



PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

September 2022 - August 2023

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HISTORY

Good Shepherd Kindergarten began operating in September 1968 as an outreach ministry of the Good Shepherd United Methodist Church to young children and their families in the St. Charles area. In 1971 we became the Good Shepherd Preschool and Kindergarten with the addition of a new Preschool class. On July 1, 2000, we became the Good Shepherd Education Center and in December of 2013 we received our accreditation from the Maryland State Department of Education. Today, we can enroll over 100 students in 5-day Preschool classes, Pre-Kindergarten, and Childcare. The church feels that the Education Center is an important community ministry concerned with the emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development of young children. Since our inception, we have offered scholarships to culturally and/or economically disadvantaged children.

PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophy is to meet the educational and childcare needs of the community by providing a safe and nurturing Christian environment. We create a “home away from home,” where age-appropriate opportunities are offered for each child to grow spiritually, intellectually, aesthetically, physically, and socially.

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Good Shepherd Education Center to provide young children a high quality, distinctly Christian, early education by:

- Providing a safe and caring environment for young children to learn the value of relating to other children and adults.
- Offering support and encouragement to children and their families as the children make the important transition from toddler to kindergartener.
- Helping children and parents to experience a loving and caring Christian community and see the value of a relationship with Jesus Christ modeled and taught.
- Encouraging children to develop to the fullest the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, physical and social gifts given to them by satisfying their curiosity and channeling their energy, imagination, and creativity into constructive efforts.
- Providing children, the opportunity to have their learning needs met by offering every opportunity to excel in academic studies and social growth.
- Nurturing their need for spiritual maturity in proportion with their age and experience.

GOALS

We feel that the beginning of a child's education is a crucial step in life; therefore, the following are our goals:

- a. To create a warm learning environment where children can learn about God's love.
- b. To provide growth and development (physical, social, and emotional) where positive self-images can be built.
- c. To provide skill development (knowledge, creativity, and independence).
- d. To provide a high-quality early childhood education for all young children.

DISCIPLINE STATEMENT

As stated in our school philosophy, our goal is to establish an age-appropriate learning environment for each child. We encourage open communication between the home and school by building a rapport with our families. This ensures the academic and social success of all students in the GSEC family.

The goal of our staff is to help children function in a group setting without hurting themselves, others, or abusing property. When a child is not functioning well in a group setting, one or more of the following procedures are used:

1. Children are verbally asked to stop a certain activity or are redirected to another one.
2. Staff members will model appropriate words or behaviors as a teaching strategy.
3. A staff member will only physically remove a child in the event of danger to the child or another child.
4. A child may be asked to leave the group for a brief period until ready to join group activities again.
5. A staff member may place their arms around a child whose behavior is out of bounds to stop the child from injuring self or others.
6. The teaching/learning environment is re-evaluated often to make changes that would suggest a more positive behavior.
7. Parents and staff will work together to get new insight and establish common goals.

Corporal punishment is not allowed at GSEC. Spanking, threatening, or frightening the student is prohibited. Depriving a student of food or comfort, such as taking away snack or prolonged periods away from the group are not permitted for disciplining at GSEC.

The Director of GSEC reserves the right to request that the parent of a student who becomes a constant source of disruption to the group be asked to seek professional help for the child and/or family or withdraw the child from the program. This situation is rare, and every effort is made to avoid it.

SCHOOL ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Good Shepherd Education Center follows school entrance requirements for the State of Maryland regarding the child's age at date of entry. Exceptions to this rule will be made only with the recommendation (in writing to the Director) from a Medical Doctor, the F.B. Gwynn Center, or the student's previous teacher.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

The Maryland State Department of Education has implemented a new State regulation for all children in regulated care and early childhood educational programs. All children, up to kindergarten entry age attending regulated care and early childhood educational programs, will need to have a developmental screening conducted. Developmental screening is important to help identify children with developmental concerns so they can be further evaluated by a professional and receive services as needed. Children who receive early intervention services generally do better in the long term than those identified later. Children aged birth-36 months will be required to have two screenings

per year. Children aged 37 months-Kindergarten entry will be required to have one screening per year.

The screening tool our program will use is called Ages and Stages. Our screening process will be conducted upon the enrollment of each child. Upon completion of the screening, we will meet with you to discuss the findings and whether a referral to another agency for further evaluation is necessary. Parents should consider this process as part of the required documentation for the child to attend our or any other licensed childcare program in the State.

AGE LEVEL ORGANIZATION

The following terminology and dates will be used regarding age/class placement levels:

a. The Twos

- Must be 2 years old to enter the program
- Attends 5 days (Monday – Friday), 7:00AM to 6:00PM

b. Preschool (PS)

- Must be 3 years old by September 1st of the enrolling year
- Attends 5 days (Monday – Friday), 8:30AM to 12:30PM

c. Preschool Child Care (PSCC)

- Must be 3 years old by September 1st of the enrolling year
- Attends 5 days (Monday – Friday), 7:00AM to 6:00PM

d. Pre-Kindergarten (PK)

- Must be 4 years old by September 1st of enrolling year
- Attends 5 days (Monday – Friday), 8:30AM to 12:30PM

e. Pre-Kindergarten Child Care (PKCC)

- Must be 4 years old by September 1st of enrolling year
- Attends 5 days (Monday – Friday), 7:00AM to 6:00PM

REGISTRATION

Good Shepherd Education Center has on-going registration throughout the year. To prepare for the following school year, GSEC in-house registration will begin in late January and will last for two weeks. In-house refers to GSEC staff children, currently enrolled students, their siblings, and GSUMC church members. Tuition, for currently enrolled students, must be current to register for the following school year. After the two-week in-house enrollment period, enrollment will be open to the public. A child is considered registered when their registration paperwork has been completed and turned in along with the non-refundable registration fee. Post-dated checks will not be accepted at any time throughout the year. The registration fee is NOT included in the last month's tuition. Enrollment packets will be given to families mid-July. Enrollment packets include:

- Parent/Guardian Agreement
- Parent/Guardian Handbook
- "Guide to Regulated Child Care" Pamphlet
- GSEC COVID-19 Policies and Procedures
- Emergency Form

- “All About _____” Form
- Health Inventory

All enrollment paperwork will need to be completed and submitted prior to Orientation.

Priority in admissions will go as follows:

1. GSEC staff children
2. Currently enrolled GSEC students and their siblings
3. GSUMC church members
4. The public

Each age level has an assigned student capacity based on licensing regulations and quality of care standards put forth by GSEC. Waiting lists are kept for each classroom when a class has met its capacity. Vacancies in enrollment will be filled from individuals on the waiting lists in the chronological and priority order in which they were received. Priorities to the waiting lists are GSEC staff children, siblings of currently enrolled students, then GSUMC members.

For children starting care after the school year has begun, an enrollment application will be completed and submitted along with the required non-refundable registration fee. Once both are received, an enrollment packet will be given to the family to be completed. A child may begin care when all enrollment paperwork has been submitted to GSEC administration.

Every child is expected to always have the most up-to-date immunization record on file at the center. When a child receives a vaccine, an updated immunization record must be given to GSEC administration.

Initial and annual registration fees, as well as annual summer activity fees are non-refundable. The registration fee and summer activity fee are NOT included in the last month's tuition.

A two-week written notice is required if a family chooses to withdraw their child from the center. Payment is required for this two-week period regardless of whether your child attends.

FEES

The center has a few annual fees, and one monthly fee, which are charged in addition to tuition.

- Annual Fees
 - Registration Fee
 - There is a \$150 registration fee each year. Families that have multiple children that attend GSEC will pay \$100 for each additional child that is registered. The fee is non-refundable and is to be paid at the time of registration.

- Summer Activity Fee
 - There is a \$100 summer activity fee each year. This fee covers all special lunches, treats, activities, and shows that happen throughout the summer. This fee is due in April of each year.
- Monthly Fee
 - COVID Cleaning Fee
 - There is a \$25 cleaning fee, per child, added to the tuition each month. This fee pays for the professional electro-static cleaning that is done nightly.

ENTRY SECURITY SYSTEM

All childcare families will be issued a key fob to gain entrance to the building and to the interior double doors between the hours of 7:00AM and 6:00PM Monday through Friday.

Policies:

1. Each fob is assigned to a designated person. It should not be shared with anyone and should NOT be used to allow others to enter the building at any time.
2. The Education Center will be accessible between the hours of 7:00AM and 6:00PM Monday through Friday. Outside of the key fob activation time periods or in the case where someone without a fob will be dropping off or picking up your child, accessibility will be available by pressing the bell icon on the keypad located on the right of the outside front door. Please be prepared to show identification if asked. Use of the buzzer after 6:00PM is an indicator of late arrival and a late pick-up fee will be assessed (per the Parent/Guardian Handbook, page 8).
3. Notification of a lost fob should be given to the office as soon as possible. This will enable us to deactivate the fob and issue a replacement fob. A fee of \$20.00 will be charged for all replacement fobs.
4. The fob is the property of Good Shepherd Education Center and must be returned upon request or at the conclusion of enrollment. This will enable the center to keep costs to a minimum by reassigning the fob.
5. Any violation of the key fob policy can result in deactivation of key fobs assigned.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS/COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

All parents/guardians will complete a form (included in enrollment packet) concerning any individual needs required by their child while attending our center. This information must be supplied before the child is admitted. GSEC will try to make special accommodations for children who require such accommodations, provided it is within our budget and professional expectations. Accommodation can be a specific treatment prescribed by a professional or parent, a modification of equipment, or removal of physical barriers. The accommodation shall be recorded in the child's folder.

Good Shepherd Education Center will not discriminate against children or staff with special needs or communicable diseases such as Hepatitis B Virus, HIV and AIDS infection. The general policy is to disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and safety of others and to ensure appropriate care of the student.

If the Director determines that parents or the staff needs to be alerted to a case of contagious disease, it is Good Shepherd Education Center's policy not to reveal the identity of the infected student or his or her family. Our center will follow the usual infection control procedures and use proper sanitation. Universal precautions will be used for all students or staff when blood is involved.

COMMUNICATION

Notes, email, and the Daily Connect app are our major method of communication with parents. Notes sent home are placed inside the student's folder and placed inside the school bag. If there is a form that is to be sent back to the teacher, please do so the next day. A copy of the monthly center newsletter that is sent home is posted on the bulletin board in the foyer.

When a child begins care, they are put into the Daily Connect system. Parents are strongly encouraged to get the app on their phone to see their child's daily activities. Each child's profile is only visible to the parent. Teachers have access to the profiles of the children in their class. The Director and administration have access to all the children's profiles in all the classes. Daily Connect is a great method of direct communication between the parent and the teachers.

If your child goes to a caregiver after school, PLEASE make sure they know what is going on at Good Shepherd Education Center and put any notes sent home with the child in a special place until you pick up your child. This has been a problem in the past. Notes, phone calls, etc. from parents should always be directed to the teacher, not the classroom assistant.

Master email lists for each class will be maintained by the Education Center office. These lists will be used for distributing our monthly newsletter and to notify families of center classroom activities and special events.

PHONE CALLS

Please note that the phone number for the Education Center is 301-645-7550. Our fax number is 301-843-4884. Any necessary phone calls should be made only on school days during the hours of 7:00AM - 6:00PM. Due to the requirement of constant supervision of children, teachers rarely have an opportunity to speak with parents on the phone during operational hours. Whenever possible, it is best to send a note, or a message on Daily Connect, to your child's teacher in lieu of a phone call. The 301-843-6797 phone number is for Good Shepherd United Methodist Church business only.

The phone number to the center and the Director's email are on the front cover of the handbook. Every parent should save the center's number in their cell phone and save the Director's email in their email address book.

UPDATES OF PHONE NUMBERS, ADDRESSES, ETC.

Please notify the Education Center immediately, in writing, to the Director's office of any changes of phone numbers, emergency phone numbers, email accounts, or addresses. Emergency numbers must be local and someone who can pick up your child if you are not at home. **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT OUR RECORDS ARE CORRECT!**

PARENT ORIENTATION & MEET THE TEACHER

Good Shepherd Education Center conducts a Parent Orientation prior to the start of each school year. This is an opportunity for parents to become familiar with the center policies, meet the teachers, and become acquainted with the teacher's classroom policies and procedures.

The day after Parent Orientation is designated as "Meet the Teacher" day for the children. This experience provides an opportunity for parents and children to visit the classroom, explore materials, and participate in an activity together. This is also a wonderful time for your child to become acquainted with their teacher with their parent(s) present.

SCHOOL BAGS

Each student will be given a Good Shepherd Education Center school bag on Meet the Teacher Day (see date on the GSEC Calendar of Events/Closures). Students should be encouraged to carry this bag each day with their lunch bag school folder, blanket, etc. placed inside. Backpacks and other book bags with zippers, numerous compartments, etc., do not fit in our cubbies and cannot be manipulated easily by our students. Replacement bags are available at a minimal cost.

TRANSITIONS

Staff will work with children to make transitions throughout the day as smooth as possible. A daily schedule is posted in each classroom which helps to maintain routine activities so children will know what to expect.

Throughout the year activities are coordinated with other classrooms so children can become familiar with GSEC staff and children. Some of these activities focus on holidays, Read Across America, and Spirit Days.

At the end of the school year, Pre-Kindergarten children visit a local elementary school to tour the school and Kindergarten classrooms. They experience some of the kindergarten routines such as circle time and playground time. (Due to COVID-19, this has not been done since 2019. Our hope is to return to this practice once the COVID-19 restrictions have eased). All children that re-enroll for the following school year will visit their respective classrooms. Current and future teachers meet and discuss specific needs of the returning children. Children's portfolios are passed to the next teacher.

PAYMENT PROCEDURE

All tuition payments are paid monthly, semi-monthly, or weekly in advance and are due on the first of the month/week. If paying semi-monthly, payment is due on the 1st and 15th of each month. Payment in full is due for days/weeks when the Education Center may be closed due to snow, holidays, spring break, etc.

All tuition paid in advance may be refunded only if: (1) the child is removed for medical reasons, with a doctor's written excuse, or if the family moves from the area (proof of the move, i.e., change-of-station orders or bill of sale, will be required); and (2) two weeks' notice is given in writing to the Director. Both conditions must be met before we will refund prepaid tuition.

All payments must either be made by mail or put in the mailbox on the wall that is opposite the Church's Administrative Office door in the foyer. **NO TEACHER OR ASSISTANT** is authorized to receive payments. We ask that parents do not place their tuition payments in their child's folder.

All checks or money orders should be made payable to GSEC (Good Shepherd Education Center), 305 East Smallwood Drive, Waldorf, MD 20602. Please **print your child's name and the month/week you are paying** in the lower left-hand corner of the check to ensure proper credit. No refunds will be made for vacations, snow closures, holidays or missed days.

LATE TUITION PAYMENT

A late payment fee of \$25.00 will be charged for overdue monthly tuition payments if not received by the 10th of the month. When a payment has not been received by the first of the following month, the student will be dismissed until the account is current.

Weekly tuition payments are due on Monday by 4:30PM. A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged for any payments received later. If payment is not received within two weeks, the student will be dismissed until the account is current.

Families that do leave the center with a tuition balance are expected to continue payments until the balance is paid in full. Failure to complete this obligation will result in legal action by the center.

Understanding that financial hardships occur, families are asked to make an appointment to see the Director and discuss the situation to make an alternative plan for tuition payment. The GSEC Board and Director try not to forget our Christian ministry amid financial difficulties.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

Good Shepherd Education Center's half-day programs end at 12:30PM and our childcare closes at 6:00PM. If the parent/guardian is aware that they are going to be late, they should call the center to advise GSEC administration of this and of their plan to pick

up their child. Due to the operational and staffing costs incurred when a parent/guardian is late, a late fee will be charged. The childcare clock in the classroom will be the time used to determine the late fee.

When a child is not picked up by 12:30PM (half-day) or 6:00PM (childcare), the staff on duty will complete a late fee payment form when the parent/guardian arrives, which is to be signed by the parent/guardian. By signing the form, the parent/guardian acknowledges that they are late and agrees to pay the amount due. Starting at 12:31PM (half-day) and 6:01PM (childcare), a late fee will be charged and is to be paid to the Director/office staff the following business day. The late fee is as follows:

- Pick-up between 12:31PM and 12:35PM (half-day) or 6:01PM and 6:05PM (childcare), a flat \$5 fee will be charged.
- At 12:36PM (half-day) or 6:06PM (childcare), each minute late will be charged an additional \$5.
 - Example: If a parent arrives at 6:08PM, the parent will be charged \$5 for the minutes from 6:01PM to 6:05PM, and then an additional \$15 will be charged for the 3 minutes after 6:05PM for a total late fee charge of \$20.

Chronic late pick-ups can result in termination of care.

RETURNED CHECK FEE

There is a returned check fee of \$25.00. If a check is returned for a second time, payment must be by cashier's check or money order.

LESSON PLANNING PROCESS

In planning classroom activities and materials for children, classroom teachers will use several components for lesson planning. The following components will help to design classroom activities for children enrolled at Good Shepherd Education Center that are age-appropriate, domain-based, and reflective of children's interests, skills, and cultural diversity.

- MSDE approved curriculum, *Frog Street*, for All classes
- "All About _____" form completed by parents for each child which provides information regarding interests, strengths, weaknesses, IFSP/IEP information, and primary language spoken at home
- Formal and informal assessments of each child
- Classroom/playground observations of each child
- Early Learning Assessments and Healthy Beginnings training
- Classroom staff will discuss and collaborate the lesson planning process for each child during the daily planning time

CURRICULUM/ASSESSMENTS

Materials used in the classroom reflect and support the interests, culture, language, and abilities of the children based on teacher observations, information received from the "All About _____" form, and parent/teacher discussions. The curriculum helps the classroom teacher determine age-appropriate materials and multiple modes of exploration and

learning for each unit of study. Materials are easily accessible (“child friendly” shelves and tables) for all children and are rotated with each unit. Classroom teachers take opportunities to attend professional workshops, courses, and conferences to keep up to date with current teaching trends.

All our staff share an appreciation and love for young children and can plan appropriate experiences for children at various developmental stages. We do have a specific curriculum, *Frog Street*, for each level of Twos, Preschool (PS), and Pre-Kindergarten (PK). It is our hope that your child will be enrolled at our center for all levels.

The philosophy that children learn best through play and that children learn by doing permeates our programs. The staff creates an atmosphere in which children have an opportunity to play with others and materials in cooperative and self-directed matters.

The children will have a variety of experiences in all the creative arts: creative movement, songs, finger plays, construction with blocks, storytelling, poetry, as well as a myriad of graphic media. The units that teachers plan for the children include activities that enhance the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth in each child’s development. The teachers plan experiences to enhance the MSDE approved curriculum.

Individual assessments of each child are made throughout the school year. These assessments are made through teacher observations and curriculum-based assessments. Parent-Teacher conferences are planned twice a year – Fall and Spring as indicated on the GSEC calendar. Classroom teachers will discuss the assessments at these conferences. Conferences may be conducted at separate times if parents or classroom teachers determine a need.

a. THE TWOS

A program used to develop each child’s language, gross motor, and small motor skills. Self-discipline, cooperation, and creative expression are fostered through play activities. Exploration of manipulative toys, books, indoor and outdoor play, equipment, and materials help develop the child’s curiosity, creativity, and independence. Art and music experiences with a variety of materials are an integral part of the program.

The “*Ounce Scale*”, supplemented by *Frog Street Toddler*, is the curriculum used for planning and meeting the developmental milestones of two-year-olds.

b. PRESCHOOL (PS & PSCC)

Three-year-old children are not toddlers but are also not completely ready for Pre-Kindergarten. *Frog Street Threes* curriculum integrates three key areas of three-year-old development: Social Bridge, Foundational Literacy, and Foundational Math. The curriculum offers well rounded activities that were created using early brain development research and are developed to target all learning domains. The social emotional aspect of the curriculum features Dr. Becky Bailey’s Conscious Discipline®.

Frog Street Threes is a made up of nine thematic units, with each unit designed to take 4 weeks to complete. Each unit consists of all the following areas:

- Greeting Circle
- Morning Message
- Read-Aloud Time
- Differentiated Instruction
- Moving and Learning
- Math Lessons
- STEAM
- Practice Centers
- Closing Circle
- Home School Connection
- Assessment

c. PRE-KINDERGARTEN (PK & PKCC)

Frog Street curriculum, published by Frog Street Press, Inc., is recommended by the Maryland State Department of Education as a comprehensive, fully integrated curriculum created to prepare four-year-old children for the academic and social demands of kindergarten.

It is about building a community of learners with...

Comprehensive Curriculum	Differentiated Instruction	Joyful Learning
Child-Centered	English Language Learners	High Interest Materials/Activities
Intentional & Integrated Math, Science, Music, Art	Adaptations for Young Learners	Songs, Stories, Rhymes, Fingerplays and Games
English and Spanish	Special Needs Adaptations	Opportunities to Laugh and Play
Focus on Social-Emotional Development featuring Dr. Becky Bailey's "Conscious Discipline"	Scaffolding & Challenge Opportunities	

MEDIA POLICY

Screen time will be confined to times that are directly related to learning experiences in the 3 & 4-year-old programs. There is no screen time in the two-year-old programs.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

All children should be at the center by 8:30AM. Parents are required to sign their child/children in/out at the tablet kiosk in the foyer area, in accordance with regulations. Sign-in consists of opening the Daily Connect app on your phone and pressing the

“Sign-In/Out” and then signing on the phone. A QR code will appear. Please scan the QR code at tablet kiosk. Once the child is signed in, parents are to swipe their key fob again to gain access to the Education Center and walk their child to their classroom. Parents will knock on the door to announce their arrival. The classroom teacher(s) will greet the child and parents at the door where parents may say a brief good-bye and allow their child walk into the classroom independently. Parents will then proceed to exit the Education Center. It is best to make drop-off times brief. This helps the child quickly adapt to the class and decrease separation anxiety.

DRESS/PHYSICAL FITNESS

Helping children to develop physically is a vital component of early childhood development. Children need to have the opportunity for gross motor skill development each day. It is an integral part of our curriculum and part of each child’s day. Gross motor skills include running, jumping, climbing, skipping, hopping, etc. Whenever the weather is inclement and children cannot go outside for these activities, the Fellowship Hall or the individual classroom will be used.

Since children go outside daily, in accordance with regulations, each child needs to be provided with appropriate clothing including boots, mittens, and hats in season. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing that is appropriate for the season. Belts, coveralls, and jumpsuits sometimes create problems. We will go outside each day unless prohibited by the weather. Sneakers or sturdy shoes with rubber soles are the preferred footwear for all students. If dress shoes, jelly shoes, flip-flops or sandals are worn to the center, please pack appropriate sneakers for outdoor play.

In addition to having the children dress comfortably, please send them in clothes in which they have the freedom to get messy. Many of the classroom activities use materials such as paint, glue, markers, and crayons. Children need to come to care with the mindset of exploring and learning. Please reserve special/dressy clothing for picture days and special occasions such as holiday parties.

All articles of clothing, etc. that will be removed must be labeled (last name only).

All children must always have an extra set of clothes that are kept in the classroom. Children grow quickly, so please check periodically to be sure the “spare clothes” still fit and are appropriate for the current season.

LUNCHES & SNACK TIME

While the predisposition for obesity may begin before birth, the roots of obesity are often established between the ages of two and five years. Good Shepherd Education Center will strive to plan and serve nutritious snacks and encourage parents to pack healthy snacks (when applicable) and lunches. The center will provide information and opportunities for nutrition education through various workshop opportunities, nutrition related articles and as part of our classroom curriculum.

a. PRESCHOOL & PRE-KINDERGARTEN (8:30AM-12:30PM)

Children attending preschool and pre-kindergarten will be provided a morning snack. In addition to snack and per regulation, the center will provide 1% low-fat milk and water. A snack calendar will be sent home every month, via email, with the snacks listed for each day. A snack calendar will be posted on the bulletin board in the foyer.

Parents must provide a lunch daily for their child. It should be contained in a thermal lunch bag labeled **(on the outside)** with the child's first and last name. This lunch should be nutritious and ready to eat in small, child-size portions. Staff will heat items in a microwave, if needed; however, please keep warming time to a minimum. Per regulation, the center is required to provide 1% low-fat milk with their lunch. If your child requires a modified diet for medical reasons, **a note from the physician is required.** If there are dietary restrictions, a note from parents is required for the child's file. For both instances, parents are asked to pack the modified diet in the child's lunch box each day.

b. THE TWOS, PRESCHOOL CHILDCARE & PRE-KINDERGARTEN CHILDCARE (7:00AM – 6:00PM)

The center will provide two snacks daily, one in the morning and the other in mid-afternoon. A monthly snack menu will be posted on the childcare bulletin board in the foyer. The center will serve each child 1% low-fat milk and/or water with the snack.

Children who will be in childcare for lunchtime (12:00PM) must bring a lunch daily. It should be contained in a thermal lunch bag labeled **(on the outside)** with the child's first and last name. This lunch should be nutritious and ready to eat in small, child-size portions. Staff will heat items in a microwave, if needed; however, please keep warming time to a minimum. Per regulation, the center is required to serve 1% low-fat milk to each child with their lunch. If your child requires a modified diet for medical reasons, **a note from the physician is required.** If there are dietary restrictions, a note from parents is required for the child's file. For both instances, parents are asked to pack the modified diet in the child's lunch box each day.

All children attending childcare on a full day schedule will have rest time. Cots and sheets are provided by the center for the children to lie on. Children may bring a small blanket from home to use at rest time.

c. ALL

We have limited refrigerator space for storage of milk and lunches. Carbonated beverages, cans, bottles, glass containers or pouch type drinks will not be allowed. Napkins will be provided by the center. Group snacks will be allowed for special occasions at the discretion of the teacher.

NUT-FREE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The number of children who suffer from severe nut allergies is increasing each year. Also, children may develop an allergy at **any** time. To provide a safe environment for all children, the center is promoting a nut-free environment.

To protect children with allergies to peanuts or similar nut products, GSEC will have a policy that no food (snacks/lunch) containing nuts should be brought to the center. The center will not purchase any nut products and nut products are not to be used by the staff (ex. cooking projects).

It is recommended that labels of products be read to determine if there are nuts as part of the ingredients. This policy includes products that are manufactured in a facility that processes peanuts, as stated on the label. Products that may contain (but are not limited to) nuts include peanut butter, Nutella, fruit and nut bars, and chocolate.

While it may not be possible to guarantee that nut products will not be in the center, it is requested that parents and staff make every effort to support this policy to ensure the safety and well-being of **all** children.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays will be observed in all the classrooms. Each teacher will explain how she will manage birthdays in her classroom at the Parent/Teacher Orientation meeting. Favors, balloons, candy, etc., will not be part of the class celebration. No party invitations can be handed out at the center unless the entire class is invited. This policy is to protect the feelings of every student. You may provide a simple snack, napkins, and goodie bags that do not contain any food/candy. We request cookies, donut holes, or individual ice cream treats be sent in for celebration rather than cake or cupcakes (most children tend to eat only the frosting). Due to food allergies for many children, only commercially prepared foods may be served at parties and celebrations with the class. This will enable staff to read labels and not serve foods that may cause allergic reactions for children in our care. "No label, we can't serve." At no time may candles be used. No party favors or hats, please.

ABSENCES FROM GOOD SHEPHERD EDUCATION CENTER

If a child is absent from care, the parent will need to call or email the center to inform them of their absence. If a child misses care due to illness, please refer to the illness policy in the following section. If a child misses care for 3 or more days due to illness, they must be seen by a doctor and be cleared to return to care. A doctor's note must be provided when the child returns to care.

Extended absences, which are not medically related, are strongly discouraged. Children thrive on structure and consistency of care. This is especially important during a child's first few months at care.

Tuition will not be refunded for days missed due to acute illness or by the choice of the parent/guardian.

ILLNESSES OR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES AT THE CENTER

Good Shepard Education Center must maintain a healthy environment for the benefit of the children enrolled in the center. We request full cooperation of parents when your child becomes ill. If your child becomes ill before school, please keep your child home. Outdoor activities play an integral part of a child's motor development at GSEC. If your child is not well enough to go outdoors, please keep him/her at home. Should your child become ill while at the center, a parent/guardian will be notified immediately and asked to make arrangements for their child to be picked up promptly (within 2 hours). An Illness Report will be filled out and ready for a signature when a parent/guardian arrives. The report will be photocopied, and the original will go home with the parent. Children who are absent for 3 or more days, for illness, are required to have a doctor's note stating they can return to care before they return to the center.

Children may not attend if they have, but not limited to, any of the following conditions:

1. Fever greater than 100.4° F; must be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours (without the help of medication) or have a note from the physician to return
2. Contagious condition (ex: pinkeye, head lice, etc.)
3. Symptoms and signs of illness: excessive coughing, wheezing, lethargy, irritability
4. Cough or cold persisting more than 3 days or of a serious nature
5. Difficulty breathing
6. Severe headache
7. Loss of taste or smell
8. Vomiting in the preceding 24 hours
9. Communicable diseases (ex: Strep throat, hand-foot-and-mouth, etc.)
10. Mouth sores
11. Skin rash
12. Diarrhea

If your child is absent, please notify the center via email or phone. Before being readmitted to the center, any child that has been absent for three (3) or more days must have a doctor's note stating they can return to care.

The center should be called immediately if your child contracts a communicable disease such as measles, mumps, chicken pox, strep throat, scarlet fever, etc. Please keep your child home if there is any doubt concerning illness (fever, rash, sore throat, etc.) and contact your physician to stop the spread to other classmates. The child must remain home for the time specified by the physician. No student may attend the center while results of any medical cultures or tests are pending.

In case of simple injury (e.g., abrasions, skinned knees, splinters), the staff will perform the proper first aid necessary to treat the injury. No topical medication, ointments, etc. may be used. All injuries to the head will require a phone call to the parent/guardian. This is done for precautionary purposes and to allow the parent the decision to seek further medical assistance. All injuries will be documented with a Child Accident Report and a message will be sent, via the Daily Connect app, to the parent/guardian. Child Accident Reports will need to be signed by the teacher, the director, and the parent. The

report will be photocopied. The photocopy will go home with the child and the original will be put in the child's file at the center.

If circumstances require, emergency medical services will be called. The parent/guardian will be notified immediately afterwards. The school staff will respond as necessary until rescue arrives. There is always a first aid trained staff member on site. If hospitalization (Emergency Room Services) is required, the child will be taken to the closest hospital unless the child's emergency card indicates otherwise. Parents will assume financial responsibility for such services. It is imperative that all listed emergency contacts are available during center hours.

COVID GUIDELINES

Due to COVID-19, GSEC has taken necessary measures to help keep children and staff safe. GSEC has a COVID plan and procedures that was written with guidance from Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of Health. Please adhere to our guidelines by keeping your child home when they are not well and display symptoms, if anyone in the home is sick, and/or when a positive COVID test is confirmed. Please see GSEC COVID-19 Response Plan for more information.

MEDICATIONS

- a. All medications and required paperwork brought to the center must be given by a parent or guardian to the child's teacher or the Director.
- b. All medication whether prescription or non-prescription will be administered only if there is written authorization from a licensed physician.
- c. All medications to be administered, prescription and non-prescription, must be listed on a Medication Order Form which is available from the Director or a staff member.
- d. A separate Medication Order Form must be filled out for each medication the child is to receive.
- e. Authorization to administer medication over the phone will not be permitted. All medications, including non-prescription, must be in the original container. Prescription medications must be in a container labeled by the pharmacy or physician with the child's name, date of the prescription, name of the medication, administration schedule, special instructions, duration of prescription, and expiration date. Expired medications will not be administered to a child.
- f. At least one dose of all prescription medications must be administered to the child at home.
- g. Siblings may not share medications.
- h. Due to their potential choking hazard, no child will be permitted to use cough drops or throat lozenges.
- i. Diaper rash products, sunscreen, or insect repellent supplied by a parent may be applied without prior approval of a licensed health practitioner; however, a Medication Order Form must be completed. The topical medication must also be labeled with the child's name.
- j. Any medications prescribed to treat symptoms for acute illness/virus (i.e., upper respiratory infections, cold, congestion due to colds, etc.) cannot be given at the

center. If a child is taking medication to treat symptoms, then they need to stay home until the symptoms have cleared.

CONSULTING PHYSICIAN

In accordance with MSDE Regulations, Pediatrician Dr. Aziza Alam has consented to be on a consulting basis for our center. Her office is Altamont Place (Suite 301), White Plains, MD 20695.

PRESCHOOL & PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROCEDURE

It is important for you to be on time to pick up your child. The following method will be used for dismissal of our students. Please read it carefully and give us your cooperation. Please make sure all authorized pick-up people are aware of this plan. No student will be allowed to leave the building unaccompanied. Under no circumstances will any student be released to anyone without WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION, as stated on the student's Emergency Form which is on file.

A note must be sent to the Director or Assistant Director if your child will be going home with someone other than you or the usual carpool as specified on your Emergency Form. The note must specify the name, phone number and relationship of the person picking up your child. Also, if you must pick up your child early, please notify the Director or Assistant Director, via email or phone call, specifying the time. Your child will NOT be sent to the foyer to wait for you.

Phone calls made (in case of an emergency only) must include the name of the person calling and their phone number for verification, PLUS the name and phone number of the person picking up the student.

A. Driver's Responsibilities:

- 1) Will arrive before 12:25PM be ready to leave when students are dismissed.
- 2) Will park in the parking space for persons with disabilities only if special tag or permit is displayed.
- 3) Will enter through the foyer and sign-out their child using the touchless tablet kiosk using the Daily Connect app.
- 4) Will swipe their key fob to enter the Education Center.
- 5) Will make sure that students and younger children in their care do not stop to play in classrooms or disturb materials, etc. as they pass through while picking up at dismissal.
- 6) Will leave the Education Wing by the door at the far end of the building. Please note - this door is for EXIT ONLY and will not be allowed for use to enter building at any time. **Please alert the Director if you notice anyone using this door to gain entrance to the center.**
- 7) Will buckle all passengers into safety seats or use seat belts.
- 8) Will drive slowly, with caution, in the parking lot.

B. Teacher's Responsibilities:

- 1) Will have students ready for dismissal by 12:25PM.

- 2) Will require students to remain in their classrooms until person picking them up arrives at the classroom door.
- 3) Will remain in the classroom with the students and be responsible for them until picked up.
- 4) Will fill out a form when a late pick-up fee is incurred.

C. Student's Responsibilities:

- 1) Will not stop to play or disturb classrooms as they pass through on their way to the exit door.
- 2) Will stay with responsible adult until reaching vehicle in the parking lot.
- 3) Will buckle-up as required!

RELEASE FROM CHILDCARE

Please enter through the foyer. Please sign you child out at the touchless tablet kiosk using the Daily Connect app. Please swipe your key fob to gain access to the Education Center. Parent/Guardian then proceeds to the appropriate classroom to pick up your child.

Children will only be released to persons for whom previous written permission has been obtained from the parent or guardian. Persons, other than the parent/guardian, must show identification and must be at least 16 years old. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS.**

CHILDREN'S CHAPEL/RELIGION

Good Shepherd Education Center will conduct a weekly Bible lesson/activity with all Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten, and Childcare students. Good Shepherd United Methodist Church's Director of Discipleship will conduct the weekly Bible lesson/activity which will coordinate with the center's *ABC Jesus Loves Me* religious curriculum. This service will be held every Wednesday (see dates on GSEC Calendar).

FIELD TRIPS

Twos, Preschool, and Pre-Kindergarten classes will not take any field trips off church property during the school year. GSEC will have different vendors and entertainment come to the center throughout the year.

OBSERVING CENTER ACTIVITIES

From time to time, we receive requests from parents of prospective students to observe our center activities while classes are in session. Any adult wishing to observe should call ahead and check in at the Director's office before going to observe a classroom. A letter of introduction will be needed if you are not the parent of a current or prospective student.

VOLUNTEERS

For reasons of continuity of care for our students, volunteers are not used in the classrooms. Parents may be asked to help with special events such as Scholastic Book Fairs and holiday activities.

PICTURES

Teachers take pictures of students daily to upload in the Daily Connect app for parents to see the day-to-day activities being done in the classroom. On occasion, these pictures are used for classroom and hallway bulletin boards to share school events with our families. Video recordings may be shared with families during social events (Open House, End of the Year Program). A professional photographer will take individual pictures of the children in the Fall. Individual pictures and a class picture will be taken in the Spring. Individual and class pictures will be made available for parents to order. Ordering pictures is completely voluntary.

SHOW & TELL

Show & Tell is done at the discretion of the teachers. Teachers who wish to conduct Show & Tell will assign students a time and day which will be included in the daily lesson plan. A note home, an email, and a message on the Daily Connect app will be sent specifying the day of the week assigned for his/her Show & Tell. Show & Tell is great for building self-confidence. It is best to let the child bring what he/she wants. Suggestions are bits of nature, books or media that are seasonal to go along with your child's study unit for the week. If the center is closed or your child is absent on his/her day, it is best to wait until the next week for his/her Show & Tell time. Show & Tell items should be brought in a bag with the child's name printed on it. Items that cannot fit in a child's cubby will be considered too large to bring. Due to allergies, pets may not be brought for Show & Tell.

ADULT MISCONDUCT

No abusive language or behavior will be tolerated from parents toward other parents or toward any Good Shepherd staff member on any property of the church. The staff of Good Shepherd Education Center extends courtesy to all parents, grandparents, and caregivers, and the Director expects the same courtesy to be extended by adults entering the center.

Any misconduct by a parent, grandparent, guardian, caregiver, or other adults will result in an interview with the Director. This interview will serve as a warning. Any further misconduct will be managed at the discretion of the Director and the Good Shepherd Education Center Board of Directors. This may result in expulsion of both student and adult for the remainder of the school year and/or prevent any future attendance at Good Shepherd Education Center.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

GSEC is required to have a plan to ensure that we are well prepared for emergencies. Emergency Preparedness drills are practiced twice a year. A Fire Drill is performed every month. If a need were to arise that required evacuation of the building, students and staff would go to Arthur Middleton Elementary School located at 1109 Copley Avenue in St. Charles. GSEC would follow instructions from local civil authorities regarding the need to evacuate or to keep the building secured.

PARENT/CENTER RELATIONSHIPS

Good Shepherd Education Center always strives to keep the doors of communication open between home and school. We maintain an open-door policy for our families. Parents are encouraged to participate in various activities throughout the school year. These activities include in-house field trips, Scholastic Book Fair, birthday and holiday parties, and parent/teacher conferences. The Education Center uses *Sign Up Genius* to solicit volunteers for center events.

Teachers will try to be as available as their schedule allows. Teachers are busy with class preparation before and after classes. If you wish to talk with the teacher, it is best to set up a time to speak on the phone or to conference about your child. Drop-off and pick-up times are not good times to talk to staff about concerns or questions because of the business of the times and lack of privacy for conversations. Staff members should not be approached outside of school to discuss a student's progress.

The Director is available to speak with parents about any questions or concerns. It is best to set up a time to talk with the Director, however, the Director will do their best to make themselves available if issues arise that need immediate attention.

The center receives information from state and local agencies regarding resources for children and families. These resources may include workshops, meetings, and agency descriptions and may be helpful for our families. This information is posted on the bulletin board in the church foyer as well as the Education Center Information Display located in front of the church office. If parents/family members have questions or need guidance regarding a particular concern, such as referral resources for children with special needs or health care needs, please do not hesitate to ask the staff or the Director.

Each Spring parents will receive a Program Evaluation to complete regarding many aspects of the GSEC programs. We ask parents to give us this necessary feedback to help with planning and improving programs for the following year. Throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact the Director if you have any suggestions, criticisms or concerns about center operations or the staff.

BABYSITTING/CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Based on research and discussions with legal counsel, it has been determined that a conflict of interest does exist, actual or potential, when GSEC staff babysit for GSEC families. GSEC staff owe their primary commitment to GSEC, its parents and children.

Entering other employment relationships with GSEC parents creates at least the perception that the commitment of the staff to that parent and his/her child is somehow greater than that of the staff to other parents or children. Further, if there is a dispute between the parent and the staff, there may be a perception on the part of the parent that the staff's commitment to or treatment of their child while at GSEC is, or will be, adversely impacted. Either of these situations could interfere with the proper operation of GSEC and ultimately hurt the reputation of GSEC and its employees. **Therefore, GSEC expressly prohibits its staff from babysitting for currently enrolled GSEC families.**

PARKING

Only those with special tags or permits for persons with disabilities are allowed to use the parking spaces designated for that purpose in our parking lot. We suggest that you park in the lower end of the lot nearest the Education Wing since you will be exiting from the door at the end of that building each day after picking up students. **YOUNGER CHILDREN OR BABIES SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT UNATTENDED IN YOUR VEHICLES.** Please observe and use the ONE-WAY signs and arrows (painted on the road) in our parking lot.

SEAT BELT LAW

Maryland's law (effective October 1, 2013) requires that children under eight years old ride in an appropriate child restraint, unless the child is 4'9" or taller, according to the vehicle and child restraint instructions. Every child from 8 to 16 years old who is not secured in a child restraint must be secured in the vehicle's seat belt, in every seating position in the vehicle. This law is applicable to in-state and out-of-state vehicles. It is the driver's responsibility to make sure all children are correctly buckled up.

SMOKING, ALCOHOL, AND DRUGS

As required by regulations, smoking of cigarettes, cigars, or pipes, and the consumption of alcohol, or controlled dangerous substances will not be allowed in the Center, outdoor play areas or during field trips. Please note that Good Shepherd is a Tobacco and Drug Free Zone.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

- a. We will have our office answering machine (301-645-7550) recorded with a message by 5:30AM on inclement weather days.
- b. An email and Daily Connect message will also be sent to all families by 5:30AM about the opening status of the center on inclement weather days.
- c. If the Federal Government is **CLOSED**, GSEC will be **CLOSED**.
- d. If the Federal Government is on liberal leave, every attempt will be made to open GSEC. There may be a delay or closure if icy or unsafe conditions exist.

- e. If the Federal Government closes early, childcare will follow their plan by closing early. Please be alert to news broadcasts when the weather might indicate hazardous road conditions.
- f. If the Charles County Public Schools delay opening one hour, the center will open one hour late, as well. If the Charles County Public Schools delay opening two hours or more, the center will open at 9:00AM.
- g. There may be a delay or closure if icy conditions exist. The parking lot and walkways are a safety concern during icy conditions. If these areas cannot be properly treated and/or pose a safety concern, a delay or closure will occur.
- h. If the Charles County Public Schools are closed, please listen to the center's recorded message (301-645-7550), check your email, and your Daily Connect app for the most up-to-date information regarding the center's status. Please do this before leaving to bring your child to care.

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