules that might be developed. Each classroom will post the rules of the classroom.

- Be a kind friend.**
- Listen the first time.**
- Follow the routine.**
- Stay in your own space.**
- Use your words.**
- Use inside voices.**
- Use walking feet.**
- Use things appropriately.**

## **Put everything in its place.**

The students in each class will discuss behavior expectations throughout the year. As appropriate, **each class will add specific examples** relating to each of the items listed above. For example, for “Be a kind friend,” one year, a 4’s class added “share”, then another added “respect the rights of others,” and the 3’s specified “if you put down your toy and move on to something else, another friend can use it.”

All Children’s School staff will:

- Provide limits in a calm, consistent, and respectful manner, which allows the child to grow in self-control and self-esteem.
- Respond to a child’s challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and the others in the classroom.
- Help children learn to identify both positive and negative emotions, as well as to express them appropriately.
- Work with children to develop conflict resolution skills necessary to solve their disagreements in an appropriate manner.
- Help children express and acknowledge their choices.
- Help children describe problems, evaluate their actions, verbalize alternatives, and consider the perspective of others. Children are guided and supported as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions.

This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. After a quiet time, the teacher invites the child to rejoin the group and reminds the child of the relevant expectations for the activity in progress.

Staff shall observe all children and document any problem behavior to help ascertain any patterns re: events, activities, and interactions, as well as any precipitating contextual factors. If a child’s behavior problem persists or becomes dangerous to the other children in the class (e.g., punching, kicking, temper tantrums), the child will first be removed from the class and the teacher will try to calm the child. If that doesn’t work, the teacher will bring the child to the office and call the parent to come and pick the child up. Such situations are rare at the Children’s Place and are discussed thoroughly with the child, the teacher, and the parent to determine positive steps toward solution. Families are referred to specialists for help with persistent problems that may be linked to developmental issues, with the goal being to support the child’s successful inclusion in the classroom.

### Prohibited Practices & Reporting Child Abuse (10.D.03-04)

If any staff member or person from the child’s family, while in the vicinity of Children’s Place, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director will take necessary steps to assure that there is no reoccurrence of the practice.

- Corporal or any type of physical punishment is not permitted. This includes hitting,

spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain.

- Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted.
- Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted.
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted.
- Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child is not permitted.

All observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to the child protective services agency no matter where the abuse might have occurred. We will follow the direction of the child protective services agency regarding completion of written reports. If the parent or legal guardian of the child is suspected of abuse, we will follow the guidance of the child protective agency regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian.

A staff member who is accused of child abuse may be suspended or given leave without pay pending investigation of the accusation. Such caregivers may also be removed from the classroom and given a job that does not require interaction with children. Parents or legal guardians of suspected abused children will be notified. Parents or legal guardians of other children in the program will be contacted by the Director if a caregiver is suspected of abuse so that they may share any concerns they have had. However, no accusation or affirmation of guilt will be made until the investigation is complete. Caregivers found guilty of child abuse will be summarily dismissed or relieved of their duties.

### SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

Please listen to the radio or television if you suspect that the Children's Place may close/delay due to the weather or emergency conditions. We will follow the Santa Rosa County school's closing actions. If they are closing then we will close. In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgment about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

### EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (10.D.08)

The Children's School's Emergency Action Plan specifies four safety levels including one for normal operations, one for cases when children need to be kept away from a certain area (e.g., a hazardous spill that needs to be cleaned, an accident, etc.), one for emergencies that require a lockdown / containment away from windows and one for evacuation (e.g., in case of a fire). Our first evacuation sites are the outdoor classroom or the parking lot. For longer evacuations, we go to a neighboring facility and call parents with information to pick up their child.

### EMERGENCY DRILLS

Fire drills are held on a monthly basis to acquaint children and caregivers with evacuation procedures. Our center is equipped with fire alarms and smoke detectors placed throughout our area of the building. Other seasonal procedures such as tornado drills will be discussed in each classroom.

In an emergency or time-critical situation when the director is not present or reachable by phone, the Assistant Director serves as the Acting Director. If neither the Director nor the Assistant Director is present at the time of an emergency, the Administrative Coordinator and the most senior teacher present decide collaboratively on a course of action.

### TUITION AND FEES

Children's Place tuition is actually established on an **annual basis** and then divided into **9 (nine)** equal payments for your convenience. The additional *Stay and Play* and *Early Play* fees are billed in arrears. Tuition is collected on **the first day** of each month. If payment has not been received within ten days, a \$15.00 late fee will be assessed.

### PAYMENT PROCEDURE

At the beginning of each month, you may deposit your tuition and extended care (Early Play and Stay and Play) payments in the payment box outside the Children's Place office. You will receive a tuition bill each month that will include any extended care fees from the previous month. These bills **will be put in your child's folder outside of the classroom each month**. Please make your check out to Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church (GBUMC). If you have any questions about your bill or this procedure, please speak with the assistant director or the administrative assistant.

### EXTENDED CARE

#### MORNING CARE:

Total Hours: 7:30 a.m.- 9:00 a.m.

#### AFTERNOON CARE:

Total Hours: 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.

There is a daily rate of \$3.00 for every 30 minutes of extended care used. Please let your child's teacher know if you are planning to use extended care. You will be billed in arrears for extended care fees. If you are late picking your child up from the main program, your child will be entered into stay and play and you will be financially responsible for the time they are there. If you are late picking your child up from stay and play you will be responsible for the late fee.

### Termination Policy:

The Children's Place may terminate the enrollment and enforce the withdrawal of any child at any time due to delinquent payment, ill health, consistent behavior problems without requested child guidance evaluation being completed, parent dissatisfaction,

and any other problems in accordance with the Children's Place Family and Staff Handbooks, or as necessary and determined by the Director of the school. Children's Place supports families to raise concerns, should they have them, and the Director or Asst. Director will be available to help to negotiate difficulties if they arise and to reach mutually satisfying solutions. You will always be supported to make decisions affecting your child. (7.C.02-04)

**Attachments:**

School Year Calendar

USDA Child Meal Patterns and Planning Guide

10 Symptoms that should keep kids home from school (colds, coughs, ear infections, sore throat, fever, vomiting and diarrhea, pinkeye, head lice and nits, rashes, sprained ankle)

Staff Teams

Parking Map

**Make sure all of your forms are up to date with current information:**

Enrollment form, Emergency Information, Child Release List, Permission to Photograph, Family Involvement and Committee Involvement Forms, Blue Shot Record form, Yellow Health and Physical form. VPK voucher (if applicable)

**NOTES:**

