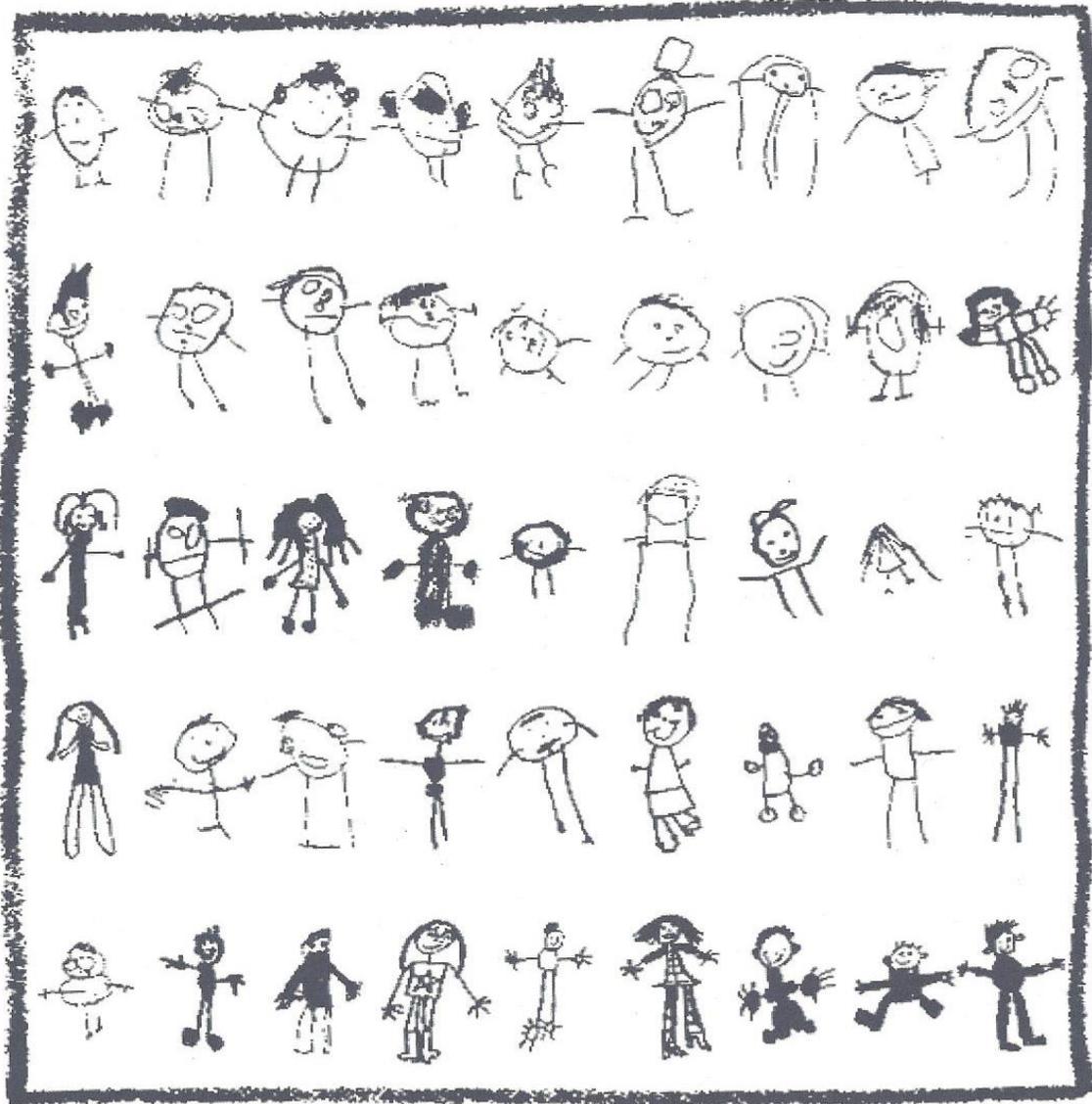


1ST CHURCH PRESCHOOL

A Morning & Full Day Program
For 3, 4, & 5 Year Olds

"Learning By Experiencing"

Parent Handbook



111 Church Drive • Cheshire, CT 06410 • 203-699-1169 • www.1stchurchpreschool.org





"Learning by Experiencing"

111 Church Drive, Cheshire, CT 06410
(203) 699-1169

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www.1stchurchpreschool.org

Dear Parents:

We welcome you and your child(ren) to our community at 1st Church Preschool. We are glad that you have chosen our program and consider it a privilege to share in your child's growth and development. Our program operates as a partnership between parents and staff to promote high quality, developmentally informed education and loving childcare. We are pleased to have the opportunity to work together with you during this coming year. We welcome families of all races and religious beliefs and delight in the opportunity for diversity in our program.

This Parent Handbook introduces you more fully to our 1st Church Preschool philosophy, policies, procedures, and curriculum. We encourage you to read it carefully and save it for reference throughout the year. Please do not hesitate to discuss any questions you may have with any of our staff.

We look forward to continuing to work together through informal daily contact, your visits and contributions to the program, scheduled conferences, and ongoing events throughout the year. We hope this will be a rich and rewarding experience for you and your child!

Sincerely,

Brenda Ward-Kelley

Brenda Ward-Kelley, Director
and the Teaching Staff of 1st Church Preschool

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Introduction

1st Church Preschool is an innovative, early childhood program providing morning and full day preschool experiences for children ages 3 to 6 years old. Our low child to teacher ratios allow for better supervision and individualized instruction while our flexible scheduling can meet the needs of most families with young children. Our integrated curriculum and literacy-rich environment can provide your children with an abundance of experiences which intentionally promote their developmental skills and knowledge across all domains. Our extensive outdoor playground with gardens offers opportunities for growth and learning out-of-doors while developing an awareness of the natural world. At 1st Church Preschool, we believe a child acquires knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which he or she lives through playful interaction with objects and people – “*Learning by Experiencing.*”

1st Church Preschool is housed in the First Congregational Church on the Cheshire Green. We are an independent, not-for-profit, child-centered program--not an extension of the Church nor affiliated with its religious program. We welcome families of all races and religious beliefs and embrace opportunities to provide children with multi-cultural and diverse experiences. We strive to provide a safe environment where children can learn confidence, develop respect and pleasure in relationships with others, and feel comfortable at school while away from home. We operate in partnership with families to promote high quality, developmentally informed, loving childcare and education to meet the needs of families in Cheshire and the surrounding communities.

Mission Statement

1st Church Preschool is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and supportive community for young children and their families. Our morning and full day programs are developmentally based and age appropriate. We provide a hands-on learning environment both in and out of doors each day. We stress a literacy-based curriculum that is interactive with the natural world. We value and maintain low child/teacher ratios for enhancing language development, social skills, and creativity. Children at 1st Church Preschool are guided by a skilled, professional early childhood staff.

History

In early 1994, our founding Director, Marilyn Donovan, a member of the First Congregational Church of Cheshire, along with Karen Kaczynski, the Director of Christian Education, worked with various Church committees to create a child care program to meet the needs of both non-working and working families both within and outside the church community. Funding for the project was borrowed from the Church congregation in September 1994 and First Congregational Church Day Care and Nursery, Inc. was set up as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. By November 1994, the Center became incorporated and renovations were quickly under way to meet licensing requirements by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. On January 3, 1995, the center was issued its initial operating license.

After an intense two-year self-study and validation process, the preschool was Accredited in June 2004 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. This was a big achievement and recognition of the quality of our early childhood program.

At the end of the 2006-2007 school year, our founder and original Director, Marilyn Donovan retired. A new Director, Dawn DeFeo, succeeded Marilyn and served as director of the program from August 2006 until August 2010. During this time, the program began doing business as 1st Church Preschool, and once again, began the process for reaccreditation by the NAEYC.

In December 2010, the board hired Brenda Ward-Kelley to succeed Dawn as director of the program. Brenda began teaching at 1st Church Preschool in August 2004, as Lead Afternoon program teacher and then after one year, co-taught in the 4's Room Program. Brenda continues to carry on the philosophy and mission of the preschool program and to maintain NAEYC Accreditation which was reissued in May of 2011.

In August of 2015, the program was expanded as a fourth classroom was added to the program. The new classroom enabled the program to increase its licensed capacity from 36 to 46 children. Then in May of 2016, the preschool program was once again accredited with a valid until date of May 2021.

To this day, 1st Church Preschool continues to operate as a non-profit organization overseen by its own volunteer Board of Directors and continues to serve the families of Cheshire and the surrounding communities.

Philosophy and Goals

Young children learn by doing. The work of Piaget, Montessori, Erikson, and other child development theorists, and researchers have demonstrated that learning is a complex process that results from the interaction of children's own thinking, interests and experiences in the external world.

Knowledge is not something that is given to children as though they were empty vessels to be filled, rather, children acquire knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which they live through playful interaction with objects and people, thus our logo "*Learning by Experiencing.*" "Children do not need to be forced to learn: they are motivated by their own desire to make sense of their world." (Developmentally Appropriate Practices, NAEYC). We, as teachers, are facilitators of play, for we view play as essential to the development and growth of every child. In the context of imaginative play, children are able to set up and resolve social and emotional conflicts, extend their ideas about the world, expand conversational skills and develop thinking skills. The social interactions that evolve from play opportunities lead the child toward greater emotional understanding of his or her self, and of others.

We encourage thinking skills by providing a stimulating and supportive environment. We offer a curriculum rich in concrete experiences that expand the child's knowledge and understanding of their world. Through individual and group activities, skills are strengthened in communication, language development, social studies, mathematics, sciences, pre-reading, pre-writing and problem-solving. We support the notion that children learn by manipulating, exploring, discovering, creating, and questioning. In every endeavor, children take an active role in the learning process without pressure or fear of failure.

We provide for the emotional development of children by building confidence, trust, and independence. We want children to enjoy the school experience, to feel good about separating from their parents, and to deal with their thoughts and feelings in constructive ways. We help children to join group play and to understand and accept the responsibility of membership in a group. We also stress the importance of making decisions and accepting the consequences of those decisions.

As significant people impacting a child's life, we believe it is very important to work in partnership with parents to take advantage of our separate and shared input regarding a child's experiences. We record developmental assessments for each child, which are shared at parent conferences, and together create goals for each child's preschool experience. It is our hope that parents will recognize the value of their participation in their child's early childhood education and the benefit that their contribution will have in all areas of their child's development.

Our Accreditation

1st Church preschool has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children since June 2004. NAEYC Accreditation requires the filing of an annual report and is renewed every six years. NAEYC Accreditation represents the mark of quality in early childhood education and programs must meet NAEYC's 10 standards for high-quality early childhood education:

- Standard 1: Relationships
- Standard 2: Curriculum
- Standard 3: Teaching
- Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress
- Standard 5: Health
- Standard 6: Teachers
- Standard 7: Families
- Standard 8: Community Relationships
- Standard 9: Physical Environment
- Standard 10: Leadership and Management



For more information on NAEYC Accreditation, please visit NAEYC.org.

Our Staff

Our teachers work together as early childhood professionals to create rich, literacy-based, developmentally appropriate learning environments that promote the development of each child's social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and creative skills. By observing and assessing, our teachers intentionally plan curriculum and create environments to best support the thinking and learning needs of each child.

At 1st Church Preschool, all teachers are experienced and knowledgeable in early childhood. All new staff members receive orientation introducing them to the fundamentals of the program before they begin working with children. Our Head Teachers hold a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood or a related educational field and our Co-Teachers hold at least an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood or a Bachelor's Degree in a related field.

Teachers of 1st Church Preschool participate in a guided, intentional continuing education plan for professional development. This plan is in accordance with NAEYC professional development criteria and Connecticut Licensing Requirements. 1st Church Preschool provides yearly review/training of: NAEYC Code of Ethics; DPH (Department of Public Health) Regulations; Abuse & Neglect Policy & Procedure; Fire Safety/Emergency Policies & Procedures; Occupational Safety and Health Administration Practices; Medical Administration Training of Injectable Medications (EPI Pen); Curriculum & Assessment; NAEYC Standards & Criteria. All staff receive/renew certification in Pediatric First Aid, CPR and medication administration of oral, topical, & inhalant medications as required.

Our Programs

We provide morning and full day preschool programs with a variety of scheduling options. Our four-hour morning program allows for a slower pace in the classroom with enough time to delve into the learning process. We encourage a consecutive day schedule to help children feel really settled and connected and we have found this better supports separation issues.

Outdoor play is an integral part of our curriculum and children go outside each day, weather permitting. Our playground, gardens and grassy play area provide extensive outdoor activity choices in every season.

Our full day preschool program includes a rest time followed by a planned afternoon curriculum which offers calm, relaxing play activities. These activities are an extension of the morning curriculum allowing children additional time for exploration and practice of the concepts previously introduced.

Blue Room Program

Our Blue Room Program enrolls 10 children each day with two teachers. This classroom provides a slower paced, protective and relaxed atmosphere for younger 3-year-old children beginning what may be their first group experience away from home. Our focus is to promote the development of social-emotional skills allowing children to learn self-confidence through eventually learned self-help skills; manage in a group setting; and follow the rules and routines of the classroom. Our teachers create a literacy-rich environment through intentionally planned learning opportunities to promote language development as well as physical, cognitive and creative growth.

Our schedule allows large blocks of time for free choice play in the classroom along with outdoor play each day. Weekly theme-based curriculum is developed around the interests of the children. Teachers observe and assess each child then use this information to adjust curriculum and play choices offered in the classroom to meet the individual needs of each child.

Our full day preschool program includes a rest time followed by a planned afternoon curriculum which offers calm, relaxing play activities. These activities are an extension of the morning curriculum allowing children additional time for exploration and practice of the concepts previously introduced.

Our Blue Room does accept children who are not toilet trained when school begins in the fall. The family is responsible for initiating the toilet training of their child during the beginning months of school. Children will be encouraged and supported in their efforts at school and must be well on their way to underwear by January. Teachers work in partnership with parents to maintain consistency in supporting their child's efforts and progress.

Orange Room Program

Our Orange Room Program enrolls 8 children each day with two teachers. This classroom provides a smaller, protective and relaxed atmosphere for older 3-year old children and younger 4-year-old children who will be doing another year of preschool before going to kindergarten. Our focus is to promote the development of social-emotional skills allowing children to learn self-confidence through eventually learned self-help skills; manage in a group setting; and follow the rules and routines of the classroom. Our teachers create a literacy-rich environment through intentionally planned learning opportunities to promote language development as well as physical, cognitive and creative growth.

Our schedule allows large blocks of time for free choice play in the classroom along with outdoor play each day. Weekly theme-based curriculum is developed around the interests of the children. Teachers observe and assess each child then use this information to adjust curriculum and play choices offered in the classroom to meet the individual needs of each child.

Our full day preschool program includes a rest time followed by a planned afternoon curriculum which offers calm, relaxing play activities. These activities are an extension of the morning curriculum allowing children additional time for exploration and practice of the concepts previously introduced.

Children enrolled in this program must be toilet trained.

Red Pre-Kindergarten Room Program

Our Red Pre-K Program takes place in a large, double classroom with a maximum enrollment of 18 children and 3 teachers and is designed to meet the needs and interests of four-year-old and young five-year-old children as they continue to prepare for their kindergarten experience. This program provides rich, literacy-based curriculum in an active, hands-on learning environment that builds on the concepts and experiences learned in our Blue and Orange Classrooms. We continue to focus on social-emotional development while providing opportunities for further language, writing, cognitive, physical and creative development.

A writing center and a center for listening to recorded stories on tape build a foundation and encourage an interest in reading and writing. Large hollow blocks are unique to this classroom and offers chances for gross motor development and dramatic play scenarios. During play, teachers promote cooperation among peers, allowing children to identify problems and develop their own solutions to these problems. The daily schedule includes activities for the whole group as well as a special activity time for teachers to observe and work with children in a small group setting. Small groups allow teachers to focus on each child individually and gather information which is used to guide weekly curriculum and adapt classroom exercises to meet children's individual developmental needs. Small group activities offer opportunities for children to participate in different, higher-level activities for literacy and learning in a teacher directed setting.

Our full day preschool program includes a quiet rest time for all children. Rest time provides up to 2 hours of sleep time. Children who no longer nap spend some down time listening to music followed by quiet reading on their cots. Quiet afternoon activities are offered until all children wake up at 3:00 p.m. Our planned afternoon curriculum is an extension of the concepts and skills introduced in the morning program. Incorporating new, additional learning materials unique to the afternoon program promotes continued engagement and interest in a relaxed environment allowing children additional opportunities to revisit and practice previously learned skills and concepts.

Yellow Pre-Kindergarten Room Program

Our Yellow Pre-K Program enrolls up to ten children with two teachers and is also designed to meet the needs and interests of four-year-old and young five-year-old children in a smaller peer group setting. This classroom is a great option for younger 4-year-old children who will be attending an additional year of preschool as a young 5-year-old.

Our integrated curriculum, with intentionally planned activities and centers, are created around the interests of the children to support their cognitive, creative and physical development while providing time for further social and emotional growth. Through observation and assessment, curriculum is adapted to meet the developmental needs of each child as well as provide them with challenging opportunities. The daily schedule balances time for free-choice and outdoor play as well as structured learning activities. Our weekly curriculum includes activities which focus on letter and sound recognition, reading and writing skills, and math and science concepts. The afternoon curriculum consists of extension activities in language arts, math, social studies, science and creative arts. Yoga and relaxation techniques are integrated into the full day schedule along with a 30-minute quiet time during which children listen to music and recorded stories.

This program offers a three-day minimum enrollment with a flexible choice of days.

Before & After Kindergarten Program

We offer both before and after kindergarten care with busing only for children attending Darcey School. The program provides children with a balance of freedom and activities and a place to unwind before or after the work of Kindergarten. It offers an environment that is interesting and engaging while providing opportunities for social interaction and daily outdoor play.

This program requires a minimum enrollment of two days with availability up to 5 days. Early morning drop-off begins at 7:30 a.m. to bus arrival. An afternoon program is available from bus drop-off to 5:30 p.m. Care for Kindergarten children when Cheshire Public Schools are closed such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Election Day and professional development days is not guaranteed. Availability for care on these days is based on enrollment numbers. Care is available for the April school vacation week at an additional cost. We can accommodate kindergarten children for delayed openings beginning at 8:30 a.m. and early dismissals. We do close when

Cheshire Public Schools close due to unsafe weather conditions. There is an additional care charge for any hours attended beyond regularly scheduled program hours.

Parents of kindergartners and Darcey Preschool children must request bus transportation between 1st Church Preschool and Darcey School by submitting a "Seat Petition Form" to the Cheshire Public School Transportation Department at least two weeks prior to the start of school.

Summer Program

Our 9-week Summer Program follows the same general philosophy and guidelines as our 1st Church Preschool Program with opportunities for social interactions and learning through guided, child-centered, play experiences. Weekly themes provide the basis of a variety of planned indoor and outdoor activities and games. Children are provided opportunities to explore their natural environment creating a program around their own interests and needs. Summer cooking, art, and science activities keep children engaged and happy. Much time is spent outdoors on our large playground and backyard area. Water activities such as sprinklers and water tables are available to keep children cool.

The program is primarily on site. Additional curriculum may be created around scheduled field trips, if transportation can be arranged. Our Summer Program is designed as a fun, yet educational experience where children can make friends and enjoy all that summer offers.

Our summer program is separate from our 10-month school year session with separate staffing and enrollment contracts. It is a multi-age level program open to all children ages 3 to 6 years (entering 1st Grade). Children do not need to be enrolled in our school year program to attend. This program offers a minimum enrollment of 2 days for two weeks, but can accommodate schedules of up to 5 full days for nine weeks. Our summer program is staffed by our own early childhood educated teachers and when needed, additional support staff may be hired.

Policies and Procedures

Hours of Operation

Our preschool is a 10-month school year program open from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday. With permission from the Director, morning care can be arranged beginning as early as 7:30 AM. Our calendar is based on the Cheshire Public School calendar and we are closed on major holidays, during the December break, and on days that are cancelled due to severe weather conditions. We are open on days such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Election Day, and Cheshire Public School professional development days.

Our regular preschool program is closed during school vacation weeks, but child care is available at an additional cost in our multi-age Optional Days Programs. During the summer, we offer a separate 9-week summer program. For further details regarding these programs, please refer to our school calendar.

Morning Preschool Program

8:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Children may arrive at or after 8:30 AM

Please know that full staff is not in place until 8:30 AM.

We are unable to accommodate extra children before 8:30 AM.

Children must be picked up by 12:30 PM.

Full Day Preschool Program

8:30 AM to 5:30 PM

*Includes early morning drop-off if needed beginning at 7:30 AM.

Director must be notified if parents need this service regularly.

We must know the number of children to expect before 8:30 AM to ensure appropriate staffing.

Please know that full staff is not in place until 8:30 AM.

Children must be picked up by 5:30 PM.

Early Morning Drop-Off

Anytime between 7:30 AM and 8:30 AM

Early Morning Drop-Off is included in Full Day Tuition Fee.

This service is only available upon request and at an additional charge to morning preschool children with absolute need.

1st Church Preschool has an Open-Door Policy. Parents and legal guardians are welcome to visit the school at any time during regular operating hours.

Weather Related Delays, Early Dismissals and Closings

1st Church Preschool follows the Cheshire Public School schedule for weather related delays, early dismissals and closings. If Cheshire Public Schools are delayed, dismissed or closed, we will do the same. Please have alternative plans in place for closings, delays, and early dismissals.

Cheshire Public Schools Closed:

1st Church Preschool Closed.

Cheshire Public Schools 2-Hour Delay:

1st Church Preschool will delay only 1 hour.

Open 8:30 a.m. for early arrivals

Open 9:30 a.m. for preschool program

Cheshire Public School Early Dismissal:

We ask parents to be aware of the weather. We try to make an early dismissal decision based on the weather we see in Cheshire. When possible, we will try not to close before 4:00 p.m. If we are expecting severe weather, we ask parents to keep an eye on the weather conditions during the day and make back up arrangements for early pick-up. We will notify parents by email and/or phone calls if we make an early dismissal decision.

When possible, delays, early dismissals, and closing information are emailed to families. This information is also posted on the television stations and the websites of NBC Connecticut, WFSB, WTNH and Fox CT.

Tuition/Payment Schedules

Tuitions are contracted with the Director when enrolling your child into the program. Tuitions are based on the regular weekly hours of the program selected. Monthly tuition payments are formulated by multiplying the regular scheduled weekly fee times the number of program weeks in the school year (which does not include school vacation weeks) and dividing by 10, to arrive at ten equal monthly payments. Tuition payments are due by the 10th of each month with the first payment being due in September and the last payment due in June.

A tuition deposit of \$100 is required upon acceptance into the program. Your tuition deposit is applied to your last tuition payment in June. There is a \$10.00 late fee for payments made after the 10th day of the month.

Reimbursement / Make-up Days

There is no reimbursement, reduction in tuition fees or substitution of days for absence of a child. This includes absence due to illness, vacations, miscellaneous days off, delays, early dismissals or closings due to weather related emergencies.

If the Cheshire Public School calendar is extended, 1st Church Preschool does not extend its school year. If additional days are needed, a summer program registration form must be submitted. Summer program is a separate program from our regular school year with separate weekly tuition fees.

Withdrawal During Contracted Enrollment Term

Enrollment is conducted on a month-to-month basis and may be terminated upon one month's written notice by either 1st Church Preschool or parents/guardians. Any final day care charges will be pro-rated depending on the actual services utilized up to the termination date. Any remaining balance due is required to be paid in full 15 days after written termination notice is given.

Additional Care Beyond Contracted Hours

If additional care is needed beyond your contracted schedule, please check with the Director for availability. Additional care includes adding an additional morning, afternoon or extended day only. No single hours are available. We will complete an "Additional Care Form" which will be used to keep track of additional care beyond your normal weekly schedule and tuition amount. One form is to be filled out per week or per month as needed and additional payment is due at the end of the month or may be included with the next monthly tuition payment.

Care for Kindergarten children when Cheshire Public Schools are closed such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Election Day and professional development days is not guaranteed. Availability for care on these days is based on enrollment numbers. Care is available for the April school vacation week at an additional cost. We can accommodate kindergarten children for delayed openings beginning at 8:30 a.m. and early dismissals due to severe weather conditions. We do close when Cheshire Public Schools close due to unsafe weather conditions. There is an additional care charge for any hours attended beyond regularly scheduled program hours.

Financial Assistance

1st Church Preschool Scholarship Fund

1st Church Preschool is building a scholarship fund to help assist families during times of hardship. Parents who wish to contribute to the scholarships fund may do so at any time. Contributions of any amount, large or small, are greatly appreciated and tax deductible.

First Congregational Church Day Care & Nursery, Inc. (1st Church Preschool) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a demonstrated commitment to the community it serves. When financial need is demonstrated, short term assistance for students and their families may be provided. To maintain privacy, all financial assistance decisions are made at the discretion of the Director in consultation with the Hardship Committee. The Hardship Committee is comprised of the Director, Board Chair, and Board Treasurer. Decisions will be based on current program finances, available staffing, and family financial need.

Care 4 Kids

1st Church Preschool accepts Care 4 Kids. The Care 4 Kids program is a partnership between the State of Connecticut, families and programs to make child care affordable for low to moderate income families in Connecticut. Care 4 Kids will help pay child care cost for eligible families. For additional information and to determine eligibility, please visit the Care 4 Kids website at <http://www.ctcare4kids.com/>.

Confidentiality

All verbal and written information collected by program staff is considered confidential and will be filed in cabinets accessible only to staff and others authorized by parent or legal guardian.

In addition, teachers and consultants working with the program may also view the file unless otherwise specified by a parent or guardian. This may include regulations governing access to files and familial rights. Information in student files is confidential and maintained in a locked cabinet in the office.

Children's assessments and other information pertaining to their child will be shared during private conferences, individual notes home or other private and confidential methods. This will include reviewing observations and other assessment as well as how this information is used to better know their child, his or her interests, strengths and needs.

Enrollment Procedure

Step 1: Fill out an Application Form and return with your Registration Fee.
This Fee is non-refundable unless there is no available placement.

Step 2: An Enrollment Packet will be provided after receipt of your Application Form and Registration Fee.

Step 3: Return the following items to secure your child's placement:

- Signed Enrollment Contract
- \$100 Tuition Deposit

Step 4: Complete the following enrollment forms and return before school begins:

- Enrollment Information Form
- Current Health Assessment/Immunization Record (within past year)
- Permission/Authorization Form
- Discipline Policy
- Transportation Form (for students attending Darcey School who will be transported by school bus)

Step 5: For children with allergies or health concerns requiring medication at school the following must be completed:

- Medication Administration Forms filled out by physician
- Permission to Post Form
- Signed Care Plan
- Submit current medication in original container with prescription label (items such as inhalers must be sent in the original box even if the prescription label is present on the inhaler itself).

Enrollment and health assessment forms are available at www.1stchurchpreschool.org. All other forms can be obtained from the school director. When requested, all forms and information can be made available in a family's home language and can be reviewed for clarification as needed.

Separation and Adjustment

During the initial weeks of the program we expect to work in partnership with parents to ensure a smooth and comfortable adjustment period. Before school begins, teachers send home welcome notes to each child inviting families to attend our Open House. The Open House is held before school begins and allows a bridge to be built between home and school as your child visits the program. They meet classmates and teachers as well as become familiar with their classroom. These are intended to help with separation and adjustment issues. More help may be needed such as staying with your child for a short time each morning, reducing hours for extended day until your child feels secure with the staff and routines, or another individual arrangement, which we will plan together. While children generally adjust readily to our caring, supportive program, healthy development can include some forms of regression, such as more clinging than usual, or some loss of independence for a time. We expect considerable variation in this significant area. We will work together to make your child's experience a positive one.

Program Orientation for Families

To help families and children become familiar with our program and to support a smooth transition, we provide families with the following opportunities and materials:

A Program Tour: Parents and guardians are invited to take a Director led tour of our program with their child. During the tour, our handbook and policies are introduced and parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns and receive clarification as needed.

Tour Folder: At the tour, each family is provided with a folder which includes: the preschool profile, school calendar, mission statement, philosophy, teacher credentials, class schedule, discipline policy, registration form, assessment information and NAEYC accreditation information.

Enrollment Packet: Once registered, each family receives an enrollment welcome letter, enrollment contract, contract copy, enrollment form, physical form, permission form, discipline policy and transportation form for kindergarteners.

Parent Handbook (accessible online): Includes our mission, philosophy, curriculum, assessment plan, communication policy, discipline policy, sick child policy as well as other policies that pertain to health/safety. It also contains other day-to-day policies and procedures helpful to parents and teachers. A printed copy can be provided upon request.

Open House: Prior to the first day of school, parents and students of enrolled families can visit the school and become familiar with teachers, other parents and children. Time can be spent together in the classroom so questions can be addressed and relationships can begin to develop.

Parent Night: Parents can visit with the teachers in the classrooms to learn more about the daily activities, curriculum, assessments, communication, and discipline policy. Our handbook and policies are reviewed. The teachers and the director are available to parents to discuss any concerns, answer any questions or receive clarification if necessary regarding school policies.

Transitioning Children Continuing at 1st Church Preschool

Before children transition to a new classroom at 1st Church Preschool, existing teachers provide opportunities for children and their classmates to visit their new classroom and teachers. At the end of the school year, child files containing copies of assessments and documentation logs for each child are forwarded to the new teacher. Teacher teams meet to discuss teaching strategies specific to transitioning children as needed.

Supervision

RATIOS

All ratios as outlined below will be maintained during our school hours Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. There shall be at least two staff members present and providing child care always when children are in care.

Preschool and School-Age Classrooms

We maintain the mandated state health regulations of a 1:10 ratio in our preschool and school-aged programs always; however, the center strives to maintain a 1:5 ratio in the Blue Room, A 1:4 in the Orange Room, a 1:6 ratio in the Red Pre-K Room, and a 1:10 ratio in the Yellow Pre-K Room.

Mixed Age Group Afternoon Program

1:10 ratio will be maintained during indoor and outdoor activities. At 3:45 p.m., afternoon attendance will be taken utilizing the afternoon checklist to confirm all children still present at the center. This checklist will be used for the remainder of the afternoon program. The head afternoon teacher will check off each child's name as they leave for the day. This list will be used to maintain a proper head count throughout all afternoon transitions until all children leave and the center is closed for the day. At closing, the teachers will do a walk through the center to confirm that all children have left the center.

Outdoor

At least a 1:10 ratio will be maintained always when outdoors. At least two staff members must be available always and outdoor play areas shall be under the supervision of staff interacting with the children.

When a staff member needs to be absent from the classroom for any reason, they will be responsible for maintaining a minimum ratio of 1:10 by finding another staff member to cover for the time they are absent from the group. In an emergency, the staff member must communicate the situation immediately to the person in charge, so the situation can be rectified until a permanent solution is put into place.

Teachers will maintain a count of the number of children present at any given time.

Regular head-counts will be taken throughout the day and before and after transitions that include: leaving the classroom; going outdoors; coming indoors; and when a group of children changes due to children joining or leaving the group. An accurate count must be maintained to ensure an accurate count of children in the event of an evacuation or emergency. For transitions that take children out of the preschool space, a checklist will be utilized to not only confirm head count, but to confirm the name of each child in the group.

Center Space Supervision (Cubbies and Bathroom)

Teaching staff will supervise children when they go to their cubbies and use the bathroom off the center space.

Lower Level Bathroom

Children will only use lower level bathroom in groups with teacher supervision. The ratios of these groups will remain in compliance and be maintained according to our center ratios of not more than 1:8. When 3-year-old children are using the lower bathroom, 2 teachers will always be present so that one teacher will supervise waiting children and the other teacher will assist children with using the toilet and washing hands.

Morning Program Dismissal

One teacher will accompany into the center space, the children from their class that leave at 12:30 p.m. The teacher will supervise their children in center space until they make contact with the parent/guardian/person responsible for picking up the child.

Rest Time

Children will be visually supervised during rest time and the classroom ratio will remain in compliance.

Field Trips

The classroom ratio will remain in compliance during field trips. Most trips will require additional parent chaperones to assist in supervising children. (See Field Trip Policy)

In the event of a missing child, teachers will notify director immediately so that child can be located as quickly as possible and to ensure that ratios are maintained for other children whom are present.

Arrival/Departure

All children must be signed in and out at the Parent Sign-In Table each day with arrival and departure times. This is a State regulation. The Parent Sign-In Table is located in the school center space.

Parents or legal guardians are responsible for their children until a classroom teacher has acknowledged their arrival. There should be clear notification to a specific teacher that a child has arrived and parents or guardians should wait for acknowledgement from that teacher of the child's presence before departing. **Children must not be left unsupervised at any time.** Please feel free to come into the classroom with your child to help them settle in and get involved in an activity.

Morning Program dismissal is at 12:30 PM. Teachers will accompany children to the Center Space for pick-up at the time. Emergency contacts will be called if a child is not picked up by 12:45 PM and an additional care charge will be incurred.

Full day program dismissal is at 5:25 PM. We ask parents to arrive by 5:25 PM to pick-up full-day children as the center closes promptly at 5:30 PM. Emergency contacts will be called if a child is not picked up by 5:30 PM. **A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged for pick-up after 5:30 p.m.** An additional \$10 will be charged for each additional 15 minutes late and doubled after 2 late pickups. If a child is not picked up by 6 p.m., the Cheshire Police Department will be contacted.

Please notify the school of late arrivals (after 9:00 AM), delayed pick-up (after 12:30 pm for morning children and after 5:25 PM for full-day children, changes in pick-up, or changes in regular schedule. For a child to be released to someone other than a parent or legal guardian, the authorized person(s) must be listed on the child's Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form. If someone not listed on the release form will be picking up a child, a written and signed permission note must be provided to your child's teacher. A picture ID will be requested at pick-up time to insure safety. Please alert us if there is someone who you do not want to pick up your child. This will need to be additionally noted on your child's emergency contact form.

Children attending Darcey kindergarten are bused to and from 1st Church Preschool each day and are supervised by staff getting on and off the school bus on Route 10 in front of the Church. **Always call for any changes in bus transportation to and from Darcey Kindergarten or Darcey Preschool.**

Security

1st Church Preschool requires an entry code to gain access to the preschool space. Each family is provided a unique four-digit code at the start of the school year.

It is imperative that families follow the guidelines below:

- Do not share this code with your child or their siblings
- Only share this code with adults who regularly pick up your child and are listed on your emergency contact form.
- ONLY ADULTS should enter the code on the keypad – NOT CHILDREN.
- Your entry code will only work on school days between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
- Upon arrival, each family/staff member should enter their code to open the door and then close the door behind them. Do not hold the door for others that are not in your party, even if you know them. Each family/staff member must enter their code upon arrival.
- If you feel that your code has been jeopardized at any time, please contact the Director immediately and a new code will be issued.

Medical and Health Care

Upon entrance to the program, a current medical and immunization record signed by a physician, physician assistant or advanced practice registered nurse documenting an examination completed within one year prior to enrollment is required for each child. Medical assessment forms must be updated yearly from the date of the initial physical examination. **An updated form must be on file and up to date while in attendance at school.** Attendance is not permitted if a current form is not on file. If such examination is contrary to the religious beliefs and practices of the child or the parent(s) a waiver shall be submitted and maintained in the child's health record. Such statement shall be signed by the parent(s). The parent(s) shall certify that he or she accepts complete responsibility for the health of the child and that, to the best of the parent's knowledge, the child is in good health.

If your child has any of the following conditions or symptoms you will be called to pick up your child from the Program within one hour of notification. Your child will also be kept separate from the group to keep illness from spreading further.

- Colds accompanied by colored nasal discharge
- Uncontrollable productive cough
- Fever greater than 100° F
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Strep throat, Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye), or mouth sores that are open
- Head lice (we have a no nits policy), scabies, pinworms, or other infestations
- Unknown body rashes
- Contagious childhood diseases, such as chicken pox, mumps or impetigo
- Any illness that affects your child's participation in regular program activities

To return to the program, your child must take any prescribed antibiotics and be free from vomiting or diarrhea for a full 24 hours (home for one day), be free of infestations, be free of open, oozing skin conditions, and **can participate comfortably in all program activities including going outside**. It is very important, and in the long run to your advantage, to keep your child home, away from the group when ill, as illnesses otherwise often go around again, becoming re-infected from germs that were spread to the group sometimes because of lowered resistance from not being fully recovered. We are aware of working family demands, but need your cooperation to keep illnesses down, especially during the winter, so children and staff can be fully involved within the program.

Posting of Infectious Disease

Notice of infectious diseases which have been reported to the school will be posted as a Medical Alert on the bulletin board located at the Parent Sign-In table. When necessary, the school's nurse consultant will be contacted for additional information regarding these illnesses. The preschool will contact the public health department to report and obtain advice when outbreaks of communicable disease occur.

Medication Administration

Only authorized staff, successfully having completed a Medication Administration Training, will administer medications. At least one teacher at all times is trained in Child & Infant CPR and First Aid, and trained to administer an asthma inhaler or EPI-Pen injection for medical emergencies.

Because administration of medication poses an extra burden for staff, and having medication in the facility is a safety hazard, families are asked whenever possible to arrange with their child's medical provider to schedule medications at times that do not include the hours the child is in the child care facility. We do not administer medication here except for an asthma condition or for severe allergic reactions requiring an Epi-Pen injection in response to anaphylactic shock symptoms. A release form and proper medical forms must be on file along with the needed medication. This means we are not allowed to give any medications orally or topically to your child while they are at school.

The first dose of any medication must be given at home to be sure that the child does not have an unexpected reaction to the medication. Parents or guardians may administer medication to their own child during the school day.

Absences from School

If your child will not be attending school, please call the school before 9:00 AM. Please let us know if your child is or has been sick with a contagious illness even if the illness occurred during your child's home days. Parents of kindergarten children must notify us if their child has a change in transportation and will not be returning on the bus to 1st Church on their regularly scheduled day.

Accident and Injury Policy

If a child receives an injury while at preschool and it is a minor bump or bruise, bloody nose, cut or fall etc., it must first be checked by a staff person and an ice pack, band aid or some appropriate attention given. Secondly, staff **must record** the injury into our Injury Log at the sign in table **and report** by giving a Boo-boo note to parents in Parent pockets so they are made aware.

If a child has a bigger injury or accident while at preschool, the teacher who is nearest must take charge and help that child; a current First Aid trained staff member if needed, will assess the injury and provide the necessary treatment. Other staff should manage the other children present, moving them away and answering their questions, providing reassurance and keeping them out of sight to avoid witnessing of anything that may be traumatic.

The staff member providing first aid will follow through with all procedures that are involved with the accident.

- The providing first aid staff person will stay with the child and make decisions as to treatment of that hurt child until emergency help arrive, if needed. They will direct or call (911) for help as needed.
- They will then immediately notify parents, explaining the situation and needs involved.
- They will be responsible for filling out the appropriate Injury Report Form completely and having a copy available to parents within 24 hours, giving details of the situation.
- They or the Director will follow through with calling parents later that day or the next day to find out the status of child and injury.
- They or the Director will call and report the injury to the CT Department of Public Health complaint desk within 24 hours if the child is hospitalized overnight and note the time and name of the person with whom they spoke.
- A copy of the Injury Report Form will be kept on file in the Emergency/Permission forms folder in the office.

Other staff will provide emotional support including listening to the first aid staff person's experience (away from children).

Guidance/Discipline

Children need to fully explore their environment and their social connection to others to establish a sense of independence, trust, connection, and self-esteem. At times, this means they will test, challenge, and defy both the materials and people within their environment. As early childhood professionals, we feel that a child's emotional development progresses in stages like all other aspects of development, and children need time and maturity to develop mastery and behavioral control. It is our responsibility to nurture, support, and assist all children and help each of them find constructive ways to express their feelings and needs.

Limits at any age are essential in terms of safety, security and protection of all individuals. These limits must match the level of development and the individual needs of each child. Because young children are only beginning to fully grasp the causes and effects of their behavior, it is the responsibility of the adults present to set clear limits. When setting limits, it is important to let children know what is expected, why certain behaviors are unacceptable, and what might be an appropriate alternative. Showing that you care, along with patience, consistency and the use of simple language, are key factors in setting limits.

If a pattern of unacceptable behavior persists, a child may be gently but firmly removed from the situation and redirected to another area, or kept close to a teacher until that child seems ready to return to play. Redirection to a different activity, changing the space, schedule, or the pacing of the day, reinforcement of positive behaviors, and intervening before the behavior starts or has a chance to get out of control, are some appropriate and effective techniques used to help young children learn to participate in a group.

Parents will be kept informed of issues and situations that occur so that they can be aware of measures taken and be involved and supportive. Teachers are also held accountable for appropriate interactions with children at all times. From time to time, written handouts may be available at the Parent Sign-In table on specific aspects of development that may be of interest to you. Also, be sure to talk with teachers about any areas of concern. We may be able to provide some additional support or resources.

Child Abuse and Neglect

It is the responsibility of 1st Church Preschool to prevent abuse and neglect of children in our care. Any person paid to care for children in a public or private day care center, which is licensed by the State of Connecticut, is a mandated reporter. This is to protect children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through injury and neglect. Any mandated reporter, who has reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 is in danger of being abused or has had a non-accidental physical injury inflicted upon them by a guardian, parent, or person responsible for such child's health, welfare and care **must report** their suspicions. (Per Connecticut Statutes Section 17a-101a) Our procedures follow those outlined in the Connecticut Statutes. They are posted on the parent board and available in detail upon request.

Communication

Communication between home and school, parents and teachers, and morning and afternoon staff is extremely important for smooth, supportive daily life. We have set up procedures and created a variety of opportunities to support effective communication between school and home. We feel that it is best to be able to touch base with you regarding your child on a weekly basis. Due to a variety of reasons, we understand that it may be difficult to talk with your child's teacher once a week. Please know that teachers can make time to touch base with you at drop-off, pick-up, by phone at rest time, through email, written notes and scheduled meetings.

If you wish to speak to a teacher during the school day, to keep distractions to a minimum during instructional time, please leave a message with the office which will be given to the teachers at an appropriate time. Teachers will call back at their earliest convenience.

Each classroom has its own email and this is the easiest way to communicate with teachers. Please know that many teachers may not check their email during the school day so you may not receive an immediate response. Teachers will make every effort to respond to email or phone messages within 24 hours.

School emails:

Director – brenda@1stchurchpreschool.org

Miss Maura – blueroom@1stchurchpreschool.org

Miss Marianne – orangeroom@1stchurchpreschool.org

Miss Sue – redprek@1stchurchpreschool.org

Miss Cindy – yellowprek@1stchurchpreschool.org

For information needing more immediate attention, please use the school email to contact the director – brenda@1stchurchpreschool.org. In urgent situations or for important questions or information that we need to know right away such as absence of a child or changes in transportation, drop off, or pick up please email the director or call the school at 203-699-1169.

The following are additional venues of communication of which parents should be aware:

- Each family has a labeled "Parent Pocket" on the wall outside their child's classroom where we will leave injury notes, daily concerns, forms, newsletters, etc. These should be checked daily for important information.
- An Injury Log is used for teachers record all significant bumps, bruises, and injuries. When any of these occur, you will receive a "Boo Boo Note" in your Parent Pocket so you will know the details of what happened and if any further attention is needed.
- Written notes with specific information pertinent to that day such as changes in pick-up time or person, lunch concerns, no breakfast eaten, etc. must be given to your child's Head Teacher who will then post it in the designated area. This helps staff to better meet individual needs.
- Outside of each classroom "Weekly Curriculum Plans" are posted indicating the curriculum focus, activities, and goals for that week. There is also a whiteboard where activities and other important daily information are written. Be sure to check it to keep up with what is happening in your child's classroom. In addition, we have an Afternoon Program Board with daily nap schedules listed for each child and the afternoon curriculum for each week so you can be informed of extended day activities. Upon request, weekly curriculum plans can be emailed to parents.
- Each month a school newsletter with relevant information about current happenings is emailed to families. It is also posted by the Parent Sign-In Table. Please read it carefully and respond as needed. Paper copies can be provided upon request.

- Located in the center space is a Parent Bulletin Board. Here you will find weekly snack menus, contact information and meeting dates for the Board of Directors, school calendars, and parent volunteer sign up.
- Also in the center space, there is an information board located at our Parent Sign-In Table. Here you will find important information regarding upcoming school events, holiday/vacation reminders, interesting articles relevant to early childhood, and when necessary, information regarding contagious illnesses that have been reported by families will be posted here.
- Parent conferences are offered in the spring and in the fall. Upon request, the director and/or teachers are more than happy to schedule additional meetings for more in depth conversations. We make a variety of resources available for families.
- A Parent Resource Board is located inside the entrance door on the right wall. Here you will find information regarding events relevant to families with young children as well as information for Darcey Parent Center and other support services. In our center space is a parent bookshelf with helpful literature along with a Family Services and Resource Binder containing information of family support services. Families may borrow any books or take copies of any of the informative articles, pamphlets or activities. If there is information that you are looking for that is not found in these resources, please ask and we will assist you in any way we can. Also, feel free to share any resources you have discovered that may be of interest to other parents.
- Information is also available on our school website www.1stchurchpreschool.org. It is frequently updated and contains our school calendar, policies, parent handbook, school events and other important information regarding our program.

Cell Phone Use

Except in an emergency, we ask that parents finish all phone calls before you arrive at 1st Church Preschool to drop off or pick up your child. As we all know, separations and reunions are very crucial times in the life of you and your child. We hope that these times will involve warm communication with your child and teachers at both the beginning and at the end of the day. If you need to answer a phone call, please step outside of the preschool space.

Photography and Video Recording

Living in an age of rapidly evolving technology and social media has led to the documentation of life's moments becoming almost second nature to many of us. Photographs are a wonderful tool for capturing and documenting the experiences of children at school. Teachers in all the classes photograph and videotape children as they engage in various activities throughout the day. These photographs and videos may be used to document a child's educational progress. Photographs and videos may also be shared with other enrolled families through displays in the classrooms and preschool space, in slide shows, or in Goodbye Books for the children at the end of the year.

1st Church Preschool is committed to fostering a diverse learning community and respects the wide array of cultures, religions, philosophies, and values our families bring to our classrooms. Not all families sanction photography and video recording of their children. Our staff is aware of our families' wishes and ensures that everyone's permissions and preferences are respected. A signed permission form from a parent/guardian must be on file before photographing or video recording any child enrolled in the program. All permission forms are kept in the child's confidential record.

Staff will use school owned equipment only to photograph or videotape children. Use of personal cell phones or other personal electronic devices will not be used by staff to photograph or videotape children.

We understand a desire for families visiting the program to photograph or video record children as they are immersed in play and discovery here at 1st Church Preschool; however, we do not permit our students to be photographed or recorded by anyone other than family members or 1st Church Preschool staff members while they are in our care. As mentioned previously, some families choose to restrict photograph and videotape permissions. We ask that you get permission from your child's teacher before taking any photographs or making any recordings at school or during any school related events.

Social Media

1st Church Preschool asks that families do not share photographs or videos containing any children other than their own via social media. The posting of confidential and identifying information about the children, parents, or staff at 1st Church Preschool on social media is strictly prohibited.

1st Church Preschool maintains a Website and a Facebook page; however, identifying images of children are not displayed. Images shared via the internet are of our environment, activities, and children's creations. 1st Church Preschool will only use photographs of students for publicity purposes such as on our website or in brochures or flyers with a signed parent permission form specifically granting permission for this purpose.

As with the use of social media, the publication of photos from the Center, whether online or otherwise, is generally prohibited without prior approval from the Director. In general, approval will usually be granted for pictures which advance the Center's mission, demonstrate the educational achievements of the Center or the children in our care, or which otherwise portray the Center's positive contributions to the community.

Assessment

Formal and informal assessments are conducted for each child using the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework, observations, questionnaires, checklists and other tools. Using these methods, children's skill levels and their progress on clearly defined learning goals are assessed. These goals include all aspects of a child's learning and are organized in four developmental domains based on the 30 Performance Standards in *The Connecticut Preschool Curriculum*

Framework. Their skill level and progress is observed and assessed within the normal activities and procedures of their own classroom and during outside playtime.

Teachers review information gathered from their observations and assessments and use the results to guide their weekly curriculum planning and activities for the overall classroom as well as individual children. Assessments serve as a guide to view how the group is progressing as a whole in specific skill areas and can indicate when skills and concepts are mastered or needs to be re-taught. This also allows teachers to differentiate activities to address the individual needs of each child. Information gathered can indicate if additional or more in-depth screening may be warranted.

Assessments allow families and teachers to better understand the individual learning styles and needs of each child. This information guides teachers and parents as they work to create individual goals for a child and indicates when revision of these goals is necessary. Assessment information also provides opportunities for parents, current teachers and receiving teachers to take a somewhat objective look at each child and their overall developmental progress and allows more effective support to be given to a child as they transition into new classrooms.

Transitioning Children Beyond 1st Church

During the last weeks of school, teachers discuss with children, where they will be going next. Each classroom creates a display which shows where each child will be going after they leave the preschool.

We help families and children transition to other schools in the community by providing general information regarding program options, enrollment procedures and practices, and visitation and bus ride orientation dates.

The Director attends meetings with public school about Kindergarten Registrations and their expectations of children entering kindergarten. Also, any available parent informational programs regarding kindergarten transition is forwarded to preschool parents. With written parent/guardian permission, staff will complete any paper work regarding your child when requested when enrolling your child in other school programs.

Family members are provided information about their child's progress on a regular basis. A formal written assessment form and a child profile graph are provided to parents twice a year, once in the fall and then in the spring. Parent Conferences are also offered in the fall and spring and provide a time for parents and teachers to talk about their child as seen in different environments, assessment information, classroom work and children's progress in all developmental domains. Teachers and parents work together to create individualized goals that guide on-going curriculum and activities for their child. Teachers discuss with parents the assessment methods used and come to a consensus together as to whether the methods used are appropriate for their child.

Teachers communicate the information being shared in conferences in ways that are sensitive to family values, culture, identity and home language. All information and data collected on each child is confidential and is maintained in locked files only accessible by 1st Church Preschool teachers and others authorized by parents with written permission.

1st Church Preschool does not conduct standardized developmental screenings. If a teacher has any developmental concerns about a child, parents can be referred to the Parent Center at Darcey School. When consulting outside support services, teachers will obtain parent permission and follow the referral procedure.

Grievance/Complaint Procedure

This procedure is for Child Day Care programs which are licensed under the authority of Connecticut General Statutes 19a-79-1a through 19a-79-13. Most problems within a Child Day Care Center are non-life threatening and can be resolved by:

1. Discussing the problem with the classroom teacher.
2. Discussing the problem with the program director.
3. Discussing the problem with the Board of Directors.
4. If the problem is not resolved you may contact the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

In case of an emergency, notify the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood as soon as the emergency is under control. In case of abuse/neglect or life threatening situations, contact the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-842-2288 and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood—Division of Licensing. All inspection reports and compliance letters are available for your review at 1st Church Preschool or by contacting the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood—Division of Licensing at:

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 302
Hartford, CT 06103
1-800-282-6063 or 1-860-500-4450

Daily Life

What to Bring to School

- **Appropriate Outdoor Clothing:** Every child should be dressed for the weather of that day. During the winter months, please provide your child with a warm winter coat, snow pants, hat, mittens, snow boots, and an additional pair of rubber soled shoes for indoor play. Boots and snow pants are worn December through March due to snow and mud. Full day children should have two pairs of waterproof mittens each day.
- **Extra Change of Clothing:** Every child should have a complete change of clothing, appropriate for the season, in the provided, labeled, canvas bag that is above their cubby. Be sure to restock regularly, especially as seasons change or your child grows.
- **Lunch and a Drink:** Every child should have a labeled lunch box or lunch bag with their daily lunch, drink, napkin and any utensils they may need.
- **Things for Rest Time:** For rest time, full-day children should have a small pillow and blanket and one soft toy that easily fits in their nap crate.

Meals

Please send nutritious lunches. A good way to cut down on power issues at lunchtime is by sending all healthy items. **We have a no candy or gum policy at school and we do not microwave or warm lunches.** An ice pack is required by the state to keep lunch food cool. Refrigeration is available in the school refrigerator for individual lunch foods needing to be kept cold. These foods can be placed in the refrigerator daily on the appropriate classroom tray. Please mark **each** item with your child's name or symbol. Partially eaten food will be returned home in the lunch box so parents can be aware of what and how much their child is eating. We provide snacks twice a day and cooking activities regularly. Snack menus and recipes will be posted. Please be sure to inform us if your child has any food allergies.

Snack and lunch are important social times when children and teachers eat together and engage in conversation. Since some children may have allergies to certain foods, sharing of any lunch food is not allowed. Children naturally begin to expand their food interests and preferences from exposure to different foods during these meals together. You may receive a note from your child indicating a new food that they have learned about and would like to include in their own lunch box in the future.

The following food will not be served to children younger than four-years old: hot dogs, whole grapes, popcorn, nuts, chunks of carrots, raw peas, hard pretzels, or spoonfuls of peanut butter.

Clothing

Each child will have a cubby space with room for their daily needs including lunch box, nap items, and outside clothing. **Please remember to label all articles with names and symbols.** Children should have at least one complete change of clothing appropriate for the season. This clothing should be placed in their labeled canvas bag above their cubby. This should include at least 2 pairs of **underwear**, at least 2 pairs of **socks**, a **shirt**, and **pants**.

Please check the contents regularly and restock, especially in the winter. We recommend children wear casual clothing as we do many messy activities, and sneakers are most appropriate footwear for school as dress-up shoes or clogs can be quite dangerous during active play. Be sure to send jackets, hats, boots, snow-pants, and mittens in the winter as we go outside daily except in severe weather. Children gain a sense of independence, and increased self-esteem, when they can locate and take care of their own needs, so a workable cubby set up and easily manageable clothing is very important.

Toilet Training

Although we accept children in our program who are not toilet trained in September, the family is responsible for initiating the toilet training of their child during the fall months. Children will be encouraged and supported in their efforts at school and **should be toilet trained by January**. Parents of children wearing training pants must provide and keep a supply of disposable training pants and wipes in their cubby. Teachers will notify families as more are needed. We will work together in helping each child move toward toilet use, and work in partnership with parents to maintain consistency in supporting their child's efforts and progress. In the pre-kindergarten programs, toilet expectations for children are for developing independence and privacy. Children are supported to take care of their own bathroom needs in preparation for going off to Kindergarten.

Rest Time

We find that it is very important for all children to have some quiet down or rest time to shift focus after a busy, full morning program. All children who attend the program after 1 PM will have a rest period of at least one hour a day, and may sleep up to two hours as needed. We'll be glad to wake children if sleeping more than one hour is too long. Older children can rest quietly during the first hour and then do quiet activities on their cot if they are not sleeping. Pre-Kindergarten children who attend full-day will have a quiet time of at least 45 minutes while listening to music. Having no rest time is not an option.

Please send a **small** pillow and blanket and stuffed animal if desired (all labeled). Cot sheets are provided by the school and will be sent home weekly to be laundered. Please be sure to return them with your child on his or her next program day and please inform us of any issues or routines regarding sleep that would be helpful. We prefer that you not pick up children during rest time, but if necessary, please enter and exit very quietly.

Personal Toys

We try to help children realize that school may not be the safest place for their most precious toys or other possessions; however, it is often important to a child to bring something from home to show or hold onto. In discussions at school, the children themselves have come up with some guidelines: a toy shouldn't be so small that it disappears, so large that it will not fit in their cubby or so special that it cannot be touched. We generally ask children to put a home toy away after a short sharing time, unless it is a necessary comfort or lends itself easily to shared use. We do not have a formal Show-and-Tell here at 1st Church Preschool, as we try not to encourage a competitive materialistic focus.

In discussing appropriate items to bring to school, children included stuffed animals, books, tapes, records, dolls, a nature object, and "things you made yourself." We try to organize our program around the use of specific school equipment rather than toys brought from home, but on the other hand, activities can often grow from the children's ideas and these sometimes involve objects brought into school. Please discourage your child from bringing commercial TV items such as Power Rangers and Barbie Dolls. **Toy guns or any toys that can be used as weapons are not allowed in school.** We also discourage money or a toy that has money in it, as children cannot seem to keep money out of their mouths!

Birthdays

We usually have a simple birthday celebration for each child in school, unless your child prefers not to do so. Please bring a healthy treat (cupcakes are acceptable) to be served to all the members of your child's class at morning snack time around 10 AM. Special napkins or plates may be included if you wish, but nothing more elaborate as it becomes too cumbersome at school. To avoid hurt feelings when planning a home birthday party, please try to schedule the party on a weekend or at a time that does not involve picking up children from school. **Please send invitations by mail if you will not be inviting everyone in the class.**

Field Trips

With approval from the director and notification to the parents, Teachers may plan off-site trips for a group of children with two or more teachers and parents in the Pre-K programs. 3-year-old groups will only participate in neighborhood walking trips. We feel that it is essential children make a secure adjustment to the program and that they feel a part of the group before venturing out for even a short time so trips will not be planned during the first weeks of school. Children usually begin their experience away from the center with neighborhood walks, and depending on their interest and reaction, more trips for the group may be scheduled further afield. Trips are planned to enrich the program and curriculum. The Summer Program usually has a few field trips planned as a regular part of their curriculum and summer experience.

We respect the wishes of children who strongly prefer not to leave the site, and give children a choice of going or remaining at school. Pre-K children will be transported in teachers' cars in car seats sent from home. Most trips will require additional parent chaperones to assist in transporting and supervising children.

A cell phone shall be accessible during all field trips. The supervision/ratio policy shall be followed at all times. First aid supplies and emergency contact numbers must also accompany each group throughout the trip. Teachers with current First Aid and CPR certification must accompany children on off-site activities. Prearranged alternate transportation plans will be in place in the event of a vehicle problem or incident during the trip.

Parent and School Interactions

Visiting the School

1st Church Preschool has an open-door policy—parents and legal guardians are welcome to visit the program at any time during regular school hours. We offer scheduled opportunities throughout the year for families to observe in the classroom, have lunch, chaperone field trips, help with activities, etc. We understand that due to work schedules or other personal circumstances that sometimes the sign-up schedule offered may not work for families. Please know that lunch visits or requests to visit the classroom can always be arranged with your child's classroom teacher at any time during the year. We also encourage participation in our curriculum by helping with a cooking, science or art activity, reading a favorite story or by sharing an interesting job or special talent. We encourage you as well as other important people in your child's life to share in their experiences here at school.

We schedule a Family Work Day in the fall and spring where families and staff come together for a special project or cleanup to enhance our program. Scheduled on Saturday, these are fun, productive opportunities for families to get to know each other and helping the school. The swing set, shed, playhouse, and water-tables, were all built by families in past years, so these projects are really important to us!

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are a time for parents and teachers to talk in a relaxed, private meeting and share information to best support children to be successful in the preschool environment. We ask that all parents sign up for a fall conference which begin in late October, early November. During this time, teachers and parents work together to create individualized goals that guide on-going curriculum and activities for their child as well as discuss their child's developmental assessment form based on the 30 Performance Standards in *The Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework*. We try to schedule these shared discussions at a mutually convenient dates and times by offering both day and evening. Conference sign ups will be posted for parents outside each classroom. If you are unable to make any of the posted times, please see the teacher to schedule a time that will work for everyone. Conferences are offered again beginning in April. Parents may sign up for this second conference or a teacher may request a second parent conference based on the needs of the child and parents.

Fundraising

There are fundraising events during the school year to raise money that will go directly to the operation of our Program. We try not to burden families with time consuming fundraising activities, but try to find events that are community building and beneficial while requiring minimal volunteer hours. Any special talent, help, ideas or involvement you can give will be greatly appreciated.

Board of Directors

The 1st Church Board of Directors is an opportunity to get involved in the behind-the-scenes work of the program. The Board of Directors oversees the finances of the school and is the policy-making body of the program. The Board is made up of voluntary members from the church, the community, and the staff along with parent from each of our preschool classrooms. Each year, interested volunteer parents will be selected to serve on our Board. Members serve a term of at least two consecutive years. Parents who wish, may receive copies of Board meeting minutes and are invited to attend meetings which are held on the third (Wednesday) of each month unless otherwise noted. Our Board member directory and meeting schedule is posted on our Parent Board located in the center space and on our school website. A set of our by-laws is available upon request.

Annual Program Survey

Family perspectives are essential to the improvement process of our program. Annually, in April, our program utilizes the NAEYC family survey along with additional survey questions specific to our program to gain input and feedback from our families regarding program strengths and areas needing improvement. These areas include policies, procedures, program quality, leadership, children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction along with community awareness. We provide all enrolled families the opportunity to respond confidentially and anonymously to this survey.

The responses are compiled at the end of each school year. The results and comments are used to determine successful aspects of the program; to develop improvement strategies; and to set annual and long term program goals. In a summary report, survey results, previous goal accomplishments/progress, and new/continuing goals are shared via email with both the current school year families and also with the new families joining the program in the fall.

Emergency Procedures

1st Church Preschool's emergency contact information, preschool floor plan, emergency exit routes and emergency procedures are on file with the Cheshire Police Department.

Fire Drills

During the school year, two fire drills are conducted and recorded in September with monthly drills conducted thereafter.

Emergency Exit Procedure

To be used for fire drills, fires, or other emergencies

1. Director and Head Teacher will keep a cell phone accessible at all times for use during emergency situations.
2. Teachers and staff will assist children in lining up quickly and quietly in each classroom. Each class will be led out their designated exit route by a teacher or staff member. The last teacher/staff member in each class will close windows and doors, turn out lights, and will check for any remaining children. Each group will proceed to their designated safe meeting area. The Head Teacher for each class will take attendance once children are in their designated meeting place.
3. In the event of an actual emergency, the Director or Head Teacher will dial 911 or utilize the panic button to contact emergency personnel immediately. In case of fire, the emergency fire pull will be used to directly contact the Cheshire Fire Department and Emergency Medical Team.
4. The Director/Head Teacher will check common areas, bathrooms, and hallways for any remaining children. The Director/Head Teacher will collect the Emergency Numbers file and medical bag, any needed medication, flashlight and cell phone before exiting the building. The Director/Head Teacher will confirm attendance and safety of children and teachers with each of the Head Teachers.
5. In the event of an actual emergency, teachers and staff will proceed with their classes to shelter in the Whiting House located across the back field on the church grounds. Once the situation is assessed by Director/Head Teacher and local emergency services, parents will be notified and if necessary, arrangements will be made for children to be picked up as soon as possible.

Emergency Exit Routes

(Maps posted in each classroom and in common areas)

Blue Classroom (Room 3)

Exit through emergency exit door in the classroom, up the stairs and out.

Meet by large tree on the left at beginning of walkway.

Orange Classroom (Room 1)

Exit left through classroom door, go straight and exit through the side fire door, up the stairs and out. Meet across driveway in front of barn doors.

Red Pre-K Classroom (Rooms 4/5)

Exit through classroom door, out rear door closest to their classroom (regular exit door) up the stairs and out. Meet in front of playground fence.

Yellow Pre-K Classroom (Room 7)

Exit through classroom door, go left and exit through the side fire door, up the stairs and out. Meet across driveway in front of barn doors.

In the event of a real fire or emergency, all children will be escorted to the Whiting House until advised further by emergency personnel.

Available Emergency Exits

- Pre-school main entrance hallway, upstairs and out
- Blue Room (Room 3) Emergency door, upstairs and out
- Side fire exit door past Orange Room (Room 1), upstairs and out
- Through Double doors, down hallway, up first set of stairs on left and out
- Through Double doors, down to end of hallway, upstairs and out at either side
- Orange Room (Room 1) ground level windows opened and children lifted out
- Yellow Pre-K Room (Room 7) ground level windows opened and children lifted out

Emergency Lockdown Procedure

Lockdown is a condition prompted by a discernable threat. All interior and exterior doors are to be locked with staff and students in place wherever they are when lockdown is initiated.

An interior threat is inherently more immediately dangerous than an exterior threat and will be treated as such.

Interior Threat

Director, teachers or staff on duty will determine, using good judgment, if an eminent threat exists. If such threat exists, Emergency Evacuation Procedures should be followed. If evacuation procedures cannot be followed the following procedures will be followed:

- A staff person will yell out to other staff that an interior threat is occurring and lockdown is now in effect (attention, attention, lockdown for interior threat).
- The Director or Head Teacher will dial 911 or utilize the panic button to report threat of danger.
- All students and staff will be brought in from hallway.
- Classroom doors and windows will be closed and locked.
- Exterior blinds will be left open to allow first responders to observe inside the classroom.

- Attendance will be taken by Head Teachers to be sure all students are accounted for. A list will be made of all students and staff present, absent/missing, and those others added to the class.
- Students will be kept as calm and quiet as possible to reinforce that the classroom is vacant. All students will be kept away from glass and doors and will remain in the safest area possible in the classroom.
- Once door is initially locked, it will not be unlocked until emergency personnel have notified the Director and staff that the space is secured or in the event that emergency personnel using picture ID request access to the room.
- Students will be released when threat of danger has passed.

Exterior Threat

Director, teachers or staff on duty will determine, using good judgment, if an eminent threat exists. If such threat exists, the following procedures will be followed:

- A staff person will yell out to other staff that an exterior threat is occurring and lockdown is now in effect (attention, attention, lockdown for exterior threat).
- The Director or Head Teacher will dial 911 or utilize the panic button to report threat of danger.
- All students and staff will be brought in from hallway.
- Classroom doors and windows will be closed and locked.
- Exterior window blinds will be closed to keep any threat from looking in from the outside.
- Attendance will be taken by Head Teachers to be sure all students are accounted for. A list will be made of all students and staff present, absent/missing, and those others added to the class.
- Staff/teachers, utilizing a cell phone, will report any suspicious activity outside their window.
- Students will be kept as calm and quiet as possible to reinforce that the classroom is vacant. All students will be kept away from glass and doors and will remain in the safest area possible in the classroom.
- Once door is initially locked, it will not be unlocked until emergency personnel have notified Director and staff that the space is secured or if emergency personnel using picture ID request access to the room.
- Students will be released when threat of danger has passed.

Natural Disaster

In the event of a threat to student or staff safety due to tornado, flood, severe storm, weather related emergency or natural disaster, the following procedure should be followed:

- If it is determined that students and staff could evacuate the premises safely the Emergency Evacuation Procedures should be followed.
- If it is determined that unsafe conditions exist outside the building, students and staff should remain in their classrooms.

Emergency Plans

- For a fire emergency, staff will: pull the fire alarm box to alert the Fire Department of a fire, get all children out of the building to the backyard by their before practiced fire alarm procedures with teachers taking attendance and accounting for the safety of each child as quickly as possible, use the closest available fire extinguisher if appropriate, and alert the rest of the church personnel. The duration and severity of the fire event would then determine time of reentry back into the building or the need to alert parents to come and pick up their children right away.
- Any other evacuations needed in case of a building emergency would follow this same procedure.
- In case of a severe storm or weather emergency, children would be gathered together into the safest possible physical area of the church building and be supervised calmly and clearly by staff until parents (who have been called and alerted by the Director) arrive.
- In the event of a bad snow storm, parents would be warned in the morning and then called as soon as the weather situation becomes imminent, to come and pick up their children or send a replacement person they have designated and staff will help children cope with the changes involved for an early dismissal.
- For a medical emergency, a staff person who is certified and trained in First Aid will attend directly to the child, providing first aid as needed, while the Director or other staff dials 911 for assistance and calls a parent to come immediately. Other staff will support the rest of the children with their concerns away from the injured or sick child. The program Nurse Consultant will also be called if needed to provide any back up or additional help or future training of staff. The First Aid kit will be readily available in the office, along with a file of each child's Doctor and emergency numbers.

APPENDIX A -- Curriculum

Our integrated curriculum is guided by *The Connecticut Preschool Framework*. It offers opportunities for exploring, learning and skill development in the areas of language, literacy, cognition, creative arts, science, social studies, mathematics, health, safety, social-emotional and physical development. Children are exposed to a diverse array of activities. They follow their own interests and when ready, they are encouraged and supported to explore unfamiliar activities to expand their interests and experiences. Children are encouraged to make choices and to participate in a range of activities that include block building, dramatic play, indoor climbing, crayons and paint, water and sand play, play-dough and clay, reading and listening to stories, music and movement, puzzles and manipulatives, cooking, and caring for plants and animals. Outdoor activities include swings and climbers, sand and digging boxes, water tables, tricycles, a playhouse, open space and gardens.

Teachers organize the daily schedule to be predictable yet flexible and organize the classroom space to provide children with opportunities for working and playing individually, in pairs and in small and whole groups. A variety of materials and open-ended activities encourage exploration, experimentation and discovery while promoting skills such as problem-solving, artistic expression, small and large muscle control, visual and auditory discrimination, hand-eye coordination, and knowledge of the world. Our curriculum is implemented in a manner that reflects sensitivity to a child's family values, beliefs and home language. Teachers plan lessons accordingly so children can revisit materials and experiences and modify materials and teaching strategies to meet each child's needs.

Although we feel it is important that there is no required sequence of units in our curriculum, teachers do plan activities around themes inspired by children's general experiences and developmental concerns. These themes are also inspired by observation of the seasons as well as events in a child's life, such as setting up a doctor's office in the dramatic play area or perhaps bringing in suitcases for packing when families are taking trips or moving. We strive to provide a safe environment in which children can feel good about themselves, develop respect and pleasure in relationships with others, and feel comfortable at school while away from home. Teachers will work with parents and, when necessary, will obtain parent permission to consult with our school consultants, the Darcey School Early Intervention Team or other appropriate outside services to develop and implement strategies and accommodations for children with special needs or as identified in their IFSP's and IEP's.

Language and Literacy Development

Language and literacy development is an integral part of our program. Through intentionally planned activities and play experiences, we create a literacy-rich environment to support the development of language, communication and literacy skills. We provide hands on experiences to facilitate an understanding of concepts such as spelling, recognition of written letters and words. We do not formally teach written letters or written words to three and four-year-old children, instead, we offer an abundance of purposeful reading and writing provided through play

experiences. Oral communication and vocabulary building is emphasized as children learn to talk and listen to each other; share feelings, ideas and information; enjoy books by "reading" and being read to; and by acting out and retelling stories. Children experience written language as they visit the art or writing centers, order from menus in restaurant play, read recipes when cooking, or use writing boards and appointment books for office and doctor play. These experiences prepare children for later formal mastery of the alphabet along with reading and writing skills.

Use of Symbols

At the start of our program, children choose a symbol that they use to represent themselves. Children quickly learn their own and everyone else's symbol. The symbol is paired with their name, which helps to develop name recognition. They recognize it as a beginning of symbolic language and a representational system at school. Eventually, the pictures become easy for them to duplicate and become a successful writing experience in preparation for later letter writing.

Books

Books provide a vast source of information. Exposure to a variety of literature gives children a greater understanding of their world. Books can also help children clarify their feelings and concerns by describing situations, which are similar to their own. They provide opportunities to experience a variety of viewpoints and foster an appreciation for all cultures and backgrounds. At an age of rapidly developing language development, books contribute to word and concept recognition. Children gain a sense of mastery as they "read" a familiar book on their own, telling the story from memory. Familiarity with books contributes significantly to children's motivation to learn to read. It also strengthens the concept that things written down have meaning, which is the beginning of literacy and so important today, in a technology based world.

Calendar

A horizontal calendar (linear calendar) is used in our preschool classrooms. This type of calendar introduces children to the left to right progression which they will later use in reading. This linear representation helps children to more easily understand the progression of time as it allows for ease of following the sequence of numbers on a single line.

As children count each passing day, they develop 1-to-1 correspondence skills, symbol number recognition, as well as a concrete understanding of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Spaces marked with a house are "home days" or the weekend, and additional events that are significant to the children are also recorded on the calendar. Each day, one child has the job of calendar helper at group meeting time.

Manipulatives, Games and Puzzles

Manipulative materials, games and puzzles provide children with experiences in problem solving, spatial relations, decision making, observation, sorting, categorizing, comparing, estimating, part/whole relationships, matching, designs and patterns, shape and form, sequencing, one-to-one correspondence, eye-hand coordination, similarities and differences, number and size.

Working alone and with others, manipulative materials offer children a chance to complete tasks in very concrete ways as well as a chance for open-ended play which encourages original thinking, creativity, and experimentation. As children become more capable, the number of materials available increase and become more complex and challenging. These materials develop readiness skills and concepts that will be the building blocks for later success in their formal school experience.

Unit Blocks

Block building offers children the opportunity to become a mathematician, stage designer, storyteller and architect, while discovering the concepts of counting, patterning, shape, symmetry, size, balance, and stability. Block building also affords the child the opportunity to work cooperatively with classmates enhancing their ability to problem-solve while using their imagination and creativity. Blocks offer an infinite variety of expressive opportunities from floor patterns or designs to incredible engineering feats of tower building.

Big Blocks and Dramatic Play

Dramatic play allows children to work through their own understandings, perceptions, feelings, and fantasies of the world through imaginary play. By trying on roles during play, children learn about the social world, what people do, where they work, and how they interact. During the year, props in this area will vary, giving children a chance to explore various roles and social situations. Some examples are a doctor's office, grocery store, restaurant, post office, construction site, etc. Children also are exposed to and have opportunities to learn the appropriate vocabulary and skills that may be involved in these situations. The use of large wooden hollow blocks promotes strength and development of large muscles while enhancing and encouraging dramatic pretend play, spatial awareness and social interactions.

Sand and Water Play

Through mixing, digging, filling, emptying, pouring, patting, sifting, and molding with sand, children learn about continuous quantity, texture, and physical attributes. Like many materials which are available in our program, sand is an open-ended, sensory material lending itself to exploration, experimentation, and discovery. As children try their ideas over and over, they begin to see relationships, many of which are the basis to understanding math and science concepts. Sand play promotes imaginary play and allows children to act out their experiences in the world through activities such as making roads and tunnels or cooking in the sand kitchen.

Water is a natural and absorbing medium for play. This sensory material has a wonderfully calming effect on young children who are feeling anxious or stressed. With water, children can explore scientific concepts such as measuring, pouring, floating and sinking, dry and wet, absorption, and temperature change. Children can also engage in dramatic play when bubbles, sponges, dolls, boats, whales, or dishes are added to the water play. This type of imaginative play develops vocabulary, turn taking, problem-solving, and develops a sense of community with others.

Art

Through art, children begin to represent their world as they problem-solve, express their thoughts, feelings, and individuality. In a developmental art program, activities focus more on the process rather than the final product. Children develop a sense of self-esteem that comes with accomplishment, imagination that comes with experimentation, and motor control that comes with practice. Fine motor coordination and finger strength develop as children paint, draw, sculpt, cut and paste. They also learn about color, form, texture, and pattern while increasing readiness skills for later academic success.

We provide daily opportunities which motivate and challenge children to explore a variety of art media utilizing a wide selection of materials. We encourage children to be their own inventors. We are not concerned with the product, but with enabling a process that provides learning, skill development and fosters the child's creativity. The child's art experience is not just to produce a product to bring home, but rather, to explore materials through open-ended opportunities. Children are given the opportunity to explore and respond to their own art as well as the creations of others. We strive to let each child know that they need only to please themselves with what they have created and that they are the sole owners of their creations.

Cooking

Cooking helps children develop small motor control and explore math and science concepts involving their five senses, texture, liquid/solid states, and pre- and post-cooking characteristics. Cooking activities are provided regularly to experience new techniques such as scraping, mashing, peeling, cutting, pouring, mixing, and measuring. Through cooking experiences, children can take pride in being able to do something basic for themselves and each other that is usually done for them. They may prepare something to eat that is beloved and special, or try new things. Often children are more willing to attempt eating something new if they have participated in its preparation, thus expanding their food experiences. They can learn about food from different cultures or participate in preparing food for a special event. Foods hotter than 110 degrees are kept out of reach of children and are cooled before serving to our students.

Music and Movement

Through singing, dancing, finger-plays, use of simple instruments, moving their bodies in planned and spontaneous ways, and listening to music, children have opportunities to develop many skills. They strengthen their muscles; learn to follow directions and take turns; and develop rhythm and balance while becoming more aware of their own and other's bodies. Literacy skills are strengthened as they learn new stories and phrases as well as experiment with letter and rhyming sounds. Music also allows children to develop their singing voices, sharpen auditory functioning and gain an appreciation for a variety of music across many cultures.

Many songs are learned over the course of the year and many quickly become favorites that children actively engage in and share at home. Music is incorporated daily in the classroom as part of the curriculum during whole group activities, clean up, rest time, and during transition times such as waiting to wash hands or use the bathroom. We also plan special occasion whole school sing-a-longs. This allows the younger children to learn from watching and participating

with the older children while building a bond among our whole school community. It also provides small groups and individuals a chance to perform in front of their peers!

Science

Science is integrated into the curriculum with many activities that involve both physical and natural science. Children explore physical science with many activities, especially through water and sand play, unit blocks, color mixing, woodworking, cooking, and outdoor play. During these activities, children experiment with many physical science concepts on a concrete level, such as solids, liquids, sinking, floating, wet and dry, pressure, motion, speed, weight, gravity, and cause and effect. Children have opportunities to use shovels, funnels, blocks, nesting measures, ramps, straws, magnifying glasses, outdoor swings, flash lights, pulleys, eyedroppers, bubble blowers, wheels, gears, and scales which extend their capacity to understand and construct their own physical realities.

The natural sciences play an active part in both the outdoor and indoor curriculum. Children have many opportunities to observe and experience the natural world. Activities are frequently inspired by the seasons and the weather as children collect leaves; plant bulbs, flowers and vegetables; care for our class pets; measure snow and watch it melt; and observe our famous horse chestnut tree as it changes through the seasons.

Mathematics

Teachers intentionally plan and integrate varied opportunities and experiences for children to explore mathematical concepts in meaningful and concrete ways. Through counting songs, stories, rhymes and games, children work with numbers, number identification, and cardinality. We do not introduce formal written symbolic math to three and four year olds. We write numbers on the calendar and keep track of the days and months. Children get practice counting as they help set the table for snack, set out mats, etc. Teachers implement learning opportunities for children to explore mathematical concepts of one-to-one correspondence, size, shape, pattern, dimension, and measurement utilizing a variety of manipulative materials such as blocks, colored cubes, pegs, and unifix cubes.

Health and Safety

Children are provided a variety of opportunities and materials that encourage good health practices. At snack and lunch, children are guided in proper hand washing and are encouraged to serve and feed themselves while teachers support good table manners and independence in cleaning up after meals. Children learn about nutrition through identifying and recognizing sources of food, preparing, eating, and valuing healthy foods. Additional activities and resources, such as planting our school garden, a trip to an apple orchard or farm, a visit from a dental hygienist or a pediatrician provide opportunities to share good health practices with children such as healthy eating, exercising and tooth brushing as well as chances for children to discuss, ask questions and express fears about visiting the doctor or dentist, getting shots and taking medicine.

Children are provided opportunities that increase their awareness of safety rules in the classroom, at home and in our community. Children are active participants in developing classroom rules and through materials such as books, play signs and dramatic play scenarios are provided regular opportunities to practice safety rules, both indoors and out. Each month, children participate in practice fire drills and an annual visit from the local fire department teaches children fire safety and a chance to practice fire safety procedures.

Social Studies

Social studies concepts are integrated throughout rich, thematic units, providing opportunities for children as they develop a sense of identity, an understanding of their place in the world and an awareness of those around them. Teachers foster children to develop a sense of identity through self-exploration as they discuss and identify their physical characteristics and their abilities along with those of their peers and family members. Children have opportunities to appreciate similarities and differences as they draw and share self-portraits, family portraits, graph eye and hair color, and read about themselves and their classmates in specially created classroom books about friends and families. Through measuring and recording children's height, in the fall and then again in the spring, allows them to see how they grow and change over time.

Teachers encourage respect for others by inviting families into the classroom to share interested jobs and hobbies as well as family and cultural customs, holiday celebrations, food, clothing and other cultural experiences with the class. Additional opportunities to learn about various cultures are provided by singing songs and reading stories from various viewpoints and cultures, displaying pictures that reflect families in the community, and modeling an appreciation for all cultures and backgrounds.

Children develop a sense of belonging and of classroom community and responsibility through discussions of why we have rules at school, by helping to develop the rules of the classroom and by partaking in daily job responsibilities. A sense of school community is experienced at whole school events such as our sing-a-longs and November "Sharing Tables" as the younger children learn from watching and participating with the older children while building a bond among our whole school community.

A larger sense of community is presented by touring the preschool building and grounds, taking neighborhood walks and identifying structures (houses, businesses, churches, etc.), inviting community workers to be guest speakers in the classroom, along with trips to the Library and Apple Orchard. Children create representations of their homes and then teachers map the location of each child's house on a town map and are encouraged to create structures with blocks that represent what they know of their community and neighborhood. They might construct a home, fire station, gas station, harbor, airport, etc. as they begin to develop a sense of awareness of the larger environment of which they are a part. Classroom discussions are initiated by children's vacations and places to which they travel. Trucks, cars, buses, trains, airplanes and helicopters are added to the block area, and boats and barges are added to the water table helping children to explore the concepts of transportation.

Through dramatic play, children explore social roles in the family and jobs in the workplace as they cook dinner in the housekeeping area, take care of babies in the nursery, deliver mail to the post office, put fires out as a firefighter, buy and sell groceries at the store, or work as a veterinarian to take care of animals. Children are made aware of their effect on the environment and civic responsibilities as they recycle containers from lunch, bring in food items for a local food drive, raise money for sick children, and plant and care for flowers, herbs, and vegetables in our school gardens.

Technology

Teachers provide opportunities to explore technology through the introduction of simple machines such as levers, gears, wheels, pulleys, ramps and inclines. Curriculum is enhanced with use of tape recorders and head phones. iPads and digital cameras are used to capture photos of block buildings, artwork that children have created or to videotape dramatic play to replay for children. Children's activities and accomplishments are organized into slideshows and displayed on a laptop for children to enjoy. Opportunities are provided for children to begin to explore and feel comfortable using an while accessing teacher selected curriculum enhancing programs. Teachers also utilize the internet to extend learning in the classroom by researching answers to questions and sharing the information with children.

Large Motor Sequences/Climber Boxes

Our Blue, Orange and Red Pre-K Rooms are equipped with wooden climber boxes of varying sizes. These climbing structures are an integral part of our program adapted from the Early Intervention Program at Darcey School. The boxes are arranged to form climbing sequences by incorporating stairs, slides, and ramps to provide a variety of gross motor activities. These sequences give children experience with direction while providing opportunities for developing and strengthening their large muscles on a whole-body level. The sequences are developed with a place to begin, challenges about how to proceed, and allow children to achieve satisfaction in completing the process. Children have an opportunity to climb on this equipment as a place to focus their physical energy in the classroom and to test and strengthen their muscles in appropriate ways. Climbing sequences provide opportunities to develop and improve skills in depth perception, balance, turn taking, focus, spatial awareness and body control.

Outdoor Play

Our extensive outdoor playground with gardens offers opportunities for growth and learning out-of-doors while developing an awareness of the natural world. We provide space, time and equipment for active, noisy outdoor play in **all** seasons except during pouring rain, temperatures below 10°F or during severe, dangerous weather conditions. Outdoor play is not merely a time to expend energy, but rather a time when growing and learning take place out of doors. It is a time for large motor development and freedom of movement in open space, as well as a time for using loud and exuberant voices. Children enjoy using tricycles, water, sand and mud, climbing, running, digging for worms, swinging, and participating in simple outside games. It is also a time for developing an awareness of the natural world: sky, trees, dirt, plants, puddles, worms, bugs,

ice, snow, wind, and for breathing fresh outside air. We go out for an extended time every day as outside playtime is an important and integral part of our program.

Holidays/Seasons

In relation to holidays as part of the curriculum, we feel that school should remain the safe, secure place that we strive for from the beginning **without** the invasion of a lot of holiday activities. We try to slowly let some of the symbols and activities of major holidays into classrooms to give children the opportunity to incorporate their experiences and perceptions into their play, but we try to keep school a sort of refuge from all the hectic energy and excitement around holiday time. We provide children with opportunities to share their family holiday traditions and we welcome parents to come in to share their cultural traditions as well. We put much more focus on seasonal changes as a way of including and responding to diverse traditions, and therefore, spend much time investigating seasonal changes as a basis for curricular activities.

We do not have big parties or celebrations to recognize major holidays, and we do not incorporate religious traditions as part of our curriculum.

Enrichment Activities

Whole School Sings

In October, November, and December, our classrooms acknowledge these special times of the year with a "Whole School Sing." Each classroom shares with the group special songs and finger plays they have learned and practiced which are significant to that time of year. Children enjoy sharing with others and develop a sense of school community beyond their classroom.

Sharing Tables

In November, we talk about what being thankful means and what we are thankful for. Together, in a group setting, our parent helpers, teachers and children each share what they are thankful for. Each child contributes either a fruit, vegetable bread or muffin to share at the gathering. Large sharing tables are set up in our large classroom and everyone has lunch while getting a chance to sample the foods brought in by the children.

Movement Week

March can sometimes seem like a long month, especially after many cold weather days that may keep children indoors. To add some interest to our curriculum, we provide a week of movement for the children. Each classroom sets up unique, theme-based activities which integrate creative arts, math and science with fine and gross motor activities. Children enjoy having the freedom to explore the classrooms and participate in the variety of activities offered in each room. After being in school for several months, children feel comfortable being able to move beyond their classrooms and interact with other teachers and peers from other classrooms.

Field Days

In June, when the weather invites us to spend more time outdoors, we plan our outdoor Field Days which allow children to spend the entire morning outside. Teachers plan special outdoor gross motor activities such as parachute play, water relays, fly-swatter painting, to name a few! Small groups of children get to travel from activity to activity over the course of the morning enjoying the extended outdoor play while getting lots of exercise. We enjoy a whole group picnic snack on the lawn and finish off the morning with outdoor playground time.

Enrichment Programs

At least twice a year, we enhance our curriculum by bringing in outside enrichment programs. These programs offer extensions to the learning in the classroom in the areas of literacy, music, science, social studies, and gross motor development.

Goodbye Book/End-of-Year Goodbye Picnic

At the end of the school year, we invite families to our Goodbye Picnic. This family gathering is a meaningful way to say good-bye to the friends, families and teachers in our preschool community. This provides a concrete experience for the children through which to begin to recognize the changes and endings that are occurring as the school year ends. The evening consists of skits and songs performed by the children and teachers handing out Goodbye Books followed by a family picnic dinner on the lawn. A Goodbye Book is created for each child which includes work samples and photographs depicting a sequential record of each child's growth and development over the past school year.