

Parent Handbook

2021-2022 School Year



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steppingstonesprek.org

Welcome to Stepping Stones Preschool! We are going to have a great year of learning and growing! To help us partner with parents as effectively as possible, we offer this handbook as a guide to our program. You will find most of the day-to-day information in the first portion of the book. The policies we operate under as license holders in the State of Minnesota complete the latter portion of the handbook. We hope this handbook can be a helpful reference to you throughout the school year. Also, please know your questions are always welcome!

Daily Routines

Drop Off

For the safety of our children, the doors into the Kid Zone will be locked while class is in session. The exception is a 15-minute window of time (8:25-8:40 am and 12:25-12:40 pm) at arrival so staff and students can freely enter. If families arrive before the hallway is open, they are welcome to wait in the common area outside of the Kid Zone entrance.

Parents are responsible for accompanying their child to the classroom and signing in their student. The sign in sheet is located just outside of Door 101A on top of the cubbies. Parents should not leave the building until the preschooler is signed in and clearly under the care of Stepping Stones staff.

If your child will be absent from preschool, please let us know through a phone call at 218.327.9343 (if no answer, leave a voice message) or email at sarah@grefc.org.

Being Ready for a Great Day!

Children will be most ready to learn and have fun if rested, nourished and comfortably dressed. Play clothes and tennis shoes are best for a busy day at preschool.

At the beginning of the school year, parents are asked to provide an **extra set of clothing** for each child to keep at school. Accidents and spills can happen at preschool, and we find it best to be prepared! The clothing should be sent in a gallon-sized Ziploc bag labeled with the child's name. The clothing will be returned to each family at the end of the school year.

We ask that preschoolers bring a **backpack or bookbag** with them each school day. It is much easier for the children to bring notes and projects home in a bag and helps you know where to check each day for communications from the preschool. Please make a habit of checking your child's bag each day after preschool to stay up-to-date on what we are doing at school.

Our program does not include a regular, outdoor free-play time, so snow pants and boots are not needed at school.

Pick Up

Pick up time is 11:30 am for morning students and 3:30 pm for afternoon students. To keep preschoolers as safe as possible and to make pick up time a little easier for parents, Stepping Stones Preschool staff will deliver preschoolers directly to vehicles at pick up time. Cars will form a line along the building leading up to the main doors of the church. Parents are asked to place their child's name card, which we will provide to you, in the window of the vehicle so that staff can readily identify the families in line for pick up.

We offer a 10-minute grace period after the stated pick up time. Parents who have not picked up their student by 11:40 am for the morning class or 3:40 pm for the afternoon class are subject to a late pick-up fee. Please see the "Tuition, Fees, and Payment" section of this handbook for more details.

Please be sure anyone who may be picking up your child during the school year is listed on your child's registration form. Your child will not be released to other individuals. Please be aware that those listed as having permission to pick up your child still may be asked to present a photo ID to preschool staff in cases where the staff is not familiar with the person. Please keep your list of emergency contacts and pick up individuals up-to-date throughout the school year.

Snack

One snack is provided each class session. Snacks include two food groups and meet USDA requirements for child care snacks. Be sure to communicate with us throughout the year if you make any changes to your child's diet that we must implement at school.

Illness

If your child is ill, please do not send him or her to preschool. Your child needs rest to recover. Further, many illnesses common among preschoolers are contagious.

Do not send your child to preschool if he or she has any of the following:

- Any known or suspected infectious illness.
- A fever of greater than 100.4 within the past 24 hours. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications before returning to school.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea. A child who has vomited or experienced diarrhea the evening before or in the morning before school should remain home for the day.
- Cough.
- Copious and/or thick nasal secretions.
- Copious and/or thick eye secretions.

- Contagious skin rash or infections
- Untreated lice or treated lice with remaining nits.
- Use of antibiotics for less than 24 hours.
- Simply does not feel well and cannot participate in the day's activities.

If a child becomes ill while at the preschool, a parent will be contacted for pick up. If the parent cannot be reached, the preschool will contact the listed alternate (emergency) contacts.

If your child becomes ill with a contagious disease outside of class time, please contact the preschool within 24 hours of the onset of the illness.

Parents will be notified whenever the classroom group has been exposed to a contagious illness. Notification will be conducted through an email communication or classroom notes sent home immediately following the exposure.

Weather-Related or Emergency Closings

If ISD 318 is closed due to weather, Stepping Stones Preschool will also be closed. Please monitor local news updates for ISD 318 weather-related closings. We will also send a text message.

If the preschool must close for other reasons specific to the preschool facility, preschool staff will contact you directly.

Tuition, Fees, and Payments

Tuition is \$170 per month and due on the 1st of each month: August and October-May.

Tuition will not be reduced for holidays, illness, vacation, extended absences, inclement weather or any unanticipated school closures.

Late Tuition: Accounts not current by the 5th of each month will receive a \$5 late fee. Accounts more than one-month overdue will result in the end of the child's enrollment at Stepping Stones unless special arrangements have been made with the preschool.

Late Pick-Up Fee: We will extend a 10-minute grace period for pick-up. After the first 10 minutes, you will be charged \$5 for every 5-minute period the caregiver is late.

Payment Options:

- You may use our Online Payment menu to submit any payments using a credit/debit card. There is a short form to fill out on your first visit to this program.

- You may mail or drop off a check made out to Stepping Stones Preschool.
- We do not accept cash.

We require a 30-day notice if you wish to withdraw your child from preschool.

Policy Information for Parents

A. Stepping Stones Preschool will serve preschoolers who are at least 4 years of age. The preschool may serve up to, but not more than, 20 children at one time.

B. The Preschool is open September-May, Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, 8:30-11:30 am and 12:30-3:30 pm.

C. Stepping Stones Preschool will offer a highly interactive, engaging, Christ-centered atmosphere where children will have ongoing opportunities to learn about God, themselves, others and their environment. Stepping Stones Preschool strives to accomplish the following objectives for each child in our program:

- Children will be exposed to Bible teaching and God.
- Children will develop socially and emotionally by growing in their understanding of themselves and others and gaining communication skills to positively interact with other children and adults.
- Children will develop intellectually by increasing their critical and independent thinking skills.
- Children will be exposed to basic math and pre-reading concepts.
- Children will develop physically by increasing gross and fine motor skills and coordination.
- The children will be exposed to creative arts and music experiences.

A complete Child Care Program Plan is available to parents upon request.

D. Parents are offered parent-teacher conferences two times each school year, once in October or November and once in February or March. Conferences will review student work and assessments, as well as the child's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development.

E. In accordance with the requirements set forth by the State of Minnesota, Stepping Stones Preschool must obtain a record of each child's current physical examination, signed by the child's health care provider. Stepping Stones Preschool must receive this documentation no later than within 30 days of entrance or readmission to the program. Also in accordance with the requirements set forth by the State of Minnesota, Stepping Stones Preschool must obtain complete and signed immunization records prior to entrance or readmission to program.

F. If a child becomes ill while at the preschool, a parent will be contacted for pick up. If the parent cannot be reached, the preschool will contact the listed alternate (emergency) contacts. Parents will be notified whenever the classroom group has been exposed to a contagious illness. Notification will be conducted through email or note sent immediately following the exposure.

G. All Stepping Stones staff are infant and child CPR certified and pediatric First Aid certified. In the event of accident or injury, staff will administer immediate First Aid. In the event of minor injury, parents will be notified at the time of pick up. In the event of an emergent situation, staff will administer first aid and call 911. The local source of emergency care is the Grand Itasca Hospital. The preschool director will contact parents immediately.

H. In the event of exceptional circumstances that necessitates the administering of prescription medication while a student is under the care of Stepping Stones Preschool, a medication form must be completed by the child's parents. Medication must be brought to the preschool by the parents and arrive in the original container with the original pharmacy label showing the child's name and dosage instructions. Any and all medication kept at the preschool will be locked. Over-the-counter medications will only be given only if directed by an allergy response plan or other emergency action plan.

I. The preschool will obtain written permission from parents prior to allowing students to participate in any field trips.

J. The preschool will obtain written permission from parents prior to allowing students to participate in research, media, and/or public relations. Specific permission must be granted for each individual instance of research, media, or public relations. The approval or objection will be kept in the student file.

K. Stepping Stones Preschool will offer students one snack each class session. Snacks will include two food groups.

L. The goal of behavior guidance is to help children build their own self-awareness and self-control. Clear and realistic expectations and consistency are foundational to behavior guidance. Stepping Stones Preschool follows a proactive approach to behavior guidance and implements the following principles.

a) Staff will provide a positive role model of acceptable behavior and affirm positive behavior in students.

b) Staff will provide behavior guidance that is age-appropriate for preschoolers, including clear and realistic expectations for this age group. Staff will be aware that

preschoolers are often still learning what is appropriate and what is not. Part of the preschool's role is to teach appropriate behaviors and social skills that will help students be successful in the preschool as well as the years ahead.

c) Staff will redirect children away from potentially eruptive situations and toward positive and constructive activity.

d) Staff will train children how to use acceptable alternatives to problem behavior such as taking turns or asking an adult for help.

e) Staff will provide behavior guidance calmly. Stepping Stones Preschool will not tolerate physical or verbal abuse. Further, students who become violent with staff or other students will be separated from the group, although always supervised, until the violent behavior stops. The safety of students and staff will be protected at all times.

f) Staff will follow up on unacceptable behaviors immediately to help make it clear to student what behaviors need adjustment. Staff will provide directly related consequences for unacceptable behavior.

Separation may be used to help a child "cool down" and bring unacceptable behaviors under control. Separation may occur only after staff has first attempted other less intrusive methods of behavior guidance or if the child is causing immediate danger to the child or others. Children separated from the group will remain in the preschool space and be supervised at all times by preschool staff. A child who has been separated from the group will return to the group when the precipitating behavior abates or stops.

All separations will be documented on a daily log. The log will include the child's name, staff person's name, time, date, and information indicating what less intrusive methods were used to guide the child's behavior and how the child's behavior continued to threaten the well-being of the child or other children in care. If a child is separated from the group three times or more in one day, the child's parent shall be notified and notation of the parent notification shall be indicated on the daily log. If a child is separated five times or more in one week or eight times or more in two weeks, the preschool will develop a behavior plan in consultation with the child's parents and other staff members and professionals when appropriate.

M. Stepping Stones does not have a classroom pet. If a pet visits the classroom, parents will be notified in writing in advance of the visit.

N. Parents of enrolled children may visit the classroom at any time.

O. The Department of Human Services, Licensing Services is 651.431.6500.

Program Grievance Procedures for Parents

Stepping Stones Preschool seeks to be an exceptional program and offer top-notch teaching and care for its children. However, in the event that a complaint or concern arises, a grievance process is in place to address concerns.

A grievance is a serious matter and is defined as a statement which alleges a violation of a policy or principle at Stepping Stones Preschool.

A parent with a grievance should:

- A. Initiate a discussion of the complaint or concern with the child's teacher.
- B. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, the parent should bring the complaint or concern to the preschool director.

No adverse action will come to the grieved party as a result of filing a grievance.

Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Information for Parents

The State of Minnesota requires that licensed center provide the rule relating to the state's Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Policy to all parents who enroll children at centers within the state of Minnesota. The mandated reporting policy is listed below. The policy is also available to parents upon request.

Who should report

- Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect.
- If you work with children in a licensed facility, you are legally required to report and cannot shift the responsibility of reporting to anyone else at your facility. If you know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected to physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years, you must immediately (within 24 hours) make a report to an outside agency.

Where to report

- If you know or suspect that a child is in immediate danger, call 911.
- All reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect of children occurring in a licensed facility should be made to the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division's Maltreatment Intake line at 651.431.6600.

- Reports regarding incidents of suspected abuse or neglect of children occurring within a family in the community should be made to Itasca County Child Protection at 218.327.2941.
- If your report does not involve possible abuse or neglect, but does involve possible violations of Minnesota Statutes or rules that govern the facility, you should call the Department of Services Licensing Division at 651.431.6500.

What to Report

- Definitions of maltreatment are contained in the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act.
- A report to any of the mentioned agencies should contain enough information to identify the child involved, any person responsible for the abuse or neglect (if known), and the nature and extent of the maltreatment and/or possible licensing violations. For reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect within a licensed facility, the report should include any actions taken by the facility in response to the incident.
- An oral report of suspected abuse or neglect made to one of the above agencies by a mandated reporter must be followed by a written report to the same agency within 72 hours, not including weekends and holidays.

Failure to Report

A mandated reporter who knows or has reason to believe a child is or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused and fails to report is guilty of misdemeanor. In addition, a mandated reporter who fails to report maltreatment that is found to be serious or recurring maltreatment may be disqualified from employment in positions allowing direct contact with person receiving services from program licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Retaliation Prohibited

An employer of any mandated reporter shall not retaliate against the mandated reporter for reports made in good faith or against a child with response to whom the report is made.

Internal Review

When the facility knows that an internal or external report of alleged or suspected maltreatment has been made, the facility must complete an internal review within 30 calendar days and take corrective action, if necessary, to protect the health and safety of children in care. The review must include an assessment of whether or not:

- Related policies were followed
- The policies and procedures were adequate

- There is a need for additional staff training
- The reported event is similar to past events with the children involved
- There is a need for corrective action by the license holder to protect the health and safety of the children in care

Primary and Secondary Person or Position to Ensure Internal Reviews are Completed

The internal review will be completed by the preschool director. If the director is involved in the alleged or suspected maltreatment, the chair of the Grand Rapid Evangelical Free Church Executive Board will be responsible for completing the review.

Documentation of the Internal Review

The facility must document completion of the internal review and make internal reviews accessible to the commissioner immediately upon the commissioner's request.

Corrective Action Plan

Based on the result of the internal review, the license holder must develop, document, and implement a corrective action plan designed to correct current lapses in performance by individuals or the license holder, if any.

Staff Training

The license holder must provide training to all staff related to the mandated reporting responsibilities as specified in the Maltreatment of Minors Act. The license holder must document the provision of this training in individual personnel records, monitor implementation by staff, and ensure that the policy is readily accessible to staff, as specified under Minnesota Statutes.