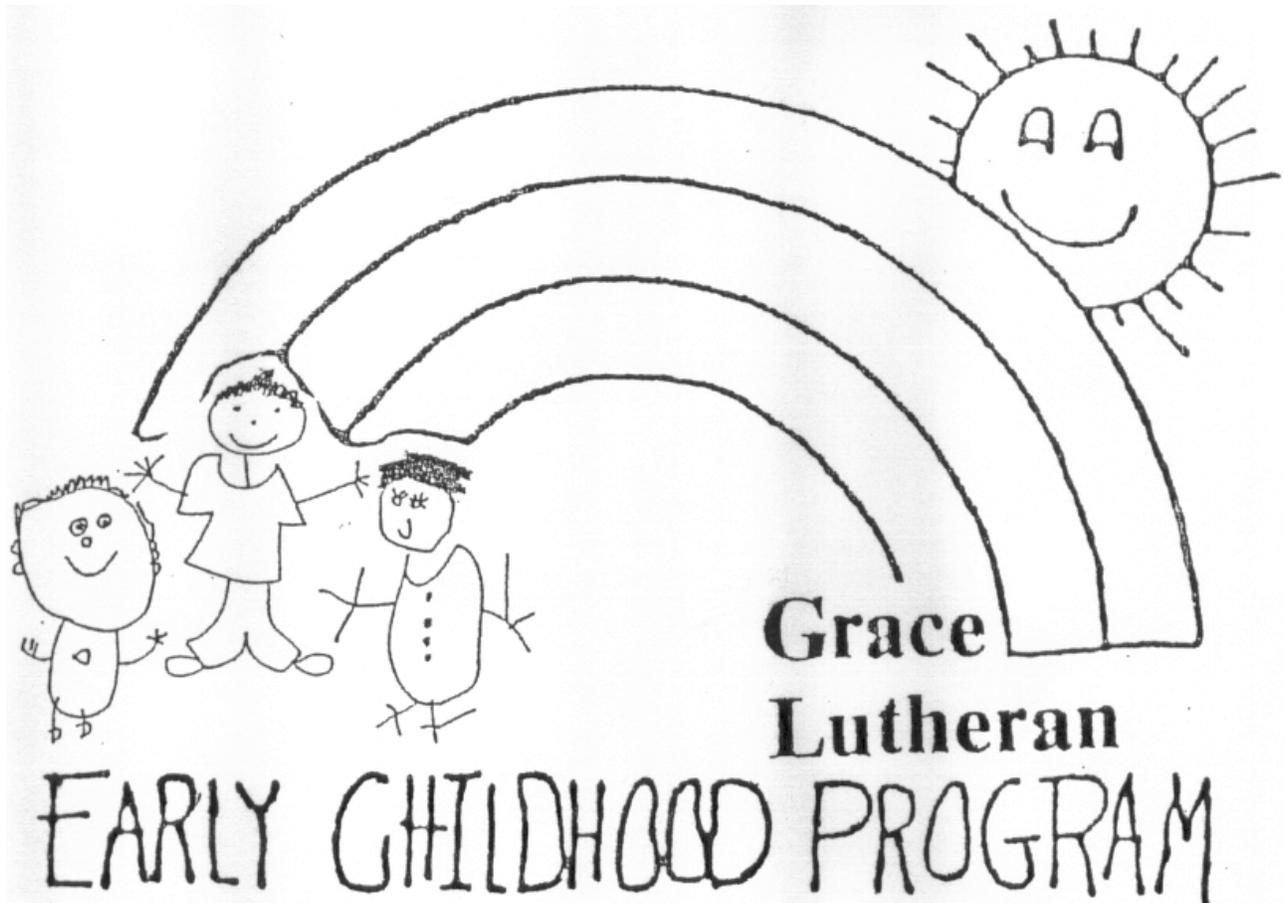


GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Parent's Handbook



*"Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Mark 10:14*

3000 W. Golf Course Road Midland, Texas 79701

ECP Office 432.694.3063

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Dear Families,

We are pleased to welcome both you and your child to Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program. We sincerely believe that each child is created to be unique and precious. Therefore, our staff's goal is to provide each child with experiences that will enhance his/her God-given potential in the areas of social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual development. This handbook is intended to serve as a brief overview of the guidelines and procedures developed by the ECP staff and Board. As you have questions or comments about the program or if you are interested in seeing our complete handbook of guidelines and procedures, please contact the ECP Director or any of the Board members.

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

In 1997 Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program attained National Lutheran School Accreditation through the Texas District, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in conjunction with the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is a five-year process and Grace ECP was granted re-accreditation in 2011.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

In addition to being an accredited preschool, Grace ECP is a licensed childcare facility. We follow all health and safety guidelines of the TDFPS and report to and are audited by this agency on a yearly basis. A copy of the minimum standards and Grace's most recent licensing inspection report are available in the ECP office and on the DFPS website: www.dfps.state.tx.us. The number to the local licensing office and child abuse hotline is 432.368.2693.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Through God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, the goal of Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program is to promote excellence in early childhood care and education by sharing God's grace, living His Word, and making disciples.

GOALS FOR EACH CHILD

The child will begin to:

- A. **Spiritually**
 - Build a personal, trusting, relationship with God through the use of Bible stories, prayer, and songs of praise.
 - Sense an assurance that God cares for him, even though we do wrong, and forgives us through Christ, even as we forgive others.
 - Develop a feeling of thankfulness for physical and spiritual blessings.

- B. **Physically**
 - Develop large and small muscles.
 - Become more self-reliant in personal habits.
 - Engage in active and quiet play.

- C. **Emotionally**
 - Become more independent.
 - Develop self-confidence, self-control, and a positive self-image.

D. **Socially**

- Use words to communicate and solve problems with others.
- Reflect upon how others feel.
- Participate in group situations.

E. **Intellectually**

- Extend the use of language.
- Explore, experiment, and question.
- Build an academic knowledge base through hands-on activities.

The ECP believes that young children learn best by doing. Thus, our staff will facilitate the development of these goals through the use of play. Play provides the foundation for academic or 'school' learning. Play is the preparation children need for learning highly abstract symbols such as letters and numbers.

CHAPEL

Children go to chapel with the Pastor at 10:00 every Wednesday and Thursday. This is a wonderful opportunity to share the Word of God with the children and reinforce proper etiquette in the sanctuary. **Parents are always invited to attend chapel.** Puppet Chapel is the second Wednesday and Thursday of each month when the puppet ministry of the church visits chapel. Jesus Time is the daily devotional time in the classroom. Children may not be exempt from chapel or Jesus Time activities for any reason.

MUSIC /CREATIVE MOVEMENT

In addition to regular classroom activities all children will have the opportunity each week to participate in a large group class focusing on gross motor development through music and movement.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parents of 2, 3, and 4 year-old ECP students will be given the opportunity to schedule parent/teacher conferences once or twice a year. The kindergarten teacher will conference parents each semester. Parents are encouraged at any time to initiate other conferences.

TUITION AND EXTENDED CARE

Annual tuition is billed in nine monthly payments. **Tuition is due in full on the first of each month.** A statement for tuition will be placed in your child's cubby at the beginning of each month. A late fee of \$20.00 will be added if payment is not received by the 5th of the month.

Deductions in tuition are not made in holiday months (i.e.: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break). Parents are responsible for each month's total tuition, regardless of the days of attendance in that month. **There will be no reduction of payments due to illness, holidays, vacations, absences, or injury.**

Monday through Friday, morning and afternoon extended care will be billed on the current month's statement. Hourly extended care will be billed on the next month's statement.

A fee schedule has been included in this handbook or is available in the ECP office. Non-payment of tuition after 30 days may result in dismissal from the ECP program. Tuition payments should not be combined with other payments such as field trips, book orders, T-shirts, pictures, etc.

DROP IN AND MAKE UP DAYS

Students who miss their regularly scheduled days may not make up those days. Grace ECP does not allow students to "drop in" on a day they are not registered to attend.

ADMISSION

Grace Lutheran ECP admits children of any race, color, religion and ethnic or national origin and makes available to them all the programs and activities provided by the facility. Students will be placed in class according to their age as of September 1.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents are encouraged to visit the school anytime during operating hours. For security reasons, doors are locked at 3:00. After 3:00, extended care parents must enter the code in the lock on the southwest door to pick up children.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Children should wear washable clothing appropriate for indoor and outdoor play. A **COMPLETE CHANGE OF CLOTHES MUST BE KEPT AT SCHOOL**, to be used for accidents or messy activities. Please place an outfit with underwear and socks in a zipper bag clearly marked with the child's name. Parents must provide diapers and wipes for one and two year old children not yet trained.

TOILET TRAINING

Please provide diapers and baby wipes for your child. All personal items must be marked with the child's name. The two-year-old children routinely go to the restroom, consistently encouraging training. The staff will assist the family with the process, please tell us how we can best help.

All 3 & 4 year olds must be toilet trained to attend classes at Grace ECP.

GUM, CANDY, SOFT DRINKS, TOYS, AND MONEY

Children may not bring gum, candy, soft drinks, toys, or money to school unless asked to do so for a class "show and tell" or other project. Toys brought to the classroom will be stored until time to go home. Exceptions to this are pillows, stuffed toys, etc. brought for nap time.

OUTSIDE PLAY POLICY

The ECP considers outside time an integral part of the daily schedule for all age groups. Children who are well enough to attend school will be expected to participate in outdoor play. Children will go outside if the temperature is above 40 degrees including the wind chill factor. Please make sure your child has appropriate outerwear (jacket, hat, etc.) for outdoor play.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays may be celebrated at school. To provide refreshments, please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. Invitations, birthday or other, will **only** be distributed at school if an invitation is provided for every child in the class.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services requires that each child be signed in and signed out with the times noted. Parents must leave phone numbers where they can be reached and indicate who will pick up the child. Extended care students must be signed in and out on the extended care clipboard as well as the regular classroom teacher's bulletin board.

Teachers meet in the kitchen for morning devotion and announcements until 8:55. Please do not bring your child into class before 8:55. **Never leave a child in the classroom unattended.** Teachers are in their rooms from 8:55 – 2:05. Any child dropped off before 8:55 or left after 2:05 will be charged extended care rates of \$3.50 an hour. Please notify us if you will be late picking up your child. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute for pick up after 5:30 will be strictly enforced.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline will be based on an understanding of appropriate child development and of the individual needs of the child. It will be directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior in a loving, Christian manner. Teachers will seek to redirect inappropriate behavior and teach the child to respect him/herself, the rights of others, and the school's authority. The following procedures will be followed if a child's behavior is deemed inappropriate:

- Step 1: The teacher and the child will seek to resolve the matter immediately. Speaking to the child or time out may be used. Time out shall not be longer than one minute times the child's age.
- Step 2: If Step 1 has repeatedly proven ineffective, the child will meet with the program director. Parents will be notified.
- Step 3: If the situation persists, the teacher will contact the parent(s), and a parent-teacher conference will be arranged.
- Step 4: If no changes occur as a result of Step 3, a parent-teacher-director conference will be held.
- Step 5: If all efforts have proven ineffective, the child may be asked to leave the program.

Appeals may be directed to the ECP School Board.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

All registration forms must be in the school office by the first day of school attendance. The student's immunization record must be current to meet state requirements. The State Health Department audits the school records annually.

Within **7 days** of starting school, each child must provide the office:

1. A health form signed by his/her own physician stating that the child has been examined within the past year and is physically capable of participating in school activities.
2. A **current** record of immunizations.

Any child who does not have all of the proper forms filed in the ECP office will be excluded from school until forms are provided to the director.

MEDICATION

All medication will be stored in the director's office and administered only by the office staff. Any medication brought to school **must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name**. Medication and special procedures will be administered to a child in the school only after a **Medication Release Form** (available in the office) has been filled out and signed by the parent. **Do not put medication in a child's backpack, lunch box or cubby.**

HEALTH CHECKS AND CHILD ABUSE

When the teacher observes an unusual sign or symptom of an illness or injury, the director checks the child. Parents are notified if behavioral or physical changes occur.

In compliance with TDFPS standards, employees of Grace ECP are required by law to report any and all suspected cases of child abuse to the proper authorities.

ACCIDENTS

In case of minor-accidents, first aid will be rendered. For more serious accidents, the child's parents (or other designated adults) will be called. If necessary and no adult can be reached, the director will assume the authority to treat/hospitalize the child at the parents' expense.

ILLNESSES/MEDICAL CONDITIONS

If your child develops a communicable condition, please notify the school office. In turn, the school will notify the parents of other children with whom your child has been in contact. Following the diagnosis a child can be readmitted according to the guidelines provided by the state licensing board.

A child may not attend school if one or more of the following exists:

1. An illness which prevents the child from comfortably participating in class;
2. An illness that necessitates greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the care of other children;
3. The child has any of the following:
 - a. Symptoms of possible severe illness, including:
 - Fever
 - Runny nose with discoloration
 - Diarrhea
 - Uncontrolled breathing
 - Lethargy
 - Wheezing

- Rash with fever
 - Mouth sores with drooling
 - Behavioral changes
 - Vomiting
 - Other unusual symptoms or until medical evaluation indicates that the child can be included in the facility's activities
- b. Communicable conditions such as, but not limited to:
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
 - Head lice
 - Scabies
 - Impetigo
 - Strep throat
- c. Chicken pox, for 7 days after the onset of rash or until all sores have scabbed over.

A child will not be readmitted until they are free of these symptoms for 24 hours. This is for the protection of all children and staff at the center.

EVACUATION RELOCATION SITE

In case of an emergency that would necessitate evacuating the premises, all ECP students will be relocated across the north parking lot in the Midland Christian School Gym at 1709 Northrup. Parents will be notified when children are relocated.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the case of bad weather, ECP classes will be delayed or canceled in conjunction with decisions made by MISD. The teacher will contact her students if this situation occurs.

In the event MISD **cancels** school, the ECP will be **closed**. Classes will be rescheduled on the day MISD reschedules classes.

If MISD classes are **delayed**, the ECP will delay the start of classes. Extended care will open at 7:30 a.m. and preschool classes will begin at 10:00 a.m. Extended care will be open to regularly attending extended care students only.

FIELD TRIPS

Preschool and kindergarten students take field trips. Annual permission must be on file in the ECP office prior to participation. Notification of each event will be posted at least 48 hours prior to the trip. Parents must provide a booster or car seat for all children. Parents who transport children must complete Transportation Training available in the ECP office.

FOOD

All children must bring a lunch that includes a drink (no soft drinks). All parts of the lunch must be labeled with the child's name. Please use a thermos and/or ice pack in lunches to keep them hot and/or cold. Children's lunches will be stored in their cubbies in the classrooms. **No provisions for keeping lunches cold or hot will be made by the school/ teacher.** Please cut all food into age appropriate bite sized pieces. Please send food that children are able to feed themselves.

NAP/QUIET TIME

Children in the one and two-year-old classes will nap every day. Three and four year olds and kindergarteners that stay in extended care will be provided a nap/rest time at 2:00. The ECP will provide a napping mat for each child. Children must bring a blanket and cover for the mat marked with their name.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Limited scholarships are available for 3 and 4 year old pre-school and kindergarten students only. Applications may be obtained in the ECP office. Scholarships are based on financial need and are reviewed and approved by the School Board.

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT

The Grace Lutheran congregation views the Early Childhood Program as an integral element of its total ministry. Under the auspices of its elected representatives, the ECP Board, the congregation pledges itself to support this ministry by:

1. Providing and maintaining facilities.
2. Providing the ministry of the Pastor, Director of Christian Education, and church secretary to the children and families of the ECP.
3. Encouraging its members to support the program through prayer, by offering their time and talent, and through monetary means.

GRIEVANCE GUIDELINES

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault.
But do it privately, just between yourselves."

If anyone has a complaint about one of the teachers, it is properly handled by going to the teacher first. Should this not be successful, the next step is the Director and ultimately the Board.

If anyone has a complaint about the administration, it is properly handled by going to the Director first. Should this not be successful, the next step is to invite an ECP Board

member to accompany the complainant for a subsequent meeting with the Director. Further action would involve the entire ECP Board.

For a complete copy of the ECP Grievance Policy, please see the director.

PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION

The Texas Structural Pest Control Board requires the school to notify parents that Grace Lutheran ECP periodically applies pesticides inside the building and on the grounds. A pest control sign will be posted 48 hours prior to each planned treatment including information on the times and types of application. A Consumer Information Sheet will be provided upon request to any individual entering or working in the building. Information concerning these applications may be obtained from the director, Mary Wood.

ECP SCHOOL BOARD

The ECP School Board was created for the support and assistance of all constituents of the Early Childhood Program. The Board has put into place guidelines and procedures to help ensure the smooth operation of all areas of the program. Copies of the guidelines are available for review by any interested individual. The Board welcomes comments and may be contacted through the ECP office at 694-3063, the church office at 697-3221, or in writing at 3000 W. Golf Course Road, Midland, 79701

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Early Childhood Program
3000 West Golf Course Road
Midland, Texas 79701**

**432.694.3063 Fax 432.697.3536
gracelutheranmidland.org grace-ecp@sbcglobal.net**

Please sign and date this form and return (form only) to the ECP office.

I have received a copy of the Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program Parent Handbook.

I will make the ECP staff aware of my child's arrival and departure by recording the time I **sign in** and **sign out**. I will list the person who will pick up my child and leave a phone number where I can be reached on the teacher's sign-in sheet located beside my child's classroom door.

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Child's Name