

# **St. John's Episcopal Church Preschool**

## **Parent Handbook**

**2026-2027 SY**

**Table of Contents**

|                                                                         |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Philosophy                                                              | 3  |
| General Information                                                     | 3  |
| Programs and Requirements                                               | 4  |
| <b>Location and Hours, Program Description</b>                          |    |
| <b>Toddlers, Two-Year-Old Preschool, Three-Year-Old Preschool,</b>      |    |
| <b>Four-Year-Old Preschool, Music Enrichment, Second Step and Field</b> |    |
| <b>Trips</b>                                                            |    |
| Enrollment Policies                                                     | 5  |
| <b>Enrollment, Registration, Fees, Payment, Withdrawal,</b>             |    |
| <b>Termination, Special Needs of Children</b>                           |    |
| Practices and Policies                                                  | 7  |
| <b>Adjustment, Arrival &amp; Departure, Behavior Management,</b>        |    |
| <b>Birthdays, Clothing, Toys, Late Pick-Up Fees, Playground</b>         |    |
| <b>Rules and Snacks</b>                                                 |    |
| Health and Safety Policies                                              | 9  |
| <b>Forms, Allergy Policy, Sick Child, Medications, and/or Diapering</b> |    |
| <b>Items, Minor and Major Injuries, Fire Drills, Weather Policies</b>   |    |
| Parent Involvement                                                      | 12 |
| <b>Volunteers, Communication, Conferences, Newsletters</b>              |    |
| St. John's Preschool Curriculum Framework                               | 13 |
| <b>Toddlers</b>                                                         | 14 |
| <b>Two-Year-Olds</b>                                                    | 15 |
| <b>Three-Year-Olds</b>                                                  | 16 |
| <b>Four-Year-Olds</b>                                                   | 17 |
| Selected References                                                     | 18 |

St. John's Preschool is a ministry of St. John's Episcopal Church for families in the Wake Forest area. It is a place where children are loved and nurtured in a safe, secure environment. The children learn to cooperate, respect others, respect differences, grow spiritually, and develop confidence in their abilities. We strive to provide opportunities for children to explore, to be creative, and to be good stewards of all that God has given us. We welcome children of all races and faiths and recognize and respect differences in religious preferences.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

St. John's Preschool is governed by a Board of Directors on behalf of the Vestry of St. John's Episcopal Church. The director of the preschool, who reports to the Board of Directors, is responsible for the yearly operations of the program. Lead teachers and assistants report to the director.

**Location:** (OBJ)

The Preschool program is located at:  
St. John's Episcopal Church Education Building  
834 Durham Road, Wake Forest, NC.

**Mailing Address:**

834 Durham Road  
Wake Forest, NC 27587

**Phone Numbers:**

Preschool Office – 919-562-8619  
Church Office - 919-556-3656

**Director's Email:**

Madisonf@stjohnswf.org

**Website:** [www.stjohnswf.org](http://www.stjohnswf.org)

If you have questions that may arise after our regular office hours of 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., you may leave a message on the Preschool office voicemail or email. You will receive a response within one business day.

**Hours of Operation:** All Preschool classes are held from 9:15 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. on their designated days, except for the Toddler class which will be held from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. All students will be dropped off and signed in with their teacher at their designated door of entry. For the safety of our children, the school doors are locked during our hours of operation. Should you need to pick up your child or deliver something to school, please ring the doorbell to the left of the door. For added security, the preschool monitors access to the building by video camera.

**Church/preschool grounds:** After exiting the preschool with your child, please make your way to your vehicle for departure. While departing, please be mindful

of the church property and watch your children. The columbarium, woods, and playgrounds are closed at all times before arrival and after dismissal.

## **PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS**

To ensure a positive preschool experience for our children, families and staff, anyone who does not adhere to preschool policies stated in our preschool handbook may be asked to withdrawal from our program and forfeit any paid tuition.

**Program Description:** St. John's Preschool is a morning program for children ages 15 months to five years. Children are enrolled in classes based on having a birthday on or before August 31<sup>st</sup> of the present year. This conforms to the Wake County Public School Policy. The program offers developmentally appropriate activities in each of our classes.

**Toddler class (15 months – 24 months):** This class is designed for children who will be 15 months and walking on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. This class has one Lead Teacher and one Assistant Teacher. The maximum class size is eight children.

**Two-Year-Old Preschool:** The Two-Year-Old Preschool class is for children who will be two on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. There are two classes: a 2-day (Tuesday, Thursday) class, and a 3-day (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) class. Each class has one Lead Teacher and one Assistant Teacher. The maximum class size is eight children.

**Three-Year-Old Preschool:** The Three-Year-Old Preschool Class is for children who will be three on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. Each class has one Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. The maximum class size is eleven children. There are two classes: a 4-day (Monday - Thursday) class and a 5-day (Monday through Friday) class.

**Four-Year-Old Preschool:** The Four-Year-Old Preschool Class is for children who will be four on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. Each class has one Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. The maximum class size is twelve children. There are two classes: both are 5 days a week (Monday – Friday).

**Chapel:** A short chapel service for all the 2's, 3's and 4's classes is held every other week. These services are led by designated Church staff. Chapel will include songs, prayer, and a Bible Story.

**Lunch:** All students in the 2's, 3's, and 4's classes will be having lunch during school hours. Parents provide a lunch box with a small mid-morning snack and a healthy lunch for their child. We are a nut-free school and teachers will look over each lunch to confirm that each child adheres to the policy. Lunches cannot be heated, and any necessary utensils should also be included in the lunch box.

**Music Enrichment:** Because we believe creative expression is an important part of the Preschool Curriculum, all children participate in music enrichment classes such as mindful music (held every other week)

**Second Step:** All 3- and 4-year-old classes will participate in a Second Step class every other week. Second Step is a program designed to increase the child's school readiness and social success by building their social and emotional competence. It focuses on empathy, compassion, emotion management, friendship skills, and problem solving.

**Field Trips:** All classes may take field trips throughout the year. You will be asked to sign a field trip consent form prior to the scheduled trip. A parent or guardian must transport and accompany their child on the field trip.

## **ENROLLMENT POLICIES**

**Enrollment:** Priority is given to:

- Current students;
- Members of St. John's Episcopal Church;
- Siblings of current students.

Registration is handled by the Director, who furnishes all information and forms. Priority registration begins in late January, followed by registration for the general public. The remaining enrollment spaces for the general public are selected on a first come, first serve basis. All financial obligations for the previous school year must be paid in full in order to ensure fall enrollment. All enrolled applicants are charged a **nonrefundable registration fee** (See "Fees"). Children are enrolled in their age group based on a birthday on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>, which conforms to the Wake County Public School Policy. After registration is complete for the coming year, a waiting list is made for each age group. When an opening becomes available, the opening is filled from this list. The waiting lists are good for the current preschool year.

In order to complete the enrollment process, the following must be complete:

- ✓ Registration fee
- ✓ Application form
- ✓ Up to date medical form and a copy of immunization records must conform to the NC public school immunization regulations and the North Carolina General Statutes (G.S. 130-A-152(a)). This information must be on file at the Preschool before the child can enter the school. **No exemptions are allowed.**
- ✓ An *Allergy Action Plan*, if appropriate.
- ✓ Parent Release forms.

Priority enrollment begins on January 19<sup>th</sup> for existing families, siblings, and church members for the 2027-2028 school year. Registration will then open to the public on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

St. John's Preschool reserves the right to make the final decision in placing children into each class. We look at many factors, including the boy-to-girl ratio, class, and student needs. We commit to doing our best to give each family their first-choice class, if possible.

**Fees:**

Registration: A nonrefundable registration fee of one month's tuition is required upon enrollment. This fee includes miscellaneous fee costs and an accident insurance coverage fee. Returning students must satisfy all financial obligations before the close of that school year. If at the conclusion of the school year there is an outstanding balance from that year, the registration fee for the coming year will be applied to that balance and the child's place in the fall class will be forfeited. The fee is nonrefundable unless you are moving out of town prior to the opening of school. Please notify the school 30 days in advance in writing and a refund check will be mailed to your new address.

Monthly Rates: 2026-2027 SY

*Toddlers \$220/month*

2 day 2's \$270/month, 3 day 2's \$330/month

4 day 3's \$360/month, 5 day 3's \$395/month

5 day 4's \$395/month

Method of Payment: Tuition fees are paid on a monthly basis and are due by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. No statements will be mailed. A \$15.00 late fee is assessed for checks received after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. There is also a \$35.00 charge for all checks returned for insufficient funds. After one returned check, future tuition payments must be made in cash or by cashier's check. In the event payment is delinquent 30 days from the due date, and no prior arrangements have been made, your child will be withdrawn from the Preschool, and the space will be filled from the waiting list. If you foresee any financial difficulties, please contact the director.

Please make checks payable to **St. John's Episcopal Church Preschool**. You can pay online via your bank's bill pay system. The entire month's tuition is to be paid, even if you know your child will be absent some days during the month. Incomplete payments will be considered a withdrawal and will allow the admission of a child on the waiting list. Payments may be mailed to:

**St. John's Episcopal Church Preschool  
834 Durham Road  
Wake Forest, NC 27587**

Payments must be placed in the tuition drop box outside the preschool. Please do not hand the check to your child's teacher or leave it in your child's school bag.

**Withdrawal:** If it becomes necessary for you to remove your child from the Preschool program, you must notify the director one month in advance. Tuition is due for the month prior to the withdrawal, and there is a \$100.00 cancellation fee. If the withdrawal is less than three weeks prior to the first day of preschool, tuition must be paid for the first two weeks of school.

**Termination:** If a child's behavior places them at risk for termination, the family will be informed of the specific challenge, and as a team, we will collaborate and work to implement strategies. After appropriate consultation with the parents or guardians, St. John's Preschool (as represented by designated staff, board members, and the Director) reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment:

- if the school cannot adequately meet the behavioral, emotional, or physical needs of a child.
- if the school cannot maintain a safe and appropriate environment for a child.
- if a child's behavior becomes a threat to the other children or to the staff. This behavior includes physical and verbal aggression, including but not limited to biting, hitting, kicking, screaming, throwing objects, and expressing verbal threats.
- if the registration fee and tuition fees have not been paid on time unless prior arrangements have been made with the director.
- if the parents do not follow the policies of the St. John's Preschool Parent Handbook.

Tuition will be prorated and refunded if a child is asked to leave the program. The registration fee is nonrefundable.

**Special Needs of Children:** Occasionally, through ongoing assessment, a teacher may become aware of a child she feels might need further professional evaluation. After consulting with the director, the teacher will document the child's performance and/or behavior over a period of two weeks. At this time, the school will arrange to meet with the child's parents/guardians. If the parents/guardians, teacher, and Director determine that an evaluation would be helpful in assessing the child, the resources of Project Enlightenment will be offered. This group offers parents free screenings/consultations in behavioral, physical, emotional, and social development. The preschool staff will be glad to work with parents on implementing the recommendations made for the child; however, we will follow the guidelines for termination should it become necessary.

## **PRACTICES AND POLICIES**

**Adjustment Period:** A new school and/or new classroom and teacher may require an adjustment period for a young child. Parents are asked to use a positive approach. A regular bedtime and morning routine is extremely important. **Be sure that your child arrives on time and comes to school each day that s/he is scheduled for class.** Some children separate from their parents more easily than others. Most children are fine within a few minutes after becoming involved in a classroom activity. If a separation problem persists, your child's teacher will work with you to map out a plan. If progress cannot be made within a

reasonable amount of time, the Preschool may suggest withdrawing your child from the program.

**Arrival and Departure:** School begins at 9:15 a.m. (9:30 for Toddlers). All children must be supervised when entering and exiting the building. Please sign your child in and leave an emergency number where you can be reached during the morning hours. Any special instructions or pick-up information needs to be left on the sign-in sheet. The adult signing the child in needs to indicate who will pick up that day; if another person picks up, staff may verify a change with the drop off adult. If anyone other than the child's parent(s) will pick him or her up, the parent must submit a written note authorizing the child to be released to that other person. **A photo ID will need to be shown to a staff member before the child is released.** Staff reserve the right to ask anyone, even parents, for identification at pick up at any time. If staff feel it may be unsafe to release a child to an adult who may be under the influence or otherwise impaired to drive due to drugs, alcohol, or mental emotional distress, they will call police to have them determine if it is safe for the child to leave with the adult in question. When picking up your child, please sign your child out. Children should be picked up no later than 1:10 p.m. After this time, a late fee may be charged.

**Behavior Management:** Children can display and may occasionally be exposed to aggressive behavior. The staff uses various behavior management techniques to limit and correct such behavior and to help children learn acceptable behavior and self-control. The following is a list of some alternative forms of discipline that will be used:

- Model appropriate behavior.
- Tell the child what s/he can do.
- Establish eye contact with the child when talking to him/her.
- Give the child choices when possible.
- Encourage children to problem solve and work out conflicts between themselves.
- Redirect the child to another activity.
- Hold the child on the lap until s/he is calm.
- Remove a child from the situation.
- Call a parent to come for the child if the child cannot remain in control of him/herself.
- Teach/model calming behaviors

Specific praise and positive reinforcement are tools used in behavioral management at St. John's Preschool. Teachers set limits that will help children understand the rules and give clear definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The staff strives to maintain a calm demeanor and a firm but kind attitude so that the children perceive a caring and respectful teacher.

**Birthday Celebrations:** The Preschool is happy to allow each child to bring a special nut free snack for the class to celebrate their special day, if desired. Please discuss your plans with your child's teacher for approval in advance.

**Change of Clothes:** The Preschool staff will give parents a large zip-lock bag at the Open House. We ask that you return this bag on the first day of school for your child with two changes of clothing in it (bottoms, tops, underwear, socks). We will send the bag home at the change of seasons for you to replace the clothing. If you are toilet training your two- or three-year-old, please tell the teachers how you are handling this situation so that we can better serve your child's needs. If your child is not completely toilet trained, pull ups are the best option while at preschool. The child can then try the potty easily, yet accidents are easy to handle and are less likely to embarrass the child. Potty training can be a stressful time, and we want to help, not hinder the process.

**Clothing, Toys, etc.:** Please dress your child for comfort at play and appropriately for the weather. All classes go outside everyday unless it is raining or snowing. Send hats, coats, gloves, or mittens. On warmer days, send a light jacket, sweater, or sweatshirt that can be layered depending on the temperature. We ask that you **label all items of school clothing with your child's name**. Encourage your child to leave toys and other personal possessions at home, as they are not allowed in the classroom. We will have opportunities during the year to share their "special treasures."

**Late Pick-Up Fees:** We reserve the right to charge late fees for parents who repeatedly are late. The fee is \$5.00 for the first 10 minutes (until 1:10 p.m.) and an additional \$1.00 per minute thereafter. A separate bill for late fees will be mailed. The late fee covers the time and expense associated with late child pick-up. A teacher will remain with the child until the parent arrives. If you know that you will be late, please make every effort to call the Preschool office at 919-562-8619. This will help the staff and alleviate any fears or concerns of the child.

**Playground Rules:** To ensure the safety of the children, we ask for your help with the following:

- Children must wear rubber soled shoes or rubber soled sandals with top and back straps (preferably with socks and closed toes).
- No clogs, crocs, shoes with "slippery" soles or backless shoes are allowed.
- Children must slide down the slide "feet first" (either sitting or on their stomachs). No sliding headfirst or walking up or down the slides is permitted.
- No climbing on the fence or sides or tops of the equipment is allowed.
- Children should not wear clothing with drawstrings or necklaces.

**Snacks:** Parents supply a nut-free daily snack for their child in a lunch box labeled with their name.

**Lunch:** Each child in 2's, 3's and 4's classes will bring lunch daily in a lunch box labelled with their name. Always be mindful that we are a **nut-free school** and cannot have nut products in our classrooms. Please include a drink and any utensils that your child may need.



# HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

## HEALTH POLICIES

**Medical Form/Updated Immunization Record:** This information must be up to date and on file at the Preschool before the child can enter school. Immunization records must conform to the North Carolina public school immunization regulations and the North Carolina Statutes {G.S. 130-A-152(a)}, which “require immunizations for every child present in this state.” No exemptions are allowed.

**Allergy Policy:** We have an **Allergy Policy** and an **Action Plan** for children who have allergies. These include children who are allergic to medication, food, and bee stings. If your child has an allergy, please contact the Director prior to enrollment for copies of this policy and to complete an **Action Plan**.

**Sick Child Policy:** Notify the preschool if your child is sick. In order to help us control the spread of germs and disease, please keep children at home if they are sick AND until they are completely recovered. Use the following guidelines concerning illness and recuperation:

- If your child has a **temperature of 100.4 or higher**, please keep him/her home until the child is free of fever for 24 hrs. without medication.
- If your child has a **sore throat with a fever**, such as strep throat, please keep him/her home until he/she has been on antibiotics for 24 hrs.
- If your child has **impetigo**, please keep him/her home until it is completely cleared up.
- If your child has **conjunctivitis**, please keep him/her at home until the discharge and redness has disappeared.
- If your child has a **runny nose with a thick discolored discharge**, please keep him/her at home.
- If your child has been diagnosed with **chicken pox**, please keep him/her at home until all pox have scabbed over and no new ones are appearing.
- If your child is **vomiting or has diarrhea**, please keep him/her home for 24 hours from the last episode.
- If your child has **an unexplained rash, an earache, a headache, or a persistent cough**, please keep him/her home for 24 hours from the last episode.

For your child’s welfare and that of the other class members and staff, please notify the director as soon as possible if your child develops a communicable disease so that other parents and staff may be informed of possible exposure. The usual childhood diseases, as well as meningitis, scarlet fever, infectious hepatitis, head lice and roseola, must be reported so that necessary precautions may be taken immediately.

**Medications and/or Diapering Items:** Our staff will **NOT** be responsible for dispensing medicines of any kind unless the child has an **Allergy Action Plan** or **Asthma Action Plan** on file in the office. Medications typically should be given

before or after school. Additionally, we ask that you apply sunscreen at home when appropriate as our staff are not allowed to do this.

Diapering items for toddlers (such as diapers, wipes, and ointments) must be provided from home. Each item must be labeled with your child's name and kept each day in their school bag. For sanitation reasons, diapering items will **NOT** be shared among children.

## **SAFETY POLICIES**

All precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of each child while in the building and on the playground. There will always be a staff person trained in first aid and CPR available in an emergency. Should an accident occur, the following steps will be taken:

**Minor Injuries:** In the event a child becomes hurt or ill at school, the teacher and/or director will decide if the injury or illness requires medical attention. Slight scrapes, bumps, or bruises will be given first aid by a staff member. If the teacher and/or director decide that the injury or illness needs medical attention, a parent will be called. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact person will be called. If necessary, the child's pediatrician will be contacted. The child will be removed from the classroom and comforted until a parent or emergency contact comes for the child. An incident/injury report will be completed by the child's teacher to be signed by the parent and filed at the Preschool.

**Major Emergencies:** In the event of an emergency at school, the teacher and/or the director will first call 911 for medical assistance and transportation to the emergency room or the nearest hospital. The parents will be called immediately after the 911 call. If a parent and/or emergency contact cannot be located and the child needs to be transported to the emergency room, the child will be transported by ambulance to the emergency room. **Any expenses incurred are the responsibility of the parent.** As with any injury or sickness, the child will be comforted and monitored continuously until the parent and/or medical assistance arrive. The director and/or teacher of the child will accompany the child to the hospital, taking with them a copy of your child's medical information. Another staff member remaining at school will continue to try and contact a parent or emergency contact person until one of these is reached. As with minor injuries, an incident/injury report will be completed by the child's teacher, and a copy will be filed at the Preschool office.

**Fire Drills:** Fire Drills are practiced monthly at school. The first two (September and October) are scheduled so the teachers can prepare the children in advance. The fire drills for the remainder of the school year are unscheduled for teachers and children. During these drills, your children are taught how to evacuate the building quickly and safely, where to go to their designated area, and appropriate behavior during the drill.

**Severe Weather Procedures:** In the event of a tornado or severe weather, teachers have been instructed on a specific location in the building for their class to go for safety. The children are taken into the basement or interior halls/rooms of the school where they are safe from flying glass or debris. The children are placed in a crouched position with knees on the floor, head to the wall, and hands covering their heads.

**Inclement Weather:** St. John's Preschool follows announcements made on television and radio for the Wake County Public Schools. If:

- A. Wake County **CLOSES** due to inclement weather, St. John's Preschool **may be CLOSED**.
- B. Wake County delays 1 hour due to inclement weather, St. John's Preschool will delay school by 30 minutes. (We will open at 9:45 a.m.)
- C. Wake County delays 2 hours, St. John's Preschool will delay school by 1 hour. (We will open at 10:15 a.m.)
- D. If the Wake County Schools close early during the school day due to inclement weather, then St. John's Preschool will close early. Please pay close attention when inclement weather is possible and call the office if there is any question of early closing. If schools are closing early, please be prompt in picking up your child. Our staff has children they need to pick up as well.

If St. John's Preschool is closed for more than five days during the school year due to inclement weather, or other unforeseen circumstances, the St. John's Director will adjust the calendar to add make-up days at their discretion.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

**Volunteers:** There will be opportunities to volunteer in the classroom and outside of the classroom throughout the school year. Please consider joining the Parents of Preschoolers (POP) committee, if you would like to volunteer at special events or work on teacher appreciation activities. Please notify the director if you can help as a substitute. If you have a special talent or occupation that you would like to share with the class, please let your child's teacher know. We would love for you to share your talents with us!

**Parent/Teacher Communication:** If you need to talk to your child's teacher, please ask the teacher for a convenient time that works for both staff and parents. This will ensure a private conversation with your child's teacher. If several parents wait to talk to the teacher at the end of the day, the teacher cannot properly supervise the children waiting for their parents.

**Communicating Parent Concerns:** If you have a concern with your child's teacher, it is recommended that you discuss your concerns with the teacher first. If you are still concerned and feel the issue has not been resolved, contact the Director and tell the teacher you will seek the Director's help. If the conflict remains unresolved, you may ask the Director to arrange a meeting with the

Preschool's Board of Directors' Grievance Representative. The Director will notify the teacher involved. If the matter remains unresolved, the parties may request to meet with the entire Preschool Board of Directors for a final decision.

**Communication with the Director:** If you have a concern about the preschool director, please reach out to the director and they will be happy to meet. If the matter remains unresolved, the parties may request to meet with the Preschool Board chair or rector.

**Conferences:** Teachers will communicate either orally or in writing with you about your child's adjustment at the end of October. Conferences are offered to the parents of three and four-year-olds in February. As a parent, you are always welcome to request time to talk to your child's teacher or to the director at any time during the year.

**Class Newsletters:** Weekly, all preschool classes send home or email class newsletters. These communications include information about class activities, projects, instructional focus, and tips for parent reinforcement. Also included is news about fundraisers and future class activities such as field trips. Weekly, all families will receive a school-wide newsletter with information about the school as a whole.

**Class Dojo:** Our school uses an app called Class Dojo. This app allows teachers to send messages, post photos, and newsletters. Each family is assigned to their specific class and will receive updates related to that class. The director is able to communicate on a school wide scale and will post newsletters, event flyers, and weather updates on the app.

## **ST. JOHN'S PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK**

A good preschool and a good early childhood education do not just happen. They are the direct result of a combination of critical factors – a faculty and staff educated in the knowledge of child development and appropriate teaching practices, a child-centered curriculum, and a learning environment based upon the acknowledgement of the dignity of and a love for each child entrusted into our care. Effective early childhood curriculum is focused on the age and developmental needs of the child and his/her abilities and interests, influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.

We know that each child is unique with his or her own strengths, needs, and interests. In addition, each child possesses an individual pattern and timing of growth, an individual personality, temperament, learning style, and experiential and family background. This knowledge is reflected in the individualized nature of early childhood education and in the wide range of learning opportunities available in the preschool classroom. These are sometimes presented in the format of learning centers. Small class size also contributes to an environment

where teachers can get to know each child one-to-one and plan activities to meet their interests and needs.

Research also informs us that the child's **domains of learning** – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive – are closely related and influence each other. As a result, thematic approaches to learning activities that cut across disciplines help the child make meaningful connections in learning. Less emphasis is placed on learning individual skills in isolation.

Even at this early age, the child is an **active learner**, drawing on direct physical and social experiences. S/he constructs his/her own understanding of the world from his/her experiences in a social context. Therefore, the child is exposed to a broad variety of firsthand experiences – physically, socially, and cognitively. Play is an excellent context for the child to participate in these active learning activities.

Another important factor in planning effective early childhood curriculum is the knowledge that the child learns best when s/he experiences a challenge just beyond the level of his/her present mastery - sometimes called the “**growing edge**.” Teachers, therefore, must understand the learning continuum or developmental sequence, observe the child closely to match curriculum and teaching to the child's emerging competencies, needs, and interests, and then help the child move forward by targeting educational experiences to the edge of the child's increasing capabilities.

Furthermore, a child can exhibit **preferred ways of learning**. We have known for a long time that some people are auditory, spatial, kinesthetic, visual, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal learners, among others. This growing body of knowledge guides the teacher in selecting a wide choice of activities, including the arts and sensory experiences, and recognizing the hidden but emerging varied talents of her students.

Finally, it is no surprise that a child learns best in an **environment where s/he feels safe and valued, where his/her physical needs are met, and where s/he feels psychologically secure**. These important primary relationships begin in the family but extend into the early childhood classroom as the important job of building positive, consistent primary relationships continues.

## **PRESCHOOL CLASSES**

### **Toddler, Two, Three, and Four-Year-Olds**

The focus on the individual child continues in the Preschool classes. Each teacher fashions her class curriculum based upon the abilities and interests of the children. In addition, she is aware of the uniqueness of each child, developmental patterns, and that hands-on learning experiences best foster early learning. In these early years, children learn best by doing, and they need time to practice what they are learning, to ask questions, to investigate, and to use what they are learning in their everyday activities. Because of these varied factors, two

classes may approach these topics in very different contexts (while providing similar learning opportunities, for example, in language and math concepts). Each class continues and builds upon the previous year's learning.

### **TODDLER CLASS**

Toddlers may best be described as curious, information seekers, and eager to explore their environment. Our teaching staff will work intentionally to ease transition and separation from parents and loved ones by fostering a sense of community and family within the classroom. We encourage them to play in a safe, happy, and nurturing environment. These are the developmental goals we have for our Toddlers:

#### **Self-Care Behaviors:**

|                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Wash hands independently      | Feeds self independently              |
| Drinks from cup independently | Throws away trash after snack         |
| Helps to put toy away         | Attempts to carry personal belongings |

#### **Social/Emotional & Language Development:**

|                                                               |                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Learn to separate from parents                                | Sits at table when asked      |
| Participates in classroom activities                          | Understands simple directions |
| Learns to communicate needs/wants<br>through words & gestures |                               |

Begins to use 2 or 3 words in combination

#### **Cognitive Development:**

|                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Counts to 3                      | Knows at least 3 primary colors       |
| Identifies body and facial parts | Identifies objects in their classroom |

#### **Physical Development:**

|                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Turns pages of a book            | Attempts to paint & color    |
| Attempts to stack blocks         | Plays with a variety of toys |
| Begins to walk up & down steps   | Jumps in place               |
| Walks in a group with assistance |                              |

### **TWO-YEAR-OLD CLASSES**

"I can do it!" could very well be the theme of the Two-Year-Old Preschool classes. Experiences are structured so that the child can move toward success in language development, social and emotional development, and physical development. Listed below are examples of themes and typical topics that emerge in the Two-Year-Old classes. Throughout the year, as the children's interests emerge, they are added to the curriculum.

#### **Language Development:**

|                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Increasing vocabulary | Following simple directions |
| Listening to stories  | Responding to questions     |

Cognitive Development:

One-to-one correspondence  
Discriminating more than one  
Animals

Counting small groups  
Shapes and colors  
Musical sounds and patterns

Small Muscle Development:

Art projects  
Playdoh

Dressing  
Tearing, cutting, gluing

Blocks  
Simple puzzles

Large Muscle Development:

Running and climbing outside  
Playing on equipment

Games  
Music activities

Social Skills:

Practicing manners at snack time  
Working and playing cooperatively  
Participating in the class routine

Sharing and taking turns  
Accepting re-direction

### **THREE-YEAR-OLD CLASSES**

The Three-Year-Old Preschool Class provides an early childhood curriculum that helps the child develop a broad range of characteristics associated with learning readiness. As the child's abilities develop, the teacher structures a learning environment to help the child develop intellectual curiosity, imagination, persistence, attentiveness, creativity, and responsibility, among others. In addition, opportunities for social and emotional development, (including developing a sense of self), physical and health development, language development and communication, (including the foundations for reading), as well as cognitive development, (including mathematical and scientific thinking), and creative expression are provided.

Language Development:

Increasing vocabulary  
Enjoys listening to stories and rhymes  
Can easily make adults understand what s/he says

Follows simple directions

Cognitive Development:

One-to-one correspondence  
Patterning by color, shape, and size  
Sorting by color, shape, size, and other attributes  
Recognizing pictures and objects that are the same and different.  
Understanding and following the rules of a simple game  
Asking questions and tries new things

Recognizing numerals 1 to 10

Recognizing the letters in their name

Small Muscle Development:

Art projects  
Playdoh  
Draws a simple picture

Scissors and glue  
Holds and uses a drawing implement  
Completes puzzles

Blocks

#### Large Muscle Development:

|                                         |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Running and climbing outside            | Games                               |
| Playing on equipment                    | Music activities                    |
| Hops, walks on toes                     | Jumps with both feet off the ground |
| Catches, throws, and kicks a large ball |                                     |

#### Social Skills:

|                                                   |                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Practicing manners at snack time                  | Working and playing cooperatively |
| Participating in the class routine                | Accepting re-direction            |
| Asks for help when needed                         |                                   |
| Puts away toys and helps with clean-up activities |                                   |

### **FOUR-YEAR-OLD-CLASSES**

The Four-Year-Old Preschool class continues facilitating a developmentally appropriate curriculum focusing on bringing together all widely held expectations for pre-kindergarten children. The groundwork that has been laid in the earlier classes begins to come together for most children during the four-year-old school year. Again, the ability and interests of the child provide context for new levels of learning. In addition, the 4's participate in **Second Step**, a social skills program. The child also reaches outside the classroom with field trips. "I am me and I am capable and ready" could be called the motto of the Four-Year-Olds Preschool class.

#### Language Development:

|                                                             |                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Phonemic awareness                                          | Holds book upright                  |
| Describing and comparing                                    | Knows positional words              |
| Follows two-step directions                                 | Speaks in complete sentences        |
| Names common objects                                        | Recognizing letters and some sounds |
| Participates and stays on discussion topics                 |                                     |
| Telling a story or retelling experiences in proper sequence |                                     |
| Making visual and auditory discriminations                  |                                     |
| Observing left to right progression in print                |                                     |
| Recognizing ones first and last name in print               |                                     |

#### Cognitive Development:

|                                                     |                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| One-to-one correspondence                           | Sequences first, next, and last    |
| Recognizing numerals 1 to 10                        | Recognizes letters and some sounds |
| Identifies simple shapes – circle, square, triangle |                                    |

#### Small Muscle Development:

|                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Uses pencils and crayons            | Uses scissors         |
| Draws a simple recognizable picture | Can assemble a puzzle |
| Draws recognizable symbols          |                       |

#### Large Muscle Development:

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Can walk backwards | Can hop on one foot |
|--------------------|---------------------|

Catches ball with increasing accuracy  
Jumps with both feet off the ground  
Participates in art/music/movement activities

Throws and kicks ball at target  
Gallops

Social Skills:

Using words to express needs and wants  
Using words to express feelings and ideas  
Independently uses the bathroom  
Uses a tissue to wipe a runny nose  
Takes pride in his/her achievements  
Attends to task or activity for about 15 minutes  
Demonstrates curiosity, persistence, and exploratory behavior

Works and plays cooperatively  
Adjusts to new situations  
Uses words to resolve conflict  
Completes tasks  
Uses control when frustrated

## SELECTED REFERENCES

There are many excellent resources for teachers and parents on Early Childhood Education. The National Association for the Education of Young Children ([www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)) has long been a leader in the field. The following were used in preparing this Handbook.

Dombro, A. M., L. J. Colker, and L. T. Dodge. (1999). *The Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers*. Revised Edition. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. Principles of child-development and learning that inform Developmentally appropriate practice. In *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. On-line <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/dap3.asp> (June 4, 2006).

Wesley, P., B. Dennis, S. Tyndall. (1997). *Quicknotes: Inclusion Resources for Early Childhood Professionals*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center.

Work, B. (Ed.) *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*. Raleigh, NC: [OBJ] North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.